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Re-Thinking Rites of Passage in Contemporary Double-Ring Ceremonies in Montreal Jewish Weddings

Marlene Bonneau

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
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Abstract

Re-Thinking Rites of Passage in Contemporary
Double-Ring Ceremonies in Montreal Jewish Weddings

Marlene Bonneau, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2002

This dissertation focuses on ritual and, in particular, contemporary Montreal Jewish wedding rituals. It is a study of the material objects used in the diverse acts of human symbol-making which represent distinct identities, both personal and communal. The change from one to two wedding rings will be the focus of this investigation within the context of several Jewish weddings within Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist denominations. Double-ring wedding ceremonies present a conundrum in Judaism. On the one hand, Jewish law does not acknowledge the bride's giving of a second ring to the groom as a legal *kinyan*, while on the other hand, the practice exists. Various identities and interpretations emerged in this study over the subject of the second ring. The juxtaposition of three salient realities—namely, rings, rabbis and couples—provided the raw material for investigating the "second ring phenomenon". Finally, a re-thinking of Arnold Van Gennep's classic model of "rites of passage" shaped the central argument of this dissertation, that contemporary double-ring ceremonies in this study represented celebrations or events that were primarily rites of identity more than rites of passage.

To my father, Jean-Marie Bonneau (1920-1999), whose memory lives in these pages.

To my mother, Violet Pastor Bonneau, whose life inspires my every day and who passed on to me the ritual of lighting candles.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

We constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified.

Roland Barthes

Part One

This dissertation focuses on ritual and, in particular, contemporary Montreal Jewish wedding rituals. It is a study of the material objects[1] used in the diverse acts of human symbol-making which represent distinct identities, both personal and communal. One of the main objects featured in this work is the wedding ring, a plain metal hoop wrapped around a finger which holds together a sense of an individual's identity and the social framework from which it was created.[2] More specifically, the change from one to two wedding rings precipitated this investigation of ritual and ritual symbols within the context of Montreal Ashkenazi weddings.

Double-ring wedding ceremonies in Judaism present a conundrum. On the one hand, Jewish law does not acknowledge the bride's giving of a second ring to the groom as a legal *kinyan*[3], while on the other hand, the practice exists. In one segment of

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[1]The term "material object" is used in material culture and material history studies. In this work, the word "object" will refer to "an artifact produced or used in human history", while the term "material culture" has been used in English-speaking research circles for over a century (Schlereth 1991: 231-251).

[2]See Appendix I for a brief history of finger rings.

[3]Appendices II and III outline briefly some of the key points of Jewish law and custom concerning marriage and weddings.

Montreal Jewry comprising rabbis and married couples from Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist congregations, various identities and interpretations emerged over the subject of the second ring. The juxtaposition of three salient realities—namely, rings, rabbis and couples—provided the raw material for investigating the "second ring phenomenon".

As a concrete self-evident symbol needing little explanation, a wedding ring's circular shape points quickly to abstract and concrete meanings of eternal love, commitment, future promises and marital obligations. However, in the case of double-ring ceremonies in contemporary Montreal Jewish weddings, what appeared as self-evident to the couples meant something quite different to the rabbis. For the couples, their wedding rings were not arbitrary, but natural symbols linking unending shaped metal hoops to promises of eternal love; for the rabbis, the same wedding rings were arbitrary signs[4] of a legal *kinyan* which could be enacted just as easily with a coin or a can of Coca Cola.[5] Yet, because in practice the rings were key ritual objects used during the

[4]De Saussure's ideas in *Course in General Linguistics* informed this distinction between signs and symbols (De Saussure 1966). A symbol has an intrinsic organic association with what it represents and it is not arbitrary. On the other hand, a sign's relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary. De Saussure argues against any fixed bond between signifier and signified. The rabbis reluctance to attribute some permanent symbolic value to the ring, as do the couples, reflects the rabbis' desire to protect the core of Jewish law from factors of time and change. If Jewish law is to be meaningful for the duration of all human time, then it is the arbitrary nature of the sign that protects it from any attempt to modify it. However, if the signifier is changed too much, it will loosen its connection to the signified which may risk changing the meaning of the original concept or signified, namely, in this case, the foundational Biblical texts. The rabbis may say that the ring could very well be a can of Coca Cola, but this kind of signifier would loosen up too much the relationship with the signified or Biblical texts.

[5]One rabbi used these exact words to describe the arbitrariness of the rings (Interview April 24, 2001).

enactment of the *kiddushin* or legal betrothal, they were in the words of Victor Turner "dominant ritual symbols" or at the core of these weddings rituals (Turner 1967:20).

For the purposes of this study on weddings, the term "dominant symbol" will be used from a ritual studies perspective and will refer to one or two rings given under the *chuppah*. According to Turner's lexicon, a dominant symbol is regarded "not merely as a means to the fulfillment of the avowed purposes of a given ritual, but also refers to values that are regarded as ends in themselves" (Turner 1967: 20). Dominant or "senior" symbols[6] refer to axiomatic values, that is, to values that are regarded as ends in themselves and as self-evident. For example, there is no need for rabbis or mathematicians to explain what non-ending circular shapes mean when the couples look at their wedding rings. Even when using Marcel Mauss' ideas on gift exchange, to be discussed later in this chapter, two wedding rings represent self-evident meanings of an equal sharing of responsibilities, obligations and feelings of love. For the couples, the second ring[7] did not embody any hidden or difficult legal constructs which would render

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[6]*The Random House Dictionary* defines the word "symbol" as "something used for or regarded as representing something else; a material object representing something, often something immaterial; emblem, token or sign. [A symbol is] a letter, figure, or other character or mark or a combination of letters or the like used to represent something" (1988 edition: 1331). In his *Models and Mirrors: towards an anthropology of public events*, Donald Handelman provides a good survey of definitions for the word "symbol". The following one from Umberto Eco is noteworthy: "Originally a symbol was a token, the present half of a broken table or coin or medal, that performed its social and semiotic function by recalling the absent half to which it could have been potentially reconnected. The verb '*symbollein*' came to mean to try an interpretation, to make a conjecture, to infer from something imprecise, because [in being] incomplete something else is suggested, evoked, revealed but [is] not conventionally [said]" (Handelman 1991: 13).

[7]Detailed discussion of the meaning of the second ring among the different denominations will be given in Chapter 6. The data from the interviews in this study showed that Reform and Reconstructionist denominations did express different views on the meaning of Jewish law and the role which *halacha* played in their respective denominations. Only Reform stood out as allowing both groom and bride to utter the same *halachic* verbal formulae. However, this was not a consistent practice. More importantly, Reform performed more single ring ceremonies than did four Orthodox, four Conservative and one

it meaningful. For the rabbis who represented a Jewish legal perspective, the first ring had dominance over the second one, despite its status as an arbitrary sign. But Turner's definition of dominant symbols allows for a multiplicity of meanings where ambivalence can exist and thrive. A dominant ritual symbol, such as the wedding ring, fulfills a key ritual role for all ritual participants while at the same time is able to contain and communicate a variety of meanings.[8] Using a variety of methodological tools was imperative, therefore, in the collection of data and in accessing the various meanings contained in this wedding symbol. Combined with a wider historical investigation of wedding rings and other wedding symbols, the analyses of these findings informed the body and conceptual frameworks of this work.

Data were collected from two periods of time. Data from the first period, 1947 to 1964, were collected through an examination of 12,580 photographic negatives of 140 Montreal Jewish weddings[9]; while data from the second period, 1990 to 2001, were collected from 36 interviews with Montreal rabbis and 40 interviews with women and

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Reconstructionist congregations. Details describing the number of double-ring ceremonies performed in Montreal during the period 1996-2001 will be given in Chapter 2, "Methodology".

[8] In Judaism as compared to other religious groups, the rings play a dominant role, ritually and legally. In Catholicism, the outward signs of the sacrament of Matrimony are the consensual vows spoken by the couple and not the rings. Two rings have only been officially exchanged since Vatican II in 1971. In Eastern Christian Orthodox practice, the official signs of the sacrament of Matrimony are the crowns. Although two rings can be traced back to the middle ages, they remain secondary to the crowns and crowning rite. Moreover, it is the best man (the *Kum*) who exchanges the rings for bride and groom. This intermediary role is reminiscent of earlier patriarchal customs where fathers, uncles and brothers arranged and negotiated a bride's future marriage. This gesture takes away, however, from the autonomy and power of the bride or groom to perform their own symbolic exchange of rings. It is in Judaism where the ring plays a more critical and dominant role, ritually and legally.

[9]Related to the question of the second ring, 60% of the photos showed the groom wearing a second ring at the reception table after the ceremony was completed. According to Ruby Shulman, (photographer of the Drummond Wedding Photo Collection) the majority of photos were from Orthodox and Conservative weddings. Details of the photographic archival data will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 4.

men who were married by Montreal rabbis.[10] Although some interviews were done with Sephardic rabbis and couples, these interviews remained peripheral to the majority of the interviews which were done with members of Ashkenazi communities.[11]

This research makes no claim to being a comprehensive demographic or sociological study of Montreal Jewry. However, particular research done by Pierre Anctil, Morton Weinfeld, Gary Caldwell and the Federation of Jewish Community Services in Montreal included relevant material which touched upon the area of Quebec Jewish identity. Studying Montreal Jewish weddings within the context of a majority French Roman Catholic population raises interesting questions about shared and divergent religious symbols in Montreal weddings. In the area of family relations, these researchers found that marriage, divorce and fertility patterns vary little between Jewish and non-Jewish individuals in the city. With one striking exception, non-Jewish couples in Montreal have five times more children outside of marriage than do Jewish couples. The following portrait will depict a few salient features of contemporary Montreal Jews.[12]

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[10]I also viewed several videos and one rare silent five-minute film of a 1947 Montreal Orthodox bride and groom entering the bride's parental home after the ceremony was completed. Interviews with jewelers, wedding planners, Sephardic rabbis, ultra-orthodox rabbis, Catholic liturgists and Protestant ministers were also included in the body of data from the late 1990s.

[11]A list of the synagogues that appeared in the photographic study is included in Chapter 2.

[12]The main sources for this profile of Montreal Jewry were: "The Sephardic Community" in *The Federation of Jewish Community Services of Montreal, Census Series 1991* (1995); Pierre Anctil's *Tur Malka: Flâneries sur les cimes de l'histoire juive Montréalaise* (1997); Anctil and Gary Caldwell's *Juifs et réaltés juives au Québec* (1984); Morton Weinfeld's *Like Everyone Else...But Different: The Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews* (2001); "Fertility Study, Montreal Population" in *The Federation of Jewish Community Services of Montreal,* (1994); *The Montreal Jewish Magazine Directory* (Fall/Winter Spring/Summer 2001-2002/5762); "Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Montreal" (text authored by Janice Rosen and Barbara Feldman, from exhibit of *Tur Malka* presented by JPL of Montreal, CJC National Archives, 1992).

Who are Contemporary Montreal Jews?

Montreal has a population of approximately 3 million people, of which 77, 131 are Ashkenazi Jews and 21, 049 are Sepharadic. The word "Ashkenaz" comes from the Hebrew word meaning "germanic territories". The majority of Ashkenazi Jews originally settled in Montreal between 1880 and 1920. By 1911, there were 30,000 Ashkenazi Jews of mostly from Eastern European origins who came from Germany, Poland, France, Russia, Lithuania, Galicia, Rumania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Almost all Ashkenazi Jews spoke Yiddish then, which is a language derived from a mixture of middle German, Hebrew, Aramaic and old French with Slavic influences. In 1931 Louis Rosenberg recorded that 99% of Montreal Jews spoke Yiddish and claimed it as their mother tongue. In 1994 only 10% of Ashkenazi Jews in the city reported speaking or knowing Yiddish.

From 1901 to 1931, the Jewish population went from 7,600 to 60,000, which was a leap from 0.46% to 2.09% of the total Quebec population, the highest proportion ever of Jews in Quebec. Up until WWII, the Jewish community in Montreal constituted one of the largest immigrant collectivities, approximately 65,000 individuals. Today, Montreal Ashkenazi Jews speak predominantly English, whereas the majority of Sephardic Jews speak French. In 1991, 75% of Montreal Ashkenazi Jews reported English as their mother tongue, and 70% of Sephardic Jews reported French as theirs. In that same 1991census, approximately 60% of all Jews in Quebec were bilingual compared to 65% of Canadian Jews who were bilingual.

After WWII Sephardic Jews immigrated to Montreal from North Africa, and mostly from Morocco. Sephardic Jews practice different customs and are either descendants of Jews from Spain or the Middle Eastern Jewish communities. Having knowledge of French, Quebec was a natural destination for many of these Jewish families. Other Sephardic Jews, from Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Israel, Russia and Algeria also arrived in Quebec from the 1950s to the 1970s. Approximately 20,000 Sephardic Jews came to Montreal during that period and because of their French speaking heritage have played a significant role in building new Jewish organizations in this province. The Sephardic communities have created their own communal institutions, synagogues and schools such as the *Ecole Maimonide*, the only French Jewish school recognized by the *Ministère de l'éducation*. The organization known as the *Communauté sépharade du Québec*, composed primarily of Moroccan Jews, is one of the main organizations for representing the Sephardic community within the province. Presently 75% of the total Canadian Sephardic population live in the province of Quebec.

The majority of Jews in Montreal form part of the middle to upper classes, with a high proportion of professionals being Jews. A large number of doctors, lawyers, accountants and entrepreneurs in this city are Jewish. They are the most cohesive group in terms of choosing where they live, compared to any other immigrant group in the city or province. Today, most Jewish families live in the western part of the city: Snowdon, Côte-St-Luc, Hampstead, Notre-Dame-de-Grace (N-D-G), Town of Mt-Royal, Westmount, Outremont, Dollard des Ormeaux and Chomedey (in Laval, north of the

city). Especially visible and prominent in Montreal are the Jewish volunteer services which form one of the most dynamic elements of the Montreal Jewish community.

For a variety of reasons, such as immigration patterns and the dominant presence of a French Roman Catholic Church, Montreal Jews seem to have preserved a more traditional character compared to other Canadian Jewish communities. There are more Jews belonging to Orthodox synagogues in this city than any other city in North America, where the majority belong to Conservative or Reform synagogues. There are one Reform, one Reconstructionist, four Conservative and thirty-two Orthodox synagogues in the city. There are also a number of ultra-Orthodox and Hasidic establishments in four areas of the city: Park Avenue, Outremont, Snowdon and Broisbriand (which is not on the island proper but in Laval).

The lowest figures for mixed marriages in all of North America are found in Montreal, while the numbers of married, single or divorced individuals is relatively the same for Jews and non-Jews in the city. Slightly lower numbers are given for Jewish women being single, divorced or separated; and slightly higher numbers are given for Jewish persons being married. 49.5% of married persons in Montreal are Jewish, whereas 47.3% are non-Jewish. The following changes in family structures apply to both non-Jews and Jews but are more pronounced in the majority population (Roman Catholics) in the city: increases in divorce rates, childless marriages, postponed marriages, single-parent families and widowhood (except for Miami which has a rate 2.5 times higher than Montreal). Two facts point to a striking difference between Montreal's Jewish and majority populations: 1) Montreal Jewish women have higher fertility rates than non-

Jewish women (1.71 for Jewish women, 1.28 for non-Jewish women), although even the Jewish rate is below replacement levels; and 2) Montreal Jews are less inclined to have children out of wedlock. The incidence of having children outside or before marriage is *5 times higher* in the non-Jewish population in the city.

This last fact confirms what the rabbis and couples reported in the interviews, and shows how Jewish wedding symbols relate to lived social realities. Fertility and procreation symbols, like the blessings over wine, lavish floral displays and sumptuous banquets are just a few examples of these fertility values. Within the context of a religious rite, then, wedding symbols which appear to be more connected to family or domestic matters become perceived as part of a religious function. Furthermore, given the number of Orthodox communities in this city and the fact that religion was highly visible in the majority Roman Catholic population, finding religious meanings within life cycle rituals would seem to fit naturally within Montreal contexts.

The history of Montreal's religious ambiance might be said to have nurtured Jewish rituals and communities in a city where religious boundaries were built up and well defined—provided that Catholic and Jew kept apart, at least in the realm of rituals. Until the mid to late 1960s, after Vatican II, no middle ground for Catholics was possible in public ritual or devotion in a city where a Catholic entering a Protestant church would be consigned as a trespasser going to Purgatory or worse. If Catholic and Protestant Christians were barely able to dialogue or share their sacred spaces together, how could Catholics ever imagine what Jewish practice was like? Confessional schools and hospitals pressed Jews in this city to adapt and to finally organize an alternative private

Jewish Day School system in 1924. But it would not be until 1965 that the Jewish community was officially represented on the Protestant School Board of Montreal. Only in 2001 did religious definitions cease to apply in the Quebec school system, when non-confessional schools appeared for the first time in its history.

However, seeing religion as an identifying marker in present-day Montreal Jewish weddings seems to fit in a city whose trademark has been religion. Yet, this historical Roman Catholic factor past cannot be credited as the driving force leading present-day Jewish couples to adhere to their own set of religious-ethnic family values. Contemporary Jewish weddings stand out from the rest as having a strong sense of their own religious identity. This is striking, because currently in the majority of the Quebec population religion has little dominating influence. Since the decline of religious practice in this province after the dismantling of clerical powers during the "Quiet Revolution" of the 1960s, Quebecers have by and large removed the yoke of Catholic interference in the area of sexual and family matters. Likewise, based on the data from the interviews in this study, the majority of Jewish couples since the late 1980s were and are freely living together before marriage. But, unlike many non-Jewish Montrealers, they refrained from becoming pregnant.

Based on this overwhelming fact that parenthood within the Montreal Jewish population is postponed until after marriage, religious factors in the sense of "adhering to traditional values" seem to merge with secular ones in weddings. In the form of a wedding ritual performed under the auspices of a rabbi, religious leadership and authority reinforce the idea that this is a religious event, and what is permitted to happen

afterwards, such as having a baby, is logically connected to the religious realm. The controlling mechanisms that put pressure on unmarried Montreal Jewish couples to postpone parenting in a province where such a practice is commonly known and accepted are remarkable. That the crux of these pressures lies more within the families and peers rather than within the "religious tradition" is highly probable. Nevertheless, Jewish weddings become pivotal as thresholds into parenthood and in this singular way are catalysts toward the transformative experience of parenthood.

Key Questions

Relying primarily, then, on anthropological and historical methods, key questions emerged which led to a sequence of findings about the second ring, Jewish and non-Jewish wedding symbols, and ritual symbols in general. What was the significance of double-ring ceremonies in Jewish weddings? What role did the second ring play in a re-thinking of weddings as "transformative rites of passage"? If the second ring represented egalitarian gender roles, how then could brides be "transformed" by grooms? In which ways did the second ring represent stabilizing or threatening factors in the shaping of new personal and religious identities? What were these identities? What was at stake in claiming that Jewish weddings did not necessarily transform but confirm identities, both old and new ? Who were the specialists in the handling, wearing, legalizing, giving and receiving of these rings? What documents, photographs, art historical material, archives and voices have recorded or forgotten the histories of these rings and their meanings? What mechanisms influence the transmission of ritual symbols and thereby create a sense

of continuity or tradition within religious communities? Is this sense of continuity based on a fictive or real chronology in creating or severing links to the past?

Six Principal Findings

A sequence of answers emerged from the investigation of the above questions which led to the formulation of six principal findings and the central thesis argument. The six principal findings were:

I. The significance of double-ring ceremonies demonstrated that the history of ritual symbols within a religious tradition is often unknown to its religious leadership, even though the practice of using these symbols exists within that tradition. In the case of Montreal Jewish weddings, most of the rabbis interviewed in the study believed that the second ring was a recent phenomenon which made its appearance in Montreal around the mid 1970s. The rabbis also stated that the reason why Jews used two rings was due to the influence of a majority Christian or Catholic environment. Going even beyond Montreal, the evidence from several historical sources will show that two rings in Jewish weddings was well known before the 1900s and as early as the 1300s. The explanation for this lack of ritual historical knowledge rests on a number of factors: the non-status of the second ring within the authoritative system of Jewish law, the suppression of symbols which challenge the status quo of "traditional" gender roles, the importance of maintaining religious differences along Jewish-Christian lines, the need to make clear distinctions between Orthodox and Reform Judaism, and misconceptions about the history or

significance of rings in general, including the origins of using one ring in Jewish wedding practices.

II. Defining, narrating and recording a ritual symbol's "history" determines its status within a religious group. The transmission of ritual symbols over generations depends on the sense of continuity these symbols convey to members of a particular religious tradition. The results of the research suggested that there are mechanisms that can explain how the transmission of symbols might work. I have suggested three factors—the "History Factor", "Analogy Factor" and "Popular Culture Factor"—to demonstrate how the repetition of symbols handled in a particular fashion both within and outside that tradition determines its status or value. Frequently, establishing fictive or real chronological links to foundational religious texts from the past becomes key to understanding why some symbols are defined as "traditional" and why others are not.

III. Despite the sharing of wedding symbols between contemporary Jewish and Christian groups, such as wedding rings, veils, cakes, white gowns and black tuxedos, distinct Jewish identities are still communicated in symbols such as, the veiling of the bride, blessings over wine, the ring ceremony, marriage contracts (*Ketoubahs)*, ritual space (*chuppahs)* and glasses broken. It is by virtue of the symbol's outward visible form or the particular way in which a symbol is used during a ritual that determines its religious identification and meaning. The communication of particular religious identities through wedding symbols has varied over time and place. For example, the outward visible forms of 17th or 19th century Jewish betrothal rings from Venice or France look very different from Christian wedding rings of the same time period. However,

contemporary Jewish wedding rings possess few or no distinguishable qualities from those of Christian ones. With the case of present-day wedding rings, one can only demarcate differences between Jewish and Christian ones by observing how the rings are used in the actual wedding rite.

IV. Montreal Jewish denominations could be identified according to the timing of the giving of the second ring and the verbal or non-verbal formulae spoken by grooms and brides under the *chuppah.* These denominational markers concerned the rabbis and not the couples, who for the most part neither remembered the sequencing of events under the *chuppah*, nor identified themselves primarily as denominational Jews.

V. The change from single to double-ring ceremonies indicated a shift towards more egalitarian gender roles in ritual, but stood in opposition to gender inequalities represented in the pre-wedding ritual of the man giving the future bride an engagement ring. Mauss' theories on gift-exchange and the data from the couples' interviews elucidated this argument.

VI. Contemporary Montreal Jewish double-ring wedding ceremonies suggest events that primarily involve the presentation of identities and, as such, are primarily rites of identity rather than rites of passage. Charting out the histories of wedding symbols emphasized dramatically the need for various communities to express a variety of identities. Public events like weddings offer a unique opportunity to communicate values on a grand scale that are important to the couples, their families, friends and rabbis. Central to this argument is a re-thinking of Arnold Van Gennep's classic model of rites of passage as it can be realistically applied to contemporary life-

cycle rituals, and of whether Van Gennep's model was ever a faithful account of weddings in the past. A critical look at the overused word "transformation" is needed to describe what amounts to a transition in status from being single to married.

Finally, a re-thinking of Van Gennep's classic model of "rites of passage" shaped the central argument of this dissertation—namely, that *contemporary Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist double-ring ceremonies in this study represented celebrations or events that were primarily rites of identity more than rites of passage.*

A few words must be said about the parameters that structured this argument before opposing views quickly arise. Methodology remains central in understanding how this argument was formulated. *First*, although many wedding symbols, other than the rings effectively communicated the prominence of identities (religious, gender, class), it would be a focus on the double-ring ceremony that would lead to the second part of the argument questioning the viability of calling these weddings "rites of passage". Moreover, in adapting the gender perspective of viewing double-ring ceremonies as egalitarian, the idea of weddings being "transformative" was also put into question. *Second*, a definition of the word "transform" needs to be clearly articulated (to be seen below) in order to understand the feminist challenges to this word within the context of weddings or marriage. With the giving of two rings, both groom and bride meet each other in mutual respect, and not to "transform" the other but to pledge and commit their love to each other. As such, it could be argued that single-ring ceremonies still represent ideas or myths of "transformation", based on the idea that only the groom initiates a

giving gesture. *Third*, given the idea that single-ring ceremonies represent "transformative" elements, it would follow that many of the rabbis would hold on to the idea that weddings are rites of passage, precisely because they do not recognize the second ring as being visible or legally present. *Fourth*, related to the last idea, the rabbis would also think that weddings are "transformative" based on the belief that marriage represents an upward movement in Judaism. *Fifth*, the data from the interviews reinforced the idea that gender-laden values pushed the idea or myth of weddings being "transformative" through popular cultural symbols. Although the brides never used the word "transformation"[13], they conveyed the idea that they felt as if they were transmuted in some way on their wedding day. They used the following terms to describe their day: "It was like a dream", "It was like Hollywood", "It was like a fairy tale", "It was Cinderella-like". The data highlighted the impact which religious lore and popular culture have had on negative gender stereotyping in the western wedding tradition. Captivating delusions follow feelings of being transmuted into a Cinderella. In addition, these notions of being "transformed" were related to the practice of giving one engagement ring. None of the grooms, however, expressed similar notions or feelings about their weddings or engagements being like fairy tales. *Sixth*, an elaboration of Gennep's definition of rites of passage needs to be integrated into a discussion of what constitutes a "transformative" rite. *Seventh*, as the history of rings demonstrates, contemporary wedding rings which are rarely inscribed with poetical verses or mystic

[13]Only one bride-to-be mentioned the word "transformation". Details of that interview will be given in Chapter 8.

letters show instead uniform hallmarkings for gold weights. "18K" or "22K" marks give little evidence that magical outside forces are acting upon the rings or those who wear them. Although the residues of "transformative" magic may still exist in golden wedding bands—whereby spouses believe that the rings will make them more faithful or loving—most couples described their rings as "markers of marital identity".

Finally, understanding what a contemporary Jewish wedding *is* and identifying who the principal participants are will further clarify the nuances of the main argument stated above. Attempts to elucidate the differences between rites of identity and rites of passage depend on these underlying premises.

A Jewish wedding is a ritual event which celebrates a couple's commitment and love which they communicate to each other, members of their family, friends and larger community primarily through non-verbal symbolic means.

The principal participants in a Jewish wedding are the couple. Therefore, to privilege the rabbis' views, despite their legal expertise, would relegate the couple to a secondary position. Evidence that points to the couple's central role is found in an entire repertoire of wedding symbols (as will be shown in Chapter 4) where the rabbi becomes secondary if not absent. Privileging the couple over the rabbi is also important when considering the rabbi's values and beliefs about the second ring. Because the majority of rabbis in this study placed more value on the single ring than the second one, "transformative" ideals were more prominent. These ideals got played out in gender roles where the male initiates the only legitimate ring-giving gesture. In their eyes the female's gesture does not count. Thus, to maintain this fiction that the second ring does not exist

becomes untenable. In this way, the double-ring ceremony remains essential to re-thinking the meaning of rites of passage when applied to contemporary Jewish weddings.

Although the rabbi plays a significant role as legal expert, his role remains secondary to that of the couple. Likewise, family, friends and invited guests play secondary roles, as well. Yet, they all symbolically stand under one wedding canopy or *chuppah* as members of one Jewish community. Hence, Jewish weddings are both personal and communal. Along with the couple, two wedding rings as dominant symbols take center stage and represent their mutual love and commitment for each other.

However, an outlined space delineating key players and objects does not fully represent the meaning of a Jewish wedding. The wedding canopy is not only a human artifact which represents a community, but it is also thought of as a sacred canopy that represents another powerful entity—the heavens above or God's protective surrounding love. The presence of a rabbi may be interpreted as representing the inner workings of the divine which appears through the human structures of Jewish law and society. The *chuppah* combined with the presence of a rabbi represent religious symbols which ultimately define Jewish weddings as religious, regardless of which denomination is characterized. Given such a theological interpretation, then, Jewish weddings would naturally include transformative powers which work upon the principal participants from both the "outside" (divine forces that transcend human experience) and "inside" (divine forces that are immanent within human experience).

Not to deny that such divine powers exist, weddings, marriage and women have nevertheless suffered under gendered stereotypes of male gods and divine powers.

Closely linked ideas of "transformation" have too often been associated with these images of male gods and male "divine" forces ruling over less empowered females (DeBeauvoir 1989; Ruether 1983; Walker 1983; Ostriker 1993). Therefore, the disentangling of negative "transformative" myths associated with weddings is accomplished through the use of a gendered lens in the analysis of the data. Double-ring ceremonies clearly gave evidence that such a movement has been in the making since the early 1960s when women's rights decidedly impacted North American households (Geller 2001; Yalom 2001; Schwartz 1998). Jewish women have definitely given evidence that, much earlier than the 1960s, they have been striving for gender equality through their desire to give their husbands a second ring under the *chuppah*. Moreover, profiling other Jewish wedding symbols, besides the wedding ring, will demonstrate that brides and grooms related to each other through various dominant and subordinate gendered gestures and objects. For the purposes of this dissertation, a key sentence mentioned in the opening paragraph of this Introduction best describes its limitations and scope: "One of the main objects featured in this work is the wedding ring, a plain metal hoop wrapped around a finger which holds together a sense of an individual's identity and the social framework from which it was created" (page 1). Leaving theological considerations aside, the reader will be left to decide whether a re-thinking of rites of passage as applied to contemporary double-ring ceremonies in Montreal Jewish weddings merits serious consideration.

Part Two of this Introduction will elaborate some of the ideas mentioned above, and provide definitions for the following terms: "non-verbal symbols", "ritual symbols",

"religious rites", and "gender". The meaning of the word "ritual" will be discussed in relation to art—an appropriate connection to make in light of the importance which style and aesthetics have in human symbol-making. Part Three will present an explanation of Van Gennep's classic term "rites of passage" within a discussion of the meaning of the word "transformation". A brief concluding section on Emile Durkheim's ideas of rites as *représentations* aims at removing the disparaging connotations associated with a rethinking of contemporary weddings as rites of identity rather than rites of passage. In Part Four, a review of key scholars will be provided with a summary of the main ideas of each chapter in this dissertation.

Part Two

Non-verbal symbols

What are non-verbal symbols and what role do they play in communicating rites of identity? Non-verbal symbols refer to non-discursive modes of communication, which means the exclusion of speaking and writing[14]. Within the context of rituals, non-discursive modes of communication include gestures, objects, clothing, food and vegetal matter. Within the context of the presentation of this dissertation, non-discursive modes of communication have also been used in the form of visually illustrated pages or plates. Because non-verbal structures function differently than does a discursive sequential linguistic structure, they rely on a different mental logical structure by which meaning is

[14]The visual impact of written or printed characters of a language on a page is not stressed in this discussion of non-verbal symbols within the context of Jewish weddings. Marshall McLuhan would include written characters on a page as examples of non-verbal modes of thought. McLuhan's work *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) delineates the history of writing and printing and contrasts the effects of silent visual print on a page with the effects of auditory and verbal symbols from TV or radio.

apprehended and absorbed neither sequentially nor in a linear fashion (as is writing on a page), but grasped in the way that the attitude, tone, color or view of a landscape are. The function of non-verbal symbols depends on the fact that they are involved in a simultaneous, integral presentation. This kind of semantic may be called "presentational symbolism", so as to characterize its essential distinction from discursive symbolism, or "language" proper (Langer 1951:89).[15]

The main body of research in this work demonstrated that an overwhelming presence of non-verbal wedding symbols effectively communicated complex ideas and feelings about religion, class and gender. Non-verbal symbols showed that meanings held in complex discursive legal written texts, like the technical requirements for witnesses to validate a legal marriage, could also be expressed in non-discursive ways. For example, the presence of a wedding cortège (procession) and banquet feast symbolically stand for the public witnessing of a couple's marriage. But, on the other hand, differences can arise as to what a non-verbal symbol really means, when different modes of thought operate in the minds of those who handle the same object. With the second ring, the rabbis' and couples' perspectives demonstrated that non-verbal symbols could hold opposing and conflicting meanings. Privileging non-verbal symbols which couples used more frequently than the rabbis as a mode of extracting meaning from their weddings led to a privileging of the meanings which were extracted from their preferred method.

How can non-verbal symbols reveal what is going on in a wedding performance?

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[15]Roland Barthes' ideas of pictures being a form of writing or language contrasts with Langer's understanding of non-verbal symbols being distinct from "language" proper (Barthes 1971).

What kind of impact does a wedding canopy, white bridal gown, black tuxedo, wine, flowers, rings, breaking a glass, lavish banquet, dancing and the well-attired guests have upon our senses, thoughts and feelings? They almost always convey impressions of feminine brides, masculine grooms, happy families, joyful couples, financial well-being, Jewishness, marriage, children and auspicious beginnings. Values and emotions are effectively communicated without sermons (although the toasting can evoke high emotions) or the reciting of highly complex legal texts. The non-verbal is effective because it can condense ideas and concepts within a multiple range of sensory modes which remain pleasurable to the mind and senses. Non-verbal modes of communication can convey ideas of identities which represent concepts such as "wife", "husband", "family", "couple" and "Jewish". In particular, the two core identities which touch upon gender and religion, were predominant in the weddings studied in this research.

Ritual non-discursive modes of communication can effectively reveal the making and revivifying of communal representations and identities. In contrast to written discursive modes of thought, non-verbal ones demonstrate significant, if not deeper, levels of meaning in how individuals and communities communicate these identities. Non-verbal symbols are more familiar to the majority of community members and are handled much more competently than are the official religious written texts. These latter texts are usually understood only by an elite religious leadership. It is with these non-verbal symbols, appropriated and handled easily by most members of a community, that

experiences are often more readily remembered and communicated over time.[16] In his book *Marrying and Burying* (1995), Ronald Grimes highlights the power which non-verbal modes of thought have over language proper, both spoken and written within the ritual context. He writes: "Action is the primary form of engagement; talk is secondary. Posture, gesture, and placement take priority over verbal interpretation. Cultures, societies and groups do not merely surround bodies. Bodies incarnate but also transform, and even undermine cultural values. Religious competence in many traditions is fundamentally choreographic, not verbal. Everything depends on the quality of the sitting" (Grimes 1995: 225, 249).

Ritual Symbols and Religious Rites

In applying definitions from Turner and Durkheim, terms like "ritual symbols" and "religious rites" can be made clearer. Turner and Durkheim reinforce the significant role which symbols and rites play as effective sources in studying a religious tradition's values. Any work on ritual symbols is at best multi-faceted, mirroring the condensed and enigmatic qualities which they suggest. Nevertheless, Turner claimed that ritual symbols are accessible and empirically observable objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures and spatial units which convey social meanings. "Symbols as the smallest unit of ritual become associated with human interests, purposes, ends and means, whether these are explicitly formulated or have to be inferred from the observed behaviour. The

[16]The question of transmission of ritual symbols and the problems of memory will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The making and remembering of a "tradition" involves a struggle with and power over written and non-verbal symbols.

structure and properties of ritual symbols may be inferred from three classes of data: 1) external form and observable characteristics, 2) interpretations offered by specialists and laymen, 3) significant contexts largely worked out by the anthropologist" (Turner 1967: 20). Relying on Turner's methodological guidelines, findings from the data demonstrated that contemporary double-ring ceremonies communicated and expressed multiple meanings to different people at the same time. For the rabbis, the single wedding ring primarily conveyed a legalistic meaning, whereas for the couples being married, two wedding rings conveyed a romantic and personal meaning.[17]

By their very nature, symbols have a capacity to store a surplus of meanings, reflecting and changing in order to suit different needs. They integrate and polarize opposite meanings; they are ambivalent and can effect change (Durkheim 1915; Lukes 1973; Turner 1967; Lèvi-Strauss 1979; Bell 1992). Nathan Schwartz-Salant's work on Carl Jung and alchemy elucidates the paradoxes of symbolism which Jung believed were mirrored in the human self. For Jung, the power and paradox of symbols, like the human self, can produce potentially dangerous or positive aspects. "Jung found a mine of symbolism that he recognized to parallel the way a human being, with a correct use of will and imagination, and the assent of fate, can enter a process whose goal is the creation of an internal structure he called the self. The self, created through what Jung termed the individuation process, yields an inner stability and sense of direction for the ego even

[17]This makes sense even outside the context of Jewish law or the rabbis. From a material studies context, the rings have a deeper connection to the couple because the rings belong to them. The intimate relationship between ring and wearer creates a different set of meanings which includes a natural personalized meaning which cannot be felt by someone else who is not wearing that ring.

amidst stormy, emotional and environmental conflict. But the self is filled with paradox, and it too can create chaotic states of mind that can endanger a person's sense of identity" (Schwartz-Salant 1995: 2).

If, for the rabbis, wedding rings related more to concepts of law, then for the couples they belonged to another pole of personalized thoughts and feelings. In addition, for the rabbis, the rings communicated important differences in denominational affiliations. Depending on when the ring was given under the *chuppah* and what words were spoken, the same Jewish wedding ceremony took on subtle nuances. However, these denominational markers meant more for the rabbis than for the couples. The ring as ritual symbol adapted, then, to several community meanings and identities while still retaining enough depth to incorporate the couple's own personalized thoughts. "Thus a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider 'unconscious' aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it" (Jung 1964: 4; Schwartz-Salant 1995:2). Combining the ideas stated above, then, symbols embody the paradoxical while being able to be observed and refined as anthropological data. Wedding symbols provided empirical data which pointed to personal and social realms which were based on religion, gender, class and law.[18] Durkheim's perspective that religious rites are *représentations* sums up best this idea that ritual symbols can effectively convey spiritual

[18]The legal markers communicated in Jewish weddings include both Jewish religious law and Quebec civil law. Common law status in the province of Quebec, which confers rights after a couple co-habitate for a period of three years, does not comprise the same legal rights as does marriage. Co-habitation differs from civil marriage in Quebec in the areas of child support, division of property, and separation of assets and debts in the case of separation or the death of one partner.

and social markers of realities that are at the same time hidden and visible. "Religion is a system of ideas by means of which individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate relations which they have with it. Such is its primordial role; and though metaphorical and symbolic, this representation is not unfaithful" (Durkheim 1915: 225).

Ritual and Art

Durkheim also understood the power of the imagination in ritual performances and how creative processes inform and inhabit ritual symbols. Both Susanne Langer and Durkheim saw connections between ritual and art, and interestingly both saw the artistic function as integral and not separate from cognitive modes of thought. Langer, however, differed from Durkheim in that she stressed the primary role of the transformative aspects of the artistic dimension of rituals. Durkheim was more concerned with the functional role of imagination in the ritual process for the sake of understanding how creating free gestures communicate emotive yet socially binding "effervescences". For Langer, the artistic dimension associated with symbol-making and ritual performances places both art and ritual in the same creative category. "Taking in more than what is commonly called thought, symbol-making in the context of ritual is expressive and transformative, born like art" (Langer 1951: 49). Understood in this light, Langer would argue that transformation in rituals depends on aesthetic and expressive qualities, and not on the legal or functional aspects that change a person's status or identity. As for weddings,

then, Langer would focus on *how* they are expressed and performed, and not on *why* they are performed.

In applying Langer's ideas to contemporary weddings—that is, that aesthetic concerns must predominate in order for a ritual to be truly called "ritual"—the works of Jaclyn Geller and Chrys Ingraham are extremely helpful.[19] Their critiques of present-day North American weddings show how weddings have been overtaken by excessive consumerism and negative gender stereotyping. Their works strongly suggest that most present-day weddings could not be called "rituals" or "art", precisely because a market-place mentality rules over them. Generalities do not help here, but the question of aesthetics in contemporary Montreal Jewish weddings could be said to be influenced and built around both religious and gender norms. Thus, the question of aesthetics remains difficult, if not compromised, in weddings where artistic elements must conform to certain forms mandated by the community and the larger popular culture. In addition, given that many of the symbols presently used in weddings come from prescribed advertising worlds, the criteria for determining artistic quality would be difficult to determine without a dismantling of the consumer models that are being endorsed. Given the influences of popular culture, the choice of music, flowers, colors and setting can still reflect an aesthetic quality which communicates a high level of emotion to the wedding participants and guests. Langer's use of the word "transformative" appropriately fits the

[19]See Jaclyn Geller's *Here Comes the Bride: Women, Weddings, and the Marriage Mystique* (2001) and Chyrs Ingraham's *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture* (1999).

enterprise of artistic expressions, but as Geller and Ingraham claim, when applied to contemporary weddings, it may be misplaced.[20]

Langer emphasized that symbolization within the context of rituals found its main expression in visible non-verbal modes of thought, just as it did in art. Symbolic non-verbal modes of thought within the wedding ritual context can be defined as gestures, clothing, objects, places and actions. Understood in Langer's terms, religious rituals would be cohesive performances directed by leaders who effectively imprinted particular values through imaginative but nevertheless well-thought out symbols. Langer's ideas explained how religious leaders enhanced the cogency of rituals by maximizing aesthetic concerns and minimizing intellectual ones, such as refraining from dry lectures or sermons during the event. The remarkable fact that the communication of important ideas seemed to work best when feelings of pleasure or joy are associated with the process was noted not only by Langer, but also by William James and Durkheim.

Steven Lukes writes about Durkheim's recognition of this fact and how the playful or the "recreative and aesthetic element" of religious ritual was not to be undermined nor underestimated.[21]

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[20]With respect to the wedding rings currently being used, no appreciable artistic differences can be discerned. Plain wedding bands do not evoke a high degree of artistic quality. However, only in doing micro-historical analyses of one or two particular wedding rings within the context of a particular wedding setting could the aesthetic component of weddings be better understood.

[21] Interestingly, Durkheim reveals a critical insight in his analogy between ritual performances and dramatic representations. In concluding that ritual performances as dramatic representations are ultimately serious enterprises, Durkheim's abrupt separation from Judaism leads one to speculate that this break was not a totally eradicating one. Steven Lukes writes about Durkheim's Jewish roots: "David Emile Durkheim was born on April 15, 1858. His father was Moïse Durkheim who had been the rabbi of Epinal, in Lorraine since the 1830s and was Chief Rabbi of the Vosges and Haute-Marne; his grandfather, Israël David Durkheim, had been a rabbi in Mutzig (Alsace), as also had his great-grandfather Simon Simon, appointed in 1784. His mother, Mélanie *née* Isidor, was the daughter of a trader in beer or horses. He grew up within

"Durkheim discussed the 'recreative and aesthetic element' of religion, comparing the rites to 'dramatic representations', and relating them to 'games and the principal forms of art'. Interestingly (and none of his interpreters or critics have noticed this), he seems to have seen this expressive aspect of religion as a by-product of its cognitive role: 'Although, as we have established, religious thought is very far from a system of fictions, the realities to which it corresponds can still only be expressed in a religious form when transfigured by the imagination. So the world of religious things is a partially imaginary world, though only in its outward form, which therefore lends itself more readily to the free creations of the mind. The state of effervescence in which the assembled faithful find themselves is necessarily outwardly expressed by exuberant movements which cannot be easily subjected to ends that are too closely defined. They escape, in part, aimlessly, they display themselves for the mere joy of doing so, and take delight in all kinds of games. Art was not simply an external ornament, there is a poetry inherent in all religion.' However, for Durkheim, rites were certainly not mere works of art, awakening 'vain images corresponding to nothing in reality': 'a rite is something different from a game: it is part of the serious life'" (Lukes 1973: 470).

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the confines of a close-knit, Orthodox and traditional Jewish family. He was destined for the rabbinate and his early education was directed to that end: he studied for a time at a rabbinical school. Yet he soon decided while still a schoolboy, not to follow the family tradition. He later would write about the typical Jewish community as 'a small society, compact and cohesive, with a very keen self-consciousness and sense of unity' and of Judaism as consisting 'like all early religions...of a body of practices minutely governing all the details of life and leaving little free room for individual judgement'" (Lukes 1973: 40-41).

Gender

Non-verbal symbols like the wedding ring are intrinsically connected to gendered roles and gendered identities. The link between gender and weddings emphasizes even more the need to recast contemporary Jewish weddings as rites of identity and to remove the transformative mold of rites of passage. The main actors represented in these rites of identity reflect not only two sexes but two genders. Gender concerns how males and females acquire masculine or feminine identities. Understood this way, wedding rituals draw not upon some natural biological division between females and males, but upon a socially prescribed division between females who are "feminine brides" and males who are "masculine grooms". The particular gestures, clothing and objects that are connected to both the bride and groom represent the ways in which females and males conform to and resist a community's prescribed feminine and masculine identities or attempt to invent new ones.

The formation of gendered identities through the institution of marriage is tied closely to the way masculine and feminine roles are constructed. These constructions are influenced by values endorsed through a community's "traditional" religious myths and through its contemporary practices and beliefs. The opposition of "nurture" and "nature" may be too simplistic, but to underplay the role of society in how individuals and communities define who they are sexually is naive. Pepper Schwartz provides a detailed and helpful definition of "gender" and the roles which biological and social factors play

in gender identification.[22] For her, gendered identities relate to both the sexual and social contexts of sexual behaviour and desire. She challenges categories like "the biological facts of nature" and shows the primary importance of social influences in the way humans perceive and define who they are. To assume that sexuality is naturally gendered and rooted in biology is seriously taken to task in her analysis of sexual stereotypes. She makes the point that, far from being a mere biological process, motherhood is enormously influenced by social processes that determine what motherhood is all about and how motherhood is different from fatherhood.

Schwartz brings up the issue of same-sex marriages as underscoring the fact that the role of gender in marriage is the product of social processes and beliefs about men, women and marriage. "People tend to believe they know whether someone is a man or a woman not because we do a physical examination and determine that the person is biologically male or biologically female. Instead, we notice whether a person is masculine or feminine. Gender is a social characteristic of individuals in our society that is only sometimes consistent with biological sex. Thus, animals, like people, tend to be identified as male and female in accordance with the reproductive function, but only people are described by their gender, as a *man* or a *woman.* When we say something is gendered we mean that social processes have determined what is appropriately masculine and feminine and that gender has thereby become integral to the definition of the phenomenon of human sexuality. Marriage is a gendered institution" (Schwartz 1998: 4).

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[22]See *The Gender of Sexuality* co-authored by Pepper Schwartz and Virginia Rutter (1998). Michael S. Kimmel's *The Gendered Society* (2000) and *Feminist Issues: Race, Class and Sexuality,* edited by Nancy Mandell (1998), also provide good critical material on the topic of gender and feminist issues.

In saying that marriage is a gendered institution, Schwartz's research supports the idea that rites which represent the entry into that institution could rightfully be called "gendered rites". A study of weddings as gendered rites reinforces, then, the use of a critical gender lens in the analysis of wedding symbols, and augments the term "rites of identity" in understanding them.

Part Three

Rites of Passage

Van Gennep had always claimed that rites of passage effected changes in social and legal statuses, or identities (Van Gennep 1960). But fundamentally, rites of passage as life cycle events represented the social symbolic means which groups enacted to mirror passages from known to unknown territories that had transformative qualities. These movements or passages required special rites that mirrored the separation, liminal and re-integration stages which the passenger was experiencing in real life. The purposes of these highly symbolic rites was to absorb the traumatic effects of abrupt changes in life, and to help individuals and groups to re-integrate the disparate elements in their lives. Leaving one direction in life and taking on a new one characterized Van Gennep's model. Re-instating an individual's wholeness as a new sort of person and a community's wholeness as a revivified cohesive group were desired goals for enacting transformative rites of passage.

Van Gennep's theories were stepping stones for digging deeper into the meanings of present-day wedding rites and instrumental in formulating the main argument of this

work. Arguing that contemporary Jewish weddings[23] are primarily rites of identity more than transformative rites of passage involves several connecting ideas, which were briefly mentioned in Part One of this Introduction. Critical to the understanding of this argument is the role of non-verbal modes of thought in the way certain values and identities are communicated. As rites of identity, weddings find maximum expression of identities and meanings in non-verbal symbols.

A wedding changes a single woman into a wife, and therein her gesture of acceptance changes a groom into a husband. Their statuses and legal identities are changed, and as wife and husband they move from the peripheral zone of being single to the central one in Judaism of being married. Emphasis on the cherished value of marriage was clearly demonstrated in the data collected from this study. Moreover, images of fertility symbols, as will be demonstrated in the next few chapters, reinforced these values of marriage and parenthood within the weddings that were studied. But the second ring's principal or dominant status represented another reality that was happening in the lived-in-world outside of the ritual *chuppah* space.

A change in ritual gender roles could be mapped out against the background of changes that were happening in the lived-in-world. From the data collected, the majority of couples who married in the late 1990s were four to five years older than the ones who married in 1990. The males were 29 or 30, and the females were 27 or 28. The majority had been living together and some had already bought their own homes. The sharing of high levels of education and professional careers were common denominators among

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[23]This argument may very well apply to contemporary Christian and Catholic weddings as well.

these couples. For the majority of couples, the suggestion that one partner, namely the husband, had "acquired" or "transformed" the other (namely the wife) was anathema. Both partners described their non-verbal ring gestures in terms of an egalitarian gift-giving. Resistance to the idea that a woman's role should be subordinate to a man's found expression in both the non-verbal gesture of women giving men rings under the *chuppah,* and in the lived realities which mirrored these gestures. Inherent in this resistance was the idea that women did not want to be changed by men; that is, changed from a lower to a higher nature—which constitutes a core meaning of the word "transformation" in relation to weddings as rites of passage.

The Word "Transformation"

In elaborating the second part of the central thesis argument (as stated above, p. 14) , the focal point lies with a rethinking of rites of passage *when applied* to double-ring ceremonies in contemporary Montreal Jewish weddings. Inherent in this rethinking process is the word "transformation". By using pertinent ideas from Van Gennep, William James and Durkheim, the word "transformation" will be defined in order to sharpen the focus of the main argument.

To reiterate, Van Gennep's classic tripartite model of rites of passage consists of three sub-sets: rites of separation, transition, and re-integration. They are transformative because they represent movements or passages from known to unknown territories.[24] But,

[24]Ronald Grimes' latest book, *Deeply into the Bone: re-inventing rites of passage*, critically re-examines Van Gennep's tripartite model in order to challenge not only contemporary rituals but the values which inform and structure the communities that endorse these rituals. In terms of weddings, he says that

implicit in this movement from the known to the unknown, and key to understanding Van Gennep's idea of transformation, is the element of time. More specifically, Van Gennep's tripartite model included in its very structure an allowance for time to co-exist or co-determine transformative processes and effects. For Van Gennep, the final third stage of re-integration was not fully completed in wedding rites until the first child was born. Understood, in this way, Van Gennep stressed the idea that a maturation process was required to effectuate human transformations.

Van Gennep also understood that rites of passages conferred new statuses and identities upon the main ritual participants or passengers. These new statuses and identities were associated with changes or transitions in a person's life, but they did not constitute transformations. The words "change" and "alter" would be more appropriate to signify the changes in legal status which occur in present-day weddings. A change or alteration refers to a modification or conversion of partial aspects of a form or structure.[25]

For Gennep, the word "transformation" in relation to rites of passage also meant a movement upwards or inwards toward a more integrative, holistic or healthier place of

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weddings are not marriages and stresses the idea that a longer process of maturation and time is needed to experience transformation. Like Turner, Grimes reserves the word "ritual" for transformative rites. In turn, rituals which do not transform are empty. Following this line of thought, Grimes' ideas urge individuals and communities to become more creative and re-inventive with rituals, especially rites of passage; otherwise, rituals remain confirmatory or ceremonial.

[25]An alchemical perspective on the topic of transformation might be helpful here to underline the difference between "transform" and "change" or "alter". Related to the idea of a "sacred wedding", the alchemists employed the image of union and relationship to define "transformation" as a change in terms of the union of different substances. "The issue of union was applied to work with outer substances by a fundamental principle often found in alchemical writers: A nature is [transformed when it is] delighted by another nature, [when] a nature conquers another nature, [when] a nature dominates another nature" (Schwartz-Salant 1995: 8). The alchemical interpretation of the word "transformation" implies that one nature is eventually overtaken by another—that is, dominated or subsumed by another nature.

being. Rites of passage were essentially healing rites for the re-integration and re-generation of individuals and communities. Within the context of weddings, then, Van Gennep's understanding of the word "transformation" connotes both change in status and a creation of a whole new social being (who does not fully transform until one becomes a parent).

James' work on conversion delineates more clearly the difference between transformations and alterations or changes (James 1961: 160-211). His ideas elaborate further the meaning of transformation as being a movement from a lower to higher order, and as being quite different from alterations or changes in character. "Our ordinary alterations of character, as we pass from one of our aims to another, are not commonly called transformations, because each of them is so rapidly succeeded by another in the reverse direction; but whenever one aim grows so stable as to expel definitively its previous rivals from the individual's life, we tend to speak of the phenomenon, and perhaps to wonder at it, as a 'transformation'" (James 1961: 163). In relation to the weddings in this study, the question to ask here is whether the wedding rites represented or foreshadowed the married state where a whole new set of directions and lifestyle choices were created such that the "previous rivals from the individual's life" became expelled.

Evidence based on the interviews and exchange of wedding rings suggested that the rabbis and couples saw the new married state being enacted in the wedding rites as being one that already shaped familiar elements within the lives of the couples before they became "newlyweds". From the interviews, most of the rabbis expressed the view

that the couples' degree of religious observance was minimal before their marriage and remained the same afterwards. In the area of personal, financial and sexual matters, most of the couples already had knowledge of these elements in their partner's life. The most dramatic changes that the couples in the study encountered after their wedding were (or would be) their parenting and status in a wider Jewish community. Weddings, however, still do not constitute transformative events, based on the fact that they give couples permission to become parents at some future time. [26]

When including the exchange of wedding rings in this argument of transformation, James' ideas become helpful once more. James always connects the transformative quality of conversions with a movement from a lower to a higher order. He says: "Some of you, I feel sure, knowing that numerous backslidings and relapses take place, make of these their apperceiving mass for interpreting the whole subject, and dismiss it with a pitying smile as so much 'hysterics'. Psychologically, as well as religiously, however, this is shallow. It misses the whole point of serious interest, which is not so much the duration as the nature and quality of these shiftings of character to higher levels. Men lapse from every level—we need no statistics to tell us that. Love is, for instance, well known not to be irrevocable, yet constant and inconstant, it reveals new flights and reaches of ideality while it lasts. These revelations form its significance to men and women, whatever be its duration. So with the conversion experience: that it

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[26] For Van Gennep the completion of the third sub-rite, rites of re-integration, occurred only at the birth of the first child, which would usually be within the first year of marriage. After a period of one year, fertility spells would have to be invoked in order to accelerate the full transformative effects of weddings. The couples' new status as married adults did not really take effect until they became parents. These two were integrally connected. In this way, even for Van Gennep, the wedding day proper could never constitute a transformative event (Van Gennep 1960).

should for even a short time show a human being what the high-water mark of his spiritual capacity is, this is what constitutes its importance—an importance which backsliding cannot diminish, although persistence might increase it. As a matter of fact, all the more striking instances of conversion, all those, for instance, which I have quoted, *have* been permanent" (James 1961: 209). Transformational experiences show humans "the high-water mark" and reflect the "shiftings of character to a higher level". This point becomes especially relevant when considering the perspective of those who believe that contemporary Jewish weddings *are* transformative.

The ideals of the rabbis and Judaism strongly suggest that a "transformation" occurs with the single act of the groom giving a ring to the bride[27]. However, when a second ring is given, this single act is no longer, but has become an act of quite a different kind—an equal exchange. The single ring-giving gesture epitomizes the idea that "transformation" does occur. One ring represents the legal movement from being single to being married or going from a lower to a higher status. The subordinate single bride is "transformed" into the higher status of marriage by the dominant groom in the single ring-giving gesture. The groom is also perceived as "transformed" with the single ring gesture. They both are "transformed" into a married couple, but his "transformation" is of a lesser kind. The bride does not have the same legal power as does the groom in her being able to "transform" him with a ring. However, a non-verbal gesture which demonstrates the bride's power over the groom is her non-verbal circling of the groom at

[27]There is no doubt that the bride in accepting the ring also performs an act. But the critical difference between one and two rings is the actual second ring itself and the giving gesture connected to it. As you will see later in this chapter, Mauss' theories on gift-giving will elucidate this point.

the beginning of the ceremony. Having no legal status, nor spoken legal words, this circling gesture sets him apart from the rest. She clearly marks the ritual space and demonstrates her possession of or loving protection toward him.

Returning to the single ring gesture, when only one ring is perceived as "visible", as legitimate, there is one person who has more privilege than the other in being able to give. The dominant male role overshadows the subordinate female role in the way that the male initiates the ring-giving *and* in the accompanying verbal gesture which expresses the male's role as the sole oracle of sacred sounds.[28] Even in cases where the brides spoke words in Orthodox, Conservative or Reconstructionist weddings, they never repeated the exact same words as did the grooms.[29] Therefore, seriously missing in those views which claim that "transformation" occurs in the legal gesture of giving the first wedding ring is the concrete presence of the second ring—and what that second ring signifies.

Durkheim's Ideas of Rites as *Représentations*

Emile Durkheim's ideas on representative rites offered one of the best explanations as to why contemporary Jewish weddings should be viewed as rites of

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[28]Only the groom says in Hebrew to his bride "*Harey at mekudesheth li betaba'ath zu, ke-dath Moshe ve Yisrael*" which means: " Behold, you are consecrated to me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel". According to Kaplan, the earliest version is found in Rashi, *Issur VeHeter* 309 (manuscript); also see *Shulchan Aruch Even Ha Ezer* 8:2:7. The Talmudic formula was simply, "*Haray at mekudesheth*" *li* (Kiddushin 5b). The additional wording, "According to the law of Moses and Israel" is first found in the context of the *ketoubah*. In a pre-Talmudic source, the expression, "take her according to the law of Moses", is found in Tobit 7:13 (Kaplan 1983: 180).

[29]In one Reconstructionist wedding the bride did say the exact same words as the groom (Interview June 9, 1998). In Reform weddings, the data was not clear. Sometimes the bride uttered the same words, while other times she did not.

identity and not as transformative rites of passage. Durkheim advocated a cautionary approach in claiming that transformation or powerful transcendental forces are at work in the performance of religious rites. His emphasis was always on the underlying moral forces which collective rituals instilled and inspired. Durkheim stressed the power which self-representation had in a collectivity which mirrored and validated this presentation of selfhood. He was trying to make clear that the real substance and worth of rituals lay in the "remaking of the individuals and groups morally". Interpreted along these lines, then, Jewish weddings symbolize all that is good and moral by the declaration of one's love and commitment in front of a whole community of supportive family and friends. The visible ritual expression of the "remaking" of this community can be found in the symbolic sharing of a lavish celebratory meal after the ceremony is completed. By virtue of such a sharing and connectedness, people ought to feel closer to each other, which in turn should precipitate a kinder form of living. How can one sever the hand that belongs to one's arm? The ultimate purpose of religious rites, according to Durkheim, was precisely to keep the whole body intact. Durkheim wrote of the "physical effects" that were produced as a result of the performance of rites, and that could be mistaken to be the main reason for the existence of these rites.

"The physical efficaciousness assigned to [these rites] by the believer is the product of an interpretation which conceals the essential reason for their existence: it is because they serve to remake individuals and groups morally that they are believed to have a power over things. [And] in saying that the rite is observed because it comes from the ancestors, it is admitted that its authority is confounded with the authority of tradition,

which is a social affair of the first order. Men celebrate it to remain faithful to the past, to keep for the group its normal physiognomy, and not because of the physical effects which it may produce. Thus, the way in which the believers themselves explain them show the profound reasons upon which the rites proceed" (Durkheim 1915: 371).

In this process of individual and social representation through religious rituals, a religious community not only defined itself but also its god as unique entities who were separate from other entities. Durkheim echoed this idea in the following words: "Likewise, the practices of the cult were not merely to be seen as ineffective gestures: while their apparent function is to strengthen the bonds attaching the believer to his god, they at the same time really strengthen the bonds attaching the individual to the society of which he is a member, since the god is only a figurative expression of the society" (Durkheim 1915: 226). The emphasis which Durkheim placed on the "practices of the cult" pointed to an essential function and need for communities to bond in the guise sometimes of responding to the demands or needs of a god. And, just as a religious tradition's representations of its god impact upon the group's identity, so do the group's representations of itself impact upon the identity of its god. The symbolic systems of religious communities convey these identities.

For Durkheim, another purpose of the performance of rituals was to render the "mythical past of the clan present to the mind", which essentially represented the system of beliefs of the group. Consequently, "the traditions whose memory it perpetuates express the way in which society represents man and the world; it is a moral system and a cosmology as well as a history. So the rite serves and can serve only to sustain the vitality

of these beliefs, to keep them from being effaced form memory and, in sum, to revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness" (Durkheim 1915: 375).

In thinking about rites as being community boosters or effective means to solidify identities, Durkheim removes disparaging ideas that might go along with defining contemporary Jewish weddings as being primarily rites of identity. Within the context of religious rites, asserting and representing one's identity are linked to some moral good by which "individuals are strengthened in their social natures" (Durkheim 1915: 375). Rituals as rites of identity give members a feeling of strength and confidence within the group. Rites of identity inspire and instruct. "So if men believe nevertheless that [the rite] acts upon things and that it assures the prosperity of the species, this can be only as a reaction to the moral action which it exercises and which is obviously the only one which is real" (Durkheim 1915: 375).

Taking into consideration Durkheim's ideas, the stakes in debating the transformative powers of contemporary Jewish weddings may be perceived as putting into question the values and efficacy of a religious community's "traditional" symbols. Phrased another way, if a religious tradition's highest moral order is invested in a particular ritual symbolic system, then re-interpreting part of that system risks questioning the whole. Drawing a line between considering weddings as merely confirmatory ceremonies or bestowing upon them deeper qualities as transformative rituals neither sums up the differences between rites of identity and rites of passage nor adequately describes the full spectrum of the weddings in this study. As the following chapters will

show, the polysemy of ritual symbols allows for and embodies multiple and often contradictory meanings.

Part Four

Review of Scholars

Particular scholars have been influential and helpful in working through the difficult yet rich terrain of ritual symbols. They contributed to the theoretical, empirical and interpretative aspects of the field work, research and writing process. Some scholars who have already been mentioned in the Introduction in some detail will not be mentioned again.

Seminal works in the field of ritual included Van Gennep's *Manuel de folklore français contemporain* (1946) and his more well-known work *Rites de Passage* (1908) which was translated into English in 1960. The vast collection of ritual practices which he recorded and studied from the early 1900s to the late 1940s is astounding in its detail and historical value. His theoretical frameworks for understanding rituals as rites of passage were integral to formulating the main argument of this dissertation. Following in Van Gennep's footsteps, Turner and Grimes' works on liminality and ritual provided scope and depth on the theoretical level. In particular, Grimes' prolific writings in the past few years have suggested radically different ways in which ritual studies can be approached. His preference for micro-histories rather than data generated by huge banks of statistics reinforces the use of personal testimonies.

Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915) presents basic principles for understanding rites as empirical social entities within the context of

religious communities. Steven Lukes' excellent study of Durkheim, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (1973) is indispensable in examining the complexities found in Durkheim's writings. Clifford Geertz's anthropological and historical approaches to the study of culture influenced the methodological framework of this research. His use of Quebec in a case study in his last work *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (2000) demonstrated his refined skills in anthropological interpretation and writing style. His analysis of the "French Situation" in Quebec reflected the voice of an anthropologist who knew what "being there" meant. In *Works and Lives* (1986), Geertz suggests that a social science, such as anthropology still relies on interpretation, which is implicitly related to the ways in which researchers present their ideas and data. Although Ruth Benedict's rich descriptive writing in her 1940s study of Thai family structure had no particular relevance to wedding rites, her writing style and anthropological insights communicated more "thick description" than piles of statistical or kinship analyses. Her work was a model in providing an engaging representation of what "being there" means. Benedict's writing demonstrated Geertz's idea that an anthropologist's style in writing and presentation of data was as significant as the contents being studied. The researcher's style and the way the material in a study is presented impacts the data and analyses of the work. The decision to include both non-verbal and written modes of thought in this dissertation resonated with Benedict and Geertz's thinking.

Finally, in the area of Quebec wedding rituals, the impact of the works of two scholars was invaluable, those of Denise Girard and Martine Tremblay. Their focussed

studies on weddings in Montreal and in the Richelieu Valley region gave a precise historical analysis of the change in wedding rites and symbols from pre World War II times to the 1980s. Although their studies examine a limited number of weddings, their precision offers a good working model for future sociologically based studies on weddings. Girard's methodological framework, inspired in part by Maurice Halbwachs, uses social classes as a category of analysis.[30] Following in Durkheim's steps, Halbwachs introduced social classes to further interpret Durkheim's study on suicide. Girard's use of class highlights the importance of relating levels of education and economics to the way wedding rituals are performed. Her study includes weddings from across three classes: *les familles bourgeoises, la classe moyenne,* and *les ouvriers.* Her finding that double rings occurred more frequently in the higher classes than in the working classes was significant for this study. It suggested that equality between men and women, given the symbol of exchanging rings, relates to levels of class (economics and education).

Another study which included research on wedding rituals and was important for situating contemporary ideas in the area of rites of passage was the field study done by Martine Segalen in Poitou, France.[31] Segalen claimed that the weddings studied in her work celebrated things quite different from "passages". "*Les mariages d'aujourd'hui célébrent tout autre chose que des 'passages'. Issues de la volonté de jeunes (ou pas si jeunes) protagonistes qui ont depuis longtemps accédé aux nouveaux stades sociaux*

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[30]See Girard's *Mariage et classes sociales: les Montréalais francophones entre les deux guerres* (2000), Tremblay's *Le mariage dans la vallée du Haut-Richelieu au XX siècle: ritualité et distinction sociale* (2001), and Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory* (1992, originally published in 1941).

[31] See "*Comment se marier en 1995? Nouveaux rituels et choix sociaux*" in *Une langue, deux cultures. Rites et symboles en France et au Québec* (1997: 149-166).

autre fois acquis uniquement par mariage (coresidence, sexualité, procréation), ces noces sont aussi l'expression d'un compromis entre le couple crée et la constellation familiale" (Segalen 1997: 149). Segalen also stated that contemporary weddings were essentially profane and lacking in religious content. In claiming that wedding rites were essentially profane, Segalen may have missed the religious nuances which underlay the secular rituals she studied, or else religious traits were not present in the weddings she studied. However, such a lack of religious symbolism hardly characterized the Montreal Jewish weddings in this study. Two characteristics, then, set apart Segalen's study from this one: (i) Montreal Jewish couples included in this study did not become parents before their wedding, and (ii) significant religious content could be clearly found in their weddings.

Segalen's study led to further inquiries about Montreal Ashkenazi Jews and whether their wedding symbols were reliable markers of social facts. Was postponing parenthood such a unique feature or could it also be found to the same degree within the majority Catholic population in the city? Why was religion more important to Montreal Jews than to the couples Segalen studied in Poitou, France? Were there any studies that could link social behaviour or social identities to the ritual symbols that were examined in this work? Her work led me to include some sociological data about Jewish and non-Jewish fertility rates in this city which supported the data collected from the work on ritual symbolism.

Mauss' classic work on gift exchange[32] made a remarkable impression in the way one could interpret double ring ceremonies by observation of the objects being moved. Mauss saw in gift-giving a whole gamut of symbolic exchanges where a simple gift or object becomes a *value-laden object* able to communicate status, obligation, freedom, identity and self-worth. It would be in terms of these communicated elements that a Jewish bride's ring giving made most sense. Mauss' theories laid the groundwork for the development of the idea that contemporary Jewish weddings were rites of identity. Characterized by double-ring giving, these weddings dramatically reflected the bride's "gift- giving" gesture as communicating ideas of freedom, self-worth, equality and mutuality. This shift of focus away from one to two ritual agents who *give* rings changed the meaning of the ritual.

Mauss' ideas were instrumental in helping to understand why brides wanted to reciprocate and also be involved in the ring-giving gesture under the *chuppah.* Without negating the objects themselves, Mauss saw gift-exchange as relating to individuals and groups. The gift was a perfect example of what he called a total social phenomenon, since it involved legal, economic, moral, religious and aesthetic dimensions. All of these applied to contemporary weddings. Theoretically, exchanges and contracts which take place in the form of presents or gifts, are voluntary, but in reality they are given and reciprocated obligatorily. Thus, issues of obligation, duty and freedom entered into the discourse on gift exchange.

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[32]See Mauss' *The Gift: The Form and Reasons for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1990 ed., translated from *Essai sur le don* 1950). Also, see Aafke E. Komter's *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (1996) for an excellent anthology on contemporary research done in the area of gift-giving.

Even when applying Mauss' references to Maori culture to Montreal, similar elements could be found in both these contexts where gift-giving proved to be the common denominator. His ideas were insightful when thinking of Jewish brides and grooms voluntarily exchanging their rings as gifts or as representations of moral responsibilities to each other. Mauss claimed that, in the Maori context, to make a gift to someone was to give a part of oneself, one's identity, one's soul. Hence, it would be morally wrong to keep a part of someone else, whereby that essence or soul could exert some magical or religious hold over you. One must, therefore, give back what is part of that other person's nature. Finally, the thing given is not inactive. It is invested with life, and often possesses individuality. It seeks to return to its place of origin. Mauss adds other ideas that he had observed in gift-exchanging communities. The exchange of gifts represents and produces an abundance of riches which consequently has a positive effect on nature. Gifts serve to buy the peace and calm evil spirits or bad influences. Finally, according to Mauss there is no such thing as a "pure gift"—all gifts entail an obligation to reciprocate.

Applying Mauss' ideas to the historical struggle of women wanting to be active givers rather than passive receivers, in the ritual or larger social context, reinforces the idea that women's struggles for financial, religious and legal equality are essentially moral issues. To be able to reciprocate means that one has the power and strength to give back, so that one does not become overpowered or ruled by the gift or giver. Mauss' anthropological approach to the concept of gift provided a critical counter-text to the rabbinical and legal interpretations of the giving of one versus two wedding rings. His

ideas provided the framework for a more abstract analysis of the exchange of rings under the *chuppah*, based on the idea that humans and objects have close relationships. Combined with theories set forth by material studies, Mauss' theories on gift-exchange also reinforced the idea that "objects are highly, though differentially, affective and amongst the strongest bearers of meaning in our society" (Kirkham 1996:1).

Less prominent in this dissertation, but used as background information in considering how political economy plays a role in social practice, two works of Pierre Bourdieu are noteworthy: *Un art moyen: essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* (1978) and *The Logic of Practice* (1990). The latter work stressed the idea that rituals, like weddings, could be understood as *rites d'institutions.* As rites of religious institutions, they mirror political and economic powers that have been historically invested within elite leaderships of established hierarchical institutions. Hence, when understood from Bourdieu's material economic perspective, change in social practice becomes less desirable when those members of the elite are faced with a loss of status or economic stability. Within his framework, religious leaders and ritual specialists are examples of such an elite who oppose change because that change may diminish their exclusive power in a community or reduce their specialized source of income. Bourdieu's ideas made money questions become more relevant to the interpretation of the data from the interviews. How much did weddings cost and how were the rabbis' fees a factor in the couples' choosing of the place and rabbi for their weddings? How do power relations between religious leaders and community members affect ritual decisions?

Turner's ideas in his classic study, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967), informed the guidelines for defining ritual symbols, dominant symbols, and the role of researcher as outside interpreter. He also made clear the distinction between referential and condensed symbols, which helped to explain how the rabbis and couples interpreted the same symbols differently. "Condensed symbols [are] highly condensed forms of substitutive behaviour [used] for direct expression, allowing for the ready release of emotional tension in conscious or unconscious form. The condensation symbol is saturated with emotional quality. The referential symbol includes such forms as speech, writing, national flags, flag signaling and is predominantly cognitive and refers to known facts. While referential symbolism grows with formal elaboration in the conscious, condensation symbolism strikes deeper and deeper roots in the unconscious, and diffuses its emotional quality to types of behaviour and situations apparently far removed from the original meaning of the symbol" (Turner 1967: 29). With the wedding ring, the rabbis' legalistic interpretations pertain specifically to a cognitive conscious ritual moment, enacting a *kinyan* under the *chuppah*, whereas the couples' interpretations stem from deeper unconscious and emotional roots. Turner's later work on the physiological factors involved in ritual response were cut short by his sudden death. He appeared to be changing his views at that time, moving from the specifics of local ritual knowledge to locating some universal neurological basis in the human brain which could show how sounds like "OM" triggered the same powerful effects in humans everywhere. Eugene d'Aquili's *The Spectrum of Ritual: A Biogenetic Structural Analysis* (1979) follows through on some of Turner's later ideas. Turner's pioneer ideas on the human

brain push for more comparative ritual studies by which differences and similarities between cultural and religious groups might be examined within scientific and religious fields.

Influenced by Ferdinand De Saussure, Roland Barthes[33] reiterates how semiology or the study of signs relates to mythologies which are basically ideas-in-forms. Barthes' ideas were especially instrumental in elevating the status of non-verbal or visual forms of communication by classifying pictures, objects and cinema as forms of "mythical speech". Photographs, therefore, can be conceived as language because they are signs which mean something. As such, Barthes' theories on the significance of visual forms support the extensive use of visual imagery in this research and in the presentation of the dissertation.

Feminist and gender critiques in the field of weddings and marriage have been scarce. However, two recent works by Jaclyn Geller and Chrys Ingraham[34] pushed this work to take on a sharper edge in the formulation of principal arguments. However, their strong anti-marriage stand did not succeed in promoting the argument that wedding rituals should be eliminated, but rather crystalized even more the need for studying, appreciating and creating meaningful rituals. Geller's work in particular struck a relevant chord with respect to this dissertation. Coming from a New York Jewish background, Geller articulates many of the pressures which young professional Jewish women suffer

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[33]See Barthes' *Mythologies* (1971).

[34]See Geller's *Here Comes the Bride: Women, Weddings, and the Marriage Mystique* (2001) and Ingraham's *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture* (1999).

by postponing or rejecting the marriage option. Her ideas on the negative stereotyping which engagements perpetuate and on the marketing of the DeBeers' diamond ring rang true, although her historical research into diamond rings as betrothal or engagement rings was incomplete.

Halbwachs'[35] work on memory changed the direction of my thinking about ritual memory, which led to the main ideas found in Chapter 5 on the transmission of ritual symbols. Originally, the transmission of symbols or traditions seemed to be evident in the ritual objects and written religious texts which contained clues of the past. They still can provide these clues, but what had not been seriously considered were the different contexts that encrusted these written texts and rituals objects. Halbwachs' work led to a more cautious approach in formulating "historical links" with the past, and thus led to a more realistic approach in viewing human memory and to tricks it can play. This approach exposed the scope of fictive histories and ideologies at work in religion, gender issues and ritual symbolism. His ideas also inspired a more attentive and critical listening style when interviewing informants, and how "imagined memories" as described by these informants were just as important, if not more so, than the actual event.

In the area of jewelry studies, the following historians were essential to a study of finger rings. The author of two classics on the history of finger rings and precious stones in general, George Frederick Kunz, [36] was my first introduction to the ancient history of finger rings. He also included gender commentaries and detailed sections on the religious

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[35]See Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory* (1992, first published in 1941).

[36]See Kunz's *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones* (1913) and *Rings for the Finger* (1917).

and magical meanings of rings. Without knowing it, Kunz represented an early 20th century material historian. He included the technical aspects of ring-making with its cultural and aesthetic functions as well.

Histories of particular individuals, like Luther and Napoleon, were interpreted through an examination of their rings. Gertrud Seidmann has made valuable contributions to the study of Jewish Betrothal Rings or *Mazol Tov* rings in several informative articles. Her earliest article, "Marriage Rings Jewish Style"[37], outlined a brief history of Jewish betrothal rings while also providing a photograph of a rare Jewish wedding ring made in the 1920s or 1930s. This ring included two wedding rings inside and a miniature scroll of the Book of Esther. The significance of the image demonstrated once more that two rings were well known in Jewish circles well before the 1970s, and that wedding rings belonged outside the sacred domain (represented by the Book of Esther which refrains from mentioning the name of God). Moreover, Seidmann's ideas in this article and in two others which she wrote in the late 1980s[38] always proclaimed that the oversized Jewish betrothal rings (or *grosses bagues*) were strictly of Ashkenazi heritage. This categorization proved to be unsatisfactory given the historical information about double-ring ceremonies occurring in places like Bordeaux, Bayonne and northern Spain. With confirmation from Benjamin Zucker's recent work, *Blue* (2000), her strict category no longer seemed to fit all the cases. Seidmann's work, when viewed alongside

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[37]See Seidmann's article in *The Connoisseur* (January 1981, pp. 48-51).

[38]See Seidmann's "Jewish Marriage Rings" in *International Silver & Jewellery Fair Catalogue* (1989: pp. 29-34), and "A 'lettered band' type Jewish marriage ring" in *The Antiquaries Journal* (1987: pp. 362-364).

Zucker's, shows the need for more comparative study between Ashkenazi and Sephardic wedding customs and rings.

Beatriz Chadour's phenomenal two-volume history of rings[39] describes rings from 2000 BCE to the present day. Surpassing in scope and detail all previous histories, her work describes in both English and German and with the finest photographic images rings from all parts of the western and eastern worlds. Her section on Jewish Betrothal rings presents rings ranging from the 14th century Colmar treasures to the beautiful filigree and enameled Venetian rings of the 17th century. The significance of the volumes also points to the role which Jewish collectors and jewelers such as the Koch family played in the preservation, documenting and creation of rings for Jewish and non-Jewish populations. The rare mention of gender in her work reflects the difficult task of relating gender roles to rituals and rings from the past. However, because the diameter size of all the hoops are indicated some guesswork can point to men when the diameter is more than 1.7cm or to women when it is less. Very tiny hoop measurements of 1.2 cm or less indicate that the ring was worn on the little finger or by a child.

Finally, in the area of material culture studies, the objects themselves take pride of place. Coming from the field of English literature, material scholars like Susan Stewart showed that material objects have a natural affinity with interdisciplinary research. Her study of narrative, exaggeration, scale, and significance focused on her interest in "the social disease of nostalgia" and "longing". The miniature (as in a souvenir replica of the Eiffel Tower) and the gigantic (as in the city or public spectacle) are invented objects

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[39]See Chadour's *Ringe: The Louis and Alice Koch Collection* (1994).

which inscribe a structure of desire describing the tensions between inside and outside, or wanting to contain as opposed to being in a container. Stewart's metaphors about "the miniature" and "the gigantice" offered insights into Jewish betrothal rings, especially the oversized ones from the 14th to 19th centuries. Her book, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (1993), brought home the idea that all material objects are either scaled-up or scaled-down versions of our own body size. Their smallness or largeness, in turn, reflect our views of the world. Stewart convincingly claims that objects, therefore, narrate certain versions of the world. Especially in the area of ritual, where written texts scarcely exist, objects such as Jewish wedding rings become effective narrating tools.

Judith Plaskow's *Standing Again at Sinai* (1990) remains a foundational work in bringing home the idea that women's identities and self-worth are integrally connected to questions of sexuality, spriritiuality, politics and social issues. Plaskow affirms that in the area of marriage and sexuality, what goes on in the bedroom and at home has a parallel in public religious structures. Arguing with Rosemary Ruther Radford, who urges for an engaged feminism which calls for an ontological revolution, Plaskow aims at fostering new ways of being, of *transforming* not only one's self but the world. Plaskow's work appeals to women and men who come from different religious backgrounds while still being able to incorporate Jewish models in her revisionist feminist approach. She refers to an aspect of *tikun*, as mirroring the work of women's liberation movements, namely an ingredient in the repair and *transformation* of the world that is part of its redemption. In this way, her work has been inspirational as a reminder that social transformation is a

spiritual matter which takes central stage in those rituals which represent ideas of the spirit and God. Her vision includes Judaism but goes beyond. Within the sacred spheres of the synagogue, Plaskow urges for a dismantling of dichotomies which propagate the separation of women and their sexuality from all male-dominated prayer spaces. She relates discriminatory practices in Judaism to other similar practices in the wider society, where patterns of domination and subordination militate against mutuality and intimacy in sexual relationships. Her reaffirmation that the "personal is the political" supports the ideas in this work that wedding rituals, Jewish and non-Jewish, are critical tools for improving the personal and the political in our world.

This survey of scholars does not include all the works or writers that were read or used in this dissertation, but highlights those whose ideas had the most impact.

Summary of Chapters

The following outline provides a brief summary of the key ideas discussed in each of the chapters.

Chapter 1, "Introduction", presents the main area of research, ritual studies, and the key ideas related to this field of research that will be argued in the dissertation. The main argument focuses on a redefinition of weddings, from being "rites of passage" to "rites of identity", and on how these rites of identity are communicated through non-verbal symbols. The use of non-verbal means of communication plays a key role in the creation, subversion, reinforcement or legitimization of the identities represented in these rites. Montreal Jewish weddings will be the particular case study used in applying the

proposed theoretical and practical framework of this dissertation. The main argument—that contemporary Jewish weddings are primarily rites of identity—relies on a study of double-ring wedding ceremonies and on rings as dominant symbols. Through the two rings, various religious, denominational and gender identities find expression in present-day Montreal Ashkenazi Jewish weddings. Six principal findings from this research project are included with a brief review of scholars who made the most impact on the work. A summary of the main ideas of each chapter is outlined.

Chapter 2, "Methodology", summarizes the methodological approaches used in the development of the main research ideas. Details about the fieldwork, the analysis of the data obtained in the field and the researcher's role as outside interpreter is described. The main theories which informed the methodology are discussed within the context of various disciplines. Moreover, the principal dichotomy of insider/outsider is outlined in relation to the different roles which rabbis and couples play in wedding rituals, and how feminist concerns have been instrumental in interpreting these roles.

Chapter 3, "Historical Background to Weddings and Wedding Symbols", provides a historical survey of biblical, rabbinic and medieval wedding symbols. Studying the past helps to better recognize the contemporary situation as being a complex one. A historical review of symbols cautions one to refrain from making hasty assumptions as to what is or what is not "traditional". The works of Kenneth Stevenson, Michael Satlow, Beatrice Gottlieb, Glückel of Hameln and Richard Hooker will be highlighted in this chapter. The historical material reveals the important association between nuptial blessings, fertility, women and jewelry. This historical link is significant within the context of changing

gender roles and the emergence of the second wedding ring. With two wedding rings, the elements, blessings, fertility, women and jewelry are altered, in that, what was exclusively female now becomes shared by both male and female.

Chapter 4, "Jewish Wedding Symbols", presents a repertoire of Montreal Jewish wedding symbols from 1947 to 1964 which reveals shared and unique wedding symbols from Jewish and Christian origins. This repertoire of symbols was collected through an examination of photographs of 140 Montreal Jewish weddings from that time period. Approximately 75 copies of these photos have been included in the dissertation. They are listed as numbered Plates. Despite a sharing of wedding symbols, the evidence demonstrates that Jewish weddings remain primarily "Jewish". This chapter defines "gender-laden" symbols, and discusses which symbols found in the photographic study are "feminine", "masculine", "gender-neutral" or "gender-equal". Following the results of this gender study, one conclusion emerged that "gender-neutral" or "gender-equal" symbols showed the presence of a new identity, "the couple". By the late 1990s, this "couple identity" would be strongly entrenched in wedding rituals. The photos also revealed the difficulty in defining denominational boundaries because denominational symbols hardly existed when looking at the wedding day as a whole unit.

Chapter 5, "Continuity of Symbols, Rituals and Identities", discusses how symbols create a sense of continuity in order to perpetuate certain identities and values. Three factors , "history", "analogy" and "popular culture", inform the ways in which symbols communicate a sense of continuity or are left out of the authoritative histories. Moreover, couples often fictively invent or re-create "rites of passage" so that they can

feel this sense of continuity or "tradition". Issues of memory are discussed in relation to the ways communities keep old symbols or create new ones. Ritual transmission over the generations is linked to a discussion of preserving certain identities that uphold particular religious and gendered values. This chapter argues that weddings, being a principal vehicle for the transmission of religious and gender identities, have become primarily "rites of identity" rather than "rites of passage".

Chapter 6, "The Rabbis' Perspectives on the Second Ring" represents the voices of the rabbis and their legal interpretations of wedding rings. Their ideas are contrasted with the couples' more romantic viewpoints, which will be discussed in Chapter 8. An analysis of the rabbis' interviews will be presented, with the following questions in mind. Who defines a tradition? Who defines a tradition's rituals? If weddings are primarily "rites of identity", whose identities are they? The rabbis' focus on denominational identities becomes for them a primary concern.

Chapter 7, "The Second Wedding Ring: Whose Symbol Is It?", aims at uncovering some of the lost history and memories surrounding the second ring. The rings themselves will be the focus of this chapter. Gender, material culture and religious denominationalism are conflated here. Manipulated objects demonstrate how empowered legitimate symbols create a certain sense of sexual and religious identity and communal continuity, whereas dis-empowered ones struggle in the creation of certain identities. The remarkable fact uncovered by the ring research was that Jewish women have been giving their husbands a second ring for quite a long time—certainly going back much further in time than the rabbis ever thought. Given this evidence, the second ring rightfully belongs

to those women and men who have given and worn them, and not to those religious authorities who have claimed power over them.

Chapter 8, "The Women and Men Who Re-present Wedding Symbols", focuses on the views expressed by the couples who were married by the rabbis interviewed in the study. The data from the interviews with the couples revealed that the second wedding ring had very different meanings for them than it had for the rabbis. The couples communicated a strong confident sense about who they married and gave little impression that they were moving into unknown territory. Their expertness in handling the wedding symbols demonstrated that ritual experts need not be within the religious leadership. Denominational differences had little impact on the way they interpreted their wedding. Most of the couples saw themselves as marrying within Judaism and not within a particular denomination. Although their wedding events showed clear signs of equality and mutuality, especially with the two rings, their engagement events expressed the exact opposite. Ultimately, the couples emerged as the most important factor in any interpretation of wedding rituals because of their primary ritual role. Particularly with regards to their own two wedding rings, their interpretations were to be given greater weight.

Chapter 9, "Conclusion", sums up the main arguments and key ideas developed in this dissertation. The significance of the study will be briefly summed up in terms of general and specific findings and with respect to its contribution to the field of ritual studies. Areas of future scholarship which could develop as a result of this work will also be suggested. The conclusion will resurrect the question about weddings being more

"rites of identity" than transformative "rites of passage". The central argument, which involves double-ring ceremonies, makes it clear that egalitarian ring-giving is a critical sign in resisting ideas of "transformative" powers in weddings. This argument, moreover, recognizes how the rabbis would push for the idea that weddings are transformative based on certain theological and legal factors. However, from the evidence collected, based on historical, material cultural and anthropological (interviews) data, a picture emerges of Montreal Jewish couples standing under *chuppahs* of the 1990s with two rings on their hands. The rings point to a world where two individuals seek each other out not to be transformed by the other but to support each other in their separate yet shared lives. These couples' weddings, at the same time, also re-present values endorsed by the world of popular culture and their parents' worlds as well. The rabbis are not the only influential "normative" elements in a Jewish wedding. But, the rabbis have a very powerful role in determining which symbols will merit historical authority and which will not. In their rabbinic role, they consequently nourish communal identities by providing authoritative material by which the most valued wedding symbols are given the title "Jewish". And, it is under the *chuppah* where the most valued wedding symbols are found. Yet, the second ring remains for many rabbis invisible and misunderstood as a "Christian" sign. The second ring, however, fittingly belongs to Judaism and to Jewish women and men who were among the first to appropriate it.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Anthropology is to enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, power and yet contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way.

Clifford Geertz

In his most recent work, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics,* Geertz summed up what he saw to be the dominant trend in the field of cultural studies in the year 2000. He described this trend as the interdisciplinary approach, or "as not being able to stay out of our neighbours' backyards". The increasing practice of historicizing anthropology and anthropologizing history was another way of characterizing what he saw to be the current field of cultural studies. Although this dissertation came from a religious studies perspective, and not *per se* from a cultural studies one, Geertz's view accurately describes the principal methodological framework employed in this research project. Looking backwards and sideways or looking into the past while trying to understand the present were two driving forces behind the diverse research activities and thought processes that emerged during the past six years of this work.

Anthropology and history were inseparable from the initial questions which sparked the investigation of wedding rings and Montreal Jewish wedding symbols. While I attended a lecture series on the role of women in Judaism at Montreal's Adat Re'im synagogue six years ago, the subject of double-ring ceremonies was raised by a visiting

Conservative rabbi from New York. A member of Adat Re'im was shocked to hear that two rings may not be exchanged in the manner that she had anticipated in her upcoming wedding to an Orthodox man. The questions that surfaced on that morning six years ago first led to the anthropological side of this research—namely interviewing rabbis and couples—and then to the historical side—researching Jewish wedding rings from the past.

The initial anthropological questions were centered on a need to understand contemporary Montreal Jewish wedding practices. Why were Montreal Jewish couples about to get married unaware of the legal and ritual contexts surrounding *their* wedding rings? Which rabbis in Montreal were performing double-ring ceremonies? What were the differences between the rabbis and couples' perspectives of the second ring? Were there significant denominational differences in the way double-ring ceremonies were performed? Was it true, as the guest rabbi suggested, that only Reform and Conservative denominations permitted the second ring?

The initial historical questions were centered on a need to clarify the rabbis' responses that emerged from the interviews about the origins of double-ring ceremonies within the Montreal context and beyond. Why were the rabbis saying that the second wedding ring was a long-standing Catholic practice which had influenced Montreal Jews, when Montreal Catholics married in the 1940s and 1950s were unaware of the practice? What were the origins of wedding rings? When did the second ring originate? What were the origins of other wedding symbols that were presently shared between Jews and

Christians? How could a material object, such as a ring, provide satisfactory evidence for ritual histories?

Gradually, the principal ideas emerged—namely, that contemporary Montreal Jewish weddings were primarily rites of religious and gendered identities, and mechanisms could be recognized in explaining the transmission of symbols that formulated these identities. Within this context of exploring contemporary Jewish weddings and wedding symbols, several lines of research methods were followed. These included: a) a broad historical overview of Christian and Jewish wedding symbols based on written biblical, liturgical, and historical texts authored by Jewish and Christian scholars; b) an ethnographic and material cultural study of Montreal Jewish weddings from 1947 to 1964 based on a review of 12, 580 photographic negatives; c) an ethnographic study of Montreal Jewish weddings from 1990 to 2001 based on interviews with 36 rabbis and 40 brides and grooms; d) a material historical study of rings, wedding rings and Jewish wedding rings; and e) an historical ritual study based on written texts authored by Jewish and Christian writers. Although, over the years, ritual observation and participation informed the aesthetic part of my understanding of the differences between Montreal Protestant, Jewish, Eastern Christian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic weddings, attending weddings in this research project was overshadowed by the historical study of the symbols used in those weddings. In this sense, the work as a whole might be appropriately categorized as a study in the domain of "material ritual history".

To elaborate further on the above methods used, the following pages will describe the particular methodological guidelines and theoretical assumptions adhered to in the

undertaking of a study which included written, visual, artifactual and verbal modes of communication.

In an area such as ritual, where written descriptions of actual practice are rare, consulting religious ritual manuals, liturgical texts, memoirs, historical works and fictional accounts proved indispensable. These written works were invaluable for confirming dates and places as to when and how Jewish wedding rings might have been used and what they possibly meant. In addition, using Christian authors proved to be informative when those authors mentioned Jewish wedding practices or wedding rings in their works. Written fictional texts, such as Ben Zucker's novel *Blue*, provided an insider's view into Jewish gem dealers and gem cutters, while describing the possible mixes between Ashkenazi and Sephardic influences that went into the making and transmitting of Jewish betrothal rings. As with any study of ritual objects, the existence of the artifacts themselves assists greatly in corroborating references to objects mentioned in written texts. Zucker's fictional work stood out precisely because it recognized and satisfied several methodological repertoires.

The novel assumes a pseudo-Talmudic authority of being able to communicate ideas and imagery in a convincing written style (each page is written like a page from the Talmud), of being the work of a *bona fide* international gem dealer, and of showing the artifacts (the rings described in the written texts) as they actually exist (through photographs of gems from Zucker's own family collections).

Blue tells of cutters seeking that flawless stone within the tinged business world of mysterious gems, which really only magnifies the mysterious natures of the gem

collectors themselves. Zucker's work reminds the academic world that knowledge of Jewish wedding rings falls outside the scope of social scientific methods. Finding the rings and knowing which are authentic entails a search comparable to that of retrieving Aaron's Breastplate (Exodus 28:15-30). Intertwined in the business and collection of gemstones lie mythologies and religious lore which enhance the private collector's treasures while leaving museums and archives as dim depositories of these jeweled histories. Access to some of these private collections becomes critical, then, in any study of Jewish betrothal rings. However, the methodological difficulty in accessing this kind of data is that extreme discretion must be maintained as to what the collection contains, who holds it and where it is located. Nevertheless, access to such private collections informs the researcher that these objects exist and that past histories which may appear lost are available and retrievable.

Photographs made up the corpus of visual historical documents used in the researching of 140 Jewish Montreal weddings that dated from 1947 to 1964. Relying on Barthes' ideas that photographs serve as "mythical speech", pictures become a kind of writing. Pictures are like writing because they mean something, just as written discourse or objects do. "This generic way of conceiving language is in fact justified by the very history of writing: long before the invention of our alphabet, objects like the Inca *quipu* [40], or drawings, as in pictographs, have been accepted as speech" (Barthes 1971: 111). Yet, pictures and writing are different. Barthes states that "pictures, to be sure, are more

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[40] A *quipu* is a device consisting of a cord with knotted strings of various colors attached, used by the ancient Peruvians for recording events and keeping accounts (*The Random House Dictionary* 1988:1085).

imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analyzing or diluting it (Barthes 1971: 110).

The use of these photos provided evidence and insights into the history of Montreal Ashkenazi Jewish weddings as they were practiced from 1947 to 1964. The photos provided evidence that double-ring ceremonies were in use in Orthodox and Conservative congregations well before 1975, the date most often quoted by many of the Orthodox and Conservative rabbis interviewed. However, the photos provided much more than just clues to wedding rings in this city; they revealed a much larger repertoire of Jewish wedding symbols that documented Jewish weddings in the city during that time period.[41]

The photos were part of the Drummond Photo Collection, a large collection consisting of approximately 223,000 photo negatives (8.6 meters), housed in the Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives in Montreal, Quebec[42] . Of these, some 54, 250 are negatives of weddings from the late 1940s to1991. The wedding series consists of nine boxes which include 716 files, averaging 100 negatives each. It includes a small number of positives. Most of the weddings depicted are Ashkenazi, although there are a few Sephardic ones that can be identified by the rabbi or a particular Sephardic custom, such as a belly dancer performing for the groom. The names of orchestras are

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[41] According to the photographers, the Drummond Collection represented the majority of Jewish weddings in the city during the 1960s.

[42] Drummond Photo was founded in 1947 by Sylvia and Syd Feldman in a studio in the Drummond Building, 1117 Ste-Catherine St. West. Two years later the Feldmans moved to1419 Drummond, and in 1951 they moved to 5194 Cote-des-Neiges. Their nephew Ruby Shulman joined the firm in 1956, as they moved once again to Van Horne Street. In 1991, Ruby Shulman merged with photographer Jacquôt of Photo Jacquôt to form Drummond Jacquôt Inc. The company now is located in Dorval.

shown, such as "Nat Raider" and "Ely Young". There are interior shots of Conservative synagogues such as the Shaar Zion and Beth El, and Orthodox ones such as Chevra Kadisha, Shomrim Laboker, Spanish and Portuguese, Young Israel of Montreal, Beth Zion and Beth Ora. Some of the rabbis and cantors (*hazzanim*) can be also identified. They are: Rabbi Shoham, Rabbi Bender and Rabbi Langner. Dating was difficult, as dates were not then imprinted on negatives. But cars, hairstyles, women's shoes, men's ties, dance styles, rabbis and seating boards with names of guests and dates of weddings helped the identification process.

It took one year, from September 1997 to September 1998, to view 12,580 negatives. Most images can be dated from the early 1960s, although several dated from the late 1940s and 1950s. The weddings were from middle to upper class families (social and economic status).[43]

The viewing was done through a light table, placed at an angle rather than flat down. Short descriptions of each wedding were written in long hand and pictures were sketched in order to record certain details, such as length and style of wedding dresses and veils. The final written report amounted to 81 typed pages.[44] For the purposes of this dissertation, only 30 negatives were transferred into positives, the number limited primarily by cost. I thought early on in the archival work that the entire 54,250 negatives

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[43]Based on an interview with the photographer, Ruby Shulman, October 12, 2001 and from the symbols communicated in the pictures which display lavishness and wealth.

[44]The report was deposited in the CJC National Archives.

could be viewed within a year. However, my viewing stopped after one year's work, being satisfied with only 23% of the job completed.

In addition to the Drummond Photo Collection, 75 Montreal Jewish wedding photos were viewed that came from the Allan Raymond Collection housed at the Montreal Jewish Public Library Archives. These photos dated from the early 1900s to 1953. There were three principal reasons for including these earlier photos: first, to show that "white weddings" with "wedding flowers, cakes, processions"[45] existed in Montreal Jewish communities well before the 1950s; second, to show that these "white weddings" could be compared with Catholic weddings in the city from that time period (Girard 2000), demonstrating that just as many if not more Jewish brides wore long white dresses with veils (based on economic reasons and possibly because of the Jewish custom of *bedeckung*)[46]; and third, to challenge statements made by some rabbis and Jewish scholars

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[45]"White weddings" refers to white long wedding dress with veil.

[46] With only two studies done on Montreal weddings (Tremblay's 2001 study deals with the Haut-Richelieu valley and not Montreal *per se* and Girard's 2000 study with Montreal weddings between WWI and WWII), there are no other data presently available. Girard's study of 36 Montreal weddings from 1916 to 1940 revealed the following: from 12 "Bourgeois (upper class)" families, all 12 wore long white dresses with veils; amongst 12 families from "la classe moyenne (middle class) only 3 wore white; amongst 12 families from "la classe ouvrière" only 2 wore white. If one compares the 140 weddings that were viewed from the Drummond Collection where all the brides wore white, the question arises as to the socio-economic status of the wedding participants. If as the photographers claim, the sample consists of mostly middle to high-class Jewish families in the city, generalizations about Jewish weddings in the city must be tempered. Since, however, there was a general wedding trend towards wearing white after WWII, given a new prosperity and large American media influence, the post 1950s photos are not really problematic. The interesting question arises from the evidence (or lack of) that pre-dates WWII. Compare the Raymond Collection weddings from this period with Girard's Catholic weddings where 3 out of 12 middle class and 12 out of 12 upper class brides wore white. The Catholic brides were wearing less white than the Jewish brides. Out of approximately 40 Jewish weddings that were viewed in that collection, all the brides wore white.

One testimony from a Jewish bride claimed that all efforts were concentrated to ensure that her 1948 wedding was a white one despite family financial difficulties. Disregarding the bride's adamant protests, an aunt from Ontario mailed her her own wedding veil and the bride's mother made the long white wedding dress. Thus, economics did not always play a role in determining a Jewish bride's wedding attire.

that popular wedding traditions after the 1950s were due primarily to wider cultural non-Jewish influences (Kaplan 1983; Chill 1979; Interviews 1996-2001).

Several images were used that were dated before the 1900s and spanned Jewish and Christian wedding traditions outside of Montreal's purview. Realizing the various British and European influences upon Montreal's diverse Jewish and non-Jewish population, these images suggested possible historical antecedents to Montreal wedding practices.

The overall experience of viewing these wedding photographs generated the idea that tracing historical changes in ritual practices might be possible through visual sources which inscribe and privilege non-verbal gestures. As such, these photographs can be called "historical photographs" (Mead 1951; Hockings 1995; Reinharz 1992). Photographs seem well suited for a study of non-verbal ritual gestures which communicated different religious and gendered identities through time.

With specific attention to gender, photographic images can abstract temporally and spatially non verbal gestures that indicate different positions of power. Culturally learned movements have been shown to influence the way non-verbal gestures express and communicate emotions, sexual identities and positions of power. (De Beauvoir 1989: 27-273; Hanna 1988; Hanna 1979; Schechner 1987; Goffman 1959). In Judith Lynn Hanna's studies on human dance, she demonstrates how human movements, even outside dance, can transmit learned sexual identities (Hanna 1988: 6-23). She says that "a multitude of studies have documented gender-related non dance messages of non-verbal movements, many of which are often outside of the communicator's awareness. Male-

female stereotypic movements learned early in life operate as implicit beliefs and expectations. Sexual movement markers tend to merge with those of interpersonal and male domination in our society in this way: signifiers of social inequality appear in contrasts in posture, precedence, elevation, movement quality, and touch. In lateral opposition, the right side is associated with strength, justice, moral integrity, and beauty. Asymmetry indicates imbalance in status, whereas symmetry or reciprocal behaviour suggests affiliation and equal status. Verticality expresses deference and authority. The upper height is high status, carrying out the parent-child relationship; the lower, or becoming horizontal in bowing and prostrating, connotes inferior status. Higher-status people touch lower-status people more than vice versa. Touch may convey power, dominance, aggression, comfort, intimate love, and sexual arousal" (Hanna 1988: 156-157).

The wedding photos demonstrated how body gestures and positions conveyed ideas of power in relation to gender roles: mothers touched the veil in the privacy of the bride's house (showing more intimacy or hiding power) whereas the males touched the bride's veil in the more public space of the rabbi's office (showing more power in public); brides were usually seated when they were veiled, grooms were standing; both brides and grooms were lifted on chairs; both brides and grooms were seated signing documents in rabbi's office; the groom knelt when removing the bride's garter, showing a subordinate position vis-à-vis the bride; and, rabbis stood while cutting the *challah* at the reception. A complex of body positions in the photos revealed set patterns for the weddings of the 1960s where brides were subordinate to older women (mothers and

mothers-in-law), sometimes subordinate to the grooms and sometimes superordinate to their grooms. More frequently, the brides' body positions showed egalitarian signs when compared to the body postures of the grooms. Because photos under the *chuppah* were not available, most of the photos during the reception exhibited equal body positions for brides and grooms. Based on body movements that were seen in the rabbis' offices, dominant gestures were attributed to males (groom touching handkerchief, groom touching bride's veil, bride seated while being veiled). In a 1970 wedding in the Collection, mothers *and* groom touched the bride's veil in the rabbi's office. This photo showed that a change had occurred in gender roles from the early 1960s to the 1970s. Later, women performed a "traditionally" dominant male gesture, for they were touching the bride's veil in a public space. They also assumed their dominant position by being in front of the bride, while the groom stood behind.

Clothing also becomes important in understanding gender roles. Gender identities have relied substantially on clothing to effectively communicate and reinforce a community's or society's constructed identities. "There should be nothing controversial in the claim that clothing operates as a system of communication, that the clothes people wear carry meaning, and thus that it is possible to 'understand' or 'read' clothing" (Hunt 1996:58). Relationships between gender, clothing and one's economic class have been researched not only in the area of medieval sumptuary laws, but in the context of present-day cultures (Hunt 1996; Hughes 1986; Ingraham 1999; Kirkham 1996). As for the scope and depth which photographs can bring to anthropological research when seen through a gendered lens, Shulamit Reinharz describes the activity of employing photos as reading

pictures. "[The researcher] 'reads' the photographs and projects herself into the various roles that she sees in the pictures. [The researcher] writes as a reader of pictures. In my view, we have barely scratched the surface of the feminist research potential of photographs. Our preference for the written word is a bias" (Reinharz 1992: 238).

In terms of data, the photographs served a crucial role in providing information about whether Jewish grooms were wearing wedding rings in the early 1960s. They gave some indication as to how many men were wearing wedding rings in 140 Montreal weddings. However, because all the photos did not show a clear picture of the groom's hands, the final count signified the lowest possible figure. In 60% of the photos, where the groom's hand was visible (usually at the reception table), the groom was wearing a plain wedding ring. Moreover, since most of these weddings were from Orthodox and Conservative weddings, the conclusion could be made that in the early 1960s, Montreal Orthodox and Conservative husbands were wearing wedding rings. The photos did not reveal, however, when the second ring was given.

One might also question how photographs could be of any use in determining the legal aspects of a rite which have been predominantly spelled out in written form.[47] Recognizing that legal aspects infiltrate other forms of human behaviour besides the written one supports the use of photography as a valid methodological device for studying such rites.

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[47]The legal aspects of Jewish weddings include written, verbal, non-verbal gestures and objects which symbolize the consummated union of the couple.

Non-verbal gestures and symbolic objects used in ritual practice quite often reflect legal concerns without having the legal apparatus of words spelled out by the religious or civic authorities enshrining them. Like rules, non-verbal gestures and ritual symbols entail a rigor and structure influenced by time and place with no less complexity and meaning than the realm of written jurisprudence. The powerful and forceful non-verbal gestures have a life of their own in the way they energize, record and legitimize a collective past and present. In Durkheim's words, these ritual actions are "mystic mechanics" (Durkheim 1915: 419).

Durkheim's insights into ritual reveal how both the sacred and profane intersect through these ritual gestures or "mystic mechanics". He suggests that all actions, including 'religious' ones, reflect social constructs. "Religious techniques seem to be a sort of mystic mechanics. But these material manoeuvers are only the external envelope under which the mental operations are hidden. Thus religion, far from ignoring the real society and making abstractions of it, is in its image" (Durkheim 1915: 421). Maurice Halbwachs also points out the significance of material rites in the life of a religious tradition. "Although religious memory attempts to isolate itself from temporal society, it obeys the same laws as every collective memory: It does not preserve the past but reconstructs it with the aid of the material traces, rites, texts, and traditions left behind by that past, and with the aid moreover of recent psychological and social data, that is to say, with the present" (Halbwachs1992: 119).

Finally, André Burgière reinforces this idea that ritual gestures found in weddings are intimately joined with legal aspects: *"De son coté, le rituel populaire [du mariage]*

répond très souvent à des préoccupations juridiques: légitimer un lien en le célébrant par des conduits qui renforcent sa publicité (comme les conduits de bruit ou de dérision, les cortèges, la présence d'une nombreuse assistance), ou des gestes symboliques, des formules qui assurent son irréversibilité" (Burguière 1978: 638).

A concrete contemporary example comes to mind. The sounds of honking car horns on a quiet Montreal Saturday afternoon are reminiscent of ancient and medieval charivari customs.[48] Two ideas are communicated immediately: one, a marriage just took place; and two, the couple who just got married was not Jewish. Contemporary car horns act just like tin cans did when they were tied to the car's rear bumper in the past. The noise makers act as an irreversible public announcement of the newlyweds' legal and social entry into the married community. This irreversible element substantiates an action's legal character. Perhaps the only difference found in today's custom lies with the route the car takes after leaving the church where the wedding ceremony took place. Since couples now live together, the honking cars follow the wedding car (usually a limousine) to a reception hall, whereas in the past, the honking cars would pass in front of the bride's parental home to let the neighbours know that she had legitimately left home. Focusing less now on the bride than on both partners, the honking horns still announce the newly legalized married state just re-enacted.

The celebration of the reception that follows wedding ceremonies is another example of a community publicly witnessing the joining of a newly married couple.

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[48]The word "charivari" derives from a medieval practice also called "shivaree", a mock serenade with kettles, pans, horns, and other noise-makers given for a newly married couple (*The Random House College Dictionary* 1988:1215).

Community presence is mandatory in both Jewish and Christian weddings. In Judaism, this presence is much more concretely articulated in the form of a *mitzvah* (Kaplan 1983: 209). Yet, articulated legal terms or principles of law do not come to mind in popular ritual activities where music, sounds, dancing, eating and frivolity dominate. Cast in a rather disinterested legal light, these kinds of ritual activities remain for most members of a community outside the domain of law. But communities, as the above examples show, persist at an unconscious and conscious level in using various non-verbal ways to effectively carry out principles of law. In this respect, photographs become a good resource for a focused study of non verbal gestures and objects which underlie processes of law intertwined with ritual histories. In addition, the photograph albums themselves can be interpreted as official records of a legal and celebratory act.

Anthropologists like Joanna Cohan-Scherer have tried to encourage an increased use of photographs in ethnographic studies. "There exists in archives and libraries forgotten worlds, fragments of people's lives which when systematically analyzed can create whole new arenas of inquiry. These materials are ethnographic photographs. The sheer volume of these images is staggering but they remain as yet largely under-utilized by anthropologists" (Hockings 1995). Cohan-Scherer outlines some rules for the use of photographs in anthropological inquiry. They include: a) a detailed analysis of internal evidence and comparison of photographs with other images; b) an understanding of the history of photography, including technological constraints and conventions; c) a study of the intention and purposes of the photographer and the manner in which images

were used by their creator; d) a study of the ethnographic subjects; and e) a review of related historical evidence.

These guidelines were applied to the photographic study used in this research in the following ways. Detailed analyses of specific symbols were recorded and compared with other images from earlier and later time periods. Since this collection was not yet catalogued, a detailed description of places and dates of the weddings was difficult. Comparison with other images helped with the difficult dating process. Cars, clothing and dance styles became key comparative markers for these dates. Technically, knowing that certain photographic lenses were not yet available to wedding photographers partly explained why *chuppah* shots were never recorded. Also, the lack of video technology prevented recording of the entire wedding. Interviewing the photographers who took most of these pictures gave insights about the kinds of shots taken and which religious denominations were included in the Collection. There was certainly a "Drummond Photo Style" where the photographer set up the pattern, content and sequencing of shots. In terms of reviewing related historical evidence, this was achieved through a historical study of the central wedding symbols that were repeated in the photos, and through a material historical study of wedding rings.

Other scholars who have endorsed visual anthropology, such as Margaret Mead and Drid Williams[49], have also been helpful in articulating a sound methodology for photographic ethnography. Emphasizing the role of the still camera in exploring the area

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[49]See Mead's photographic study in *Growth and Culture* (1951) and Williams' *Ten Lectures on Theories of Dance* (1991).

of non-verbal communication, these scholars opened up the whole area of "proxemics"—how people regulate themselves in space and how they move through space. Ritual activities can demonstrate possible ethnographic differences which can be analyzed by observing the posing and positions of the bodies engaged in ritual.

Some of the limitations of visual anthropology must also be mentioned. The photographs could not specify what happened before or after the wedding day. With the advent of videotaping, one gets a fuller picture of pre- and post-wedding activities. Yet, in the case of Jewish weddings and their preparations, not all the religious symbols are recorded visually. One will not gain access to ritual activities like going to the *mikvah* or *yichud* (spending time in the bridal chamber) through visual anthropology. Certain essential elements of Jewish weddings remain unseen to photographers and to all other members of the community. This fact distinguishes Jewish from Christian weddings where all wedding symbols other than the honeymoon are usually recorded.

In concert with this non-verbal approach of studying rituals and ritual symbols is the rich territory of material objects, particularly the rings. David Kingery's ideas on the relatively new and distinct discipline of material culture reinforce Barthes' view that things or objects communicate meaning. Kingery stresses the interdisciplinary approach needed to study objects and the depth of meaning which objects can convey. Echoing the thoughts expressed at a conference on material culture held at the Smithsonian Institute in the early 1990s, Kingery states that "the things humankind makes and uses at any particular time and place are probably the truest representation we have of values and meaning within a society. The study of things, material culture, is thus capable of piercing

interdisciplinary boundaries and bringing forward meaningful discussions and interactions among scholars in many disparate fields" (Kingery 1996: ix). Trying to overcome one of the predominant thoughts which has characterized philosophy in western civilization—namely that mind rules over matter—Kingery proposes that any material entity which carries traces of past human behaviour should be included in a study of evidence which purports to describe that past behaviour.

Only when I saw a picture of a 17th century Jewish Betrothal ring, called "The Wertheimer Wedding Ring", with two miniature wedding rings hidden inside did double-ring ceremonies take on a more concrete material study approach. I sought out Jewish betrothal rings and jewelry historians[50], and set out for the New York Jewish Museum Archives in New York and other places which housed Jewish wedding rings. I handled and tried on most of the rings that I saw, and brought a professional photographer with me to record as much as I could or as much as I was permitted to, given the restrictions of museum archives. Within the context of the New York Jewish Museum Archives, most of the eighteen rings that were viewed had incomplete data concerning their provenance. Only four in that lot were categorized as authentic. Of those four, two 19th century rings betrayed marks and worn metal hoops of two completely different past lives, one from

[50]I communicated by email, telephone, writing and in person with the following material culture specialists: Gertrud Seidmann, Jewelery Historian at the Archaeological Institute, Oxford University in the UK; Clare Phillips, Curator in the Department of Metalwork, Silver and Jewellery at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London; Denny Stone and Susan Bronstein, Curator at the Jewish Museum of New York, Judaica Collection; Peter Barnet, Associate Curator at The Detroit Institute of Arts; Anne Fauteux, Montreal Jeweler who worked and studied with Beatriz Chadour in Europe; Benjamin Zucker, international gem dealer, collector and scholar from New York; Professor Norman Stillman and Professor Yedida Stillman, both scholars in Judaica.

Russia and the other of Dutch origin.[51] On the other hand, viewing ten Jewish betrothal rings within the context of a private collection demonstrated that museums barely contain the vastness of such treasured objects. Nevertheless, while museums may be limited, they permit access and the sharing of ideas and research findings which the nature of the private collection abhors.

Chadour's comprehensive study of rings, including Jewish betrothal rings, provided the best source for situating wedding rings within a cultural context. In addition, working with Chadour's 1994 two-volume compilation of the history of rings led to contacts with jewelers, including Anne Fauteux of Montreal, Quebec who is represented in Chadour's work. Not to deny the importance which cultural meanings have in association with material objects, an understanding of the raw materials used and who fashions them is nevertheless just as critical.[52]

In dramatic contrast with the visual (photographs), non-verbal (gestures represented in the photographs) and material sources of evidence gathered from both the archival study of photographs and the study of wedding rings, a rich source of data was collected through verbal interviews. The telephone interviews communicated strictly verbal signs, while the in-person interviews communicated both verbal and non-verbal signs. The interviews were approximately thirty to ninety minutes in duration and were recorded by long and shorthand note-taking. No tape-recorder was used, which facilitated

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[51]The worn-down Russian plain silver ring (#JM 90-52) contrasted with the golden filigree Dutch one (#F-5365), betraying possible differences in the economic and social conditions of their owners.

[52]Gary Vikan's "Art and Marriage in Early Byzantine" (*DOP* 1990, #44) is an excellent source in demonstrating the history of raw materials in conjunction with the creation of ritual and art objects.

a freer and more engaging dialogue with the interviewees. The absence of a tape recorder was especially noted and appreciated by the rabbis, who on occasion requested that some parts of the interview remain "off the record". The interviews were subsequently transferred to a typed format, usually immediately after the interview was completed. This transcribing process took approximately one to three hours for each interview.

The data collected from the interviews with thirteen rabbis (one Reform, six Orthodox, five Conservative and one Reconstructionist) represented a total of approximately 1210 weddings that they performed from 1996 to 2001. The interviews overwhelmingly confirmed that double-ring ceremonies were being performed in most of these weddings along the following denominational lines.

Reform Double-ring Ceremonies

The Reform rabbi reported that he performed double-ring ceremonies in 95% of the weddings that took place in 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000. The Reform rabbi performed approximately 50 weddings per year.

Orthodox Double-ring Ceremonies

Four Orthodox rabbis reported that they performed double-ring ceremonies in 99% of the weddings that took place from 1996 to 2001.[53] These four Orthodox rabbis together performed approximately 86 weddings a year. A fifth Orthodox rabbi reported

[53]One congregation in the study is Sephardic but Modern Orthodox. As you will see in the following footnote, one of the Conservative congregations shifted to the Orthodox sector in the middle of the study.

that he *never* performed double-ring ceremonies. He performed approximately two weddings per year. A sixth Orthodox rabbi reported that he performed double-ring ceremonies in 75% of the weddings that took place in 1996, then 95% of the weddings that took place in 1997. He performed approximately 12 weddings a year.

Conservative Double-ring Ceremonies

Four Conservative rabbis reported that they performed double-ring ceremonies in 100% of the weddings that took place from 1996 to 1999. These four Conservative rabbis performed approximately 55 weddings a year. A fifth Conservative rabbi reported that he performed double-ring ceremonies in 75% of the weddings that took place in 1996 and 1997. He performed 25 weddings a year. When that rabbi was replaced in 2000, the new rabbi reported the same figures of 75% and specifically asked that his congregation be represented in this study as an Orthodox and not a Conservative or Conservadox one. The new Orthodox rabbi reported that he performed 25 weddings from 2000 to 2001. [54]

Reconstructionist Double-ring Ceremonies

The Reconstructionist rabbi reported that he performed double-ring ceremonies in 99% of the weddings that took place in 1996, 1997 and 1998. He performed approximately 12 weddings each year.

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[54]The congregation involved has officially broken all ties with the Conservative movement in 2000 and has shifted to the Orthodox sector.

Based on the two periods of study, 1947-1964 and 1990-2001, the data suggested that two rings were exchanged by Orthodox and Conservative couples in Montreal within both those time periods. As to how many of these double-ring exchanges happened under the *chuppah* during the first time period remains guesswork. It was difficult to indicate what the increase in double-ring ceremonies could have been from the first to the second period, based on the lack of evidence connecting the photos of the first time period to specific congregations. By the year 2001, in one Reconstructionist, two Conservative and four Orthodox denominations, double-ring ceremonies were performed more frequently than in one Reform and two Orthodox congregations. By 2001, there were three Conservative congregations but only two Conservative rabbis remaining in the city.

Besides providing significant data, the interviews informed a pivotal issue which dealt with the interpretative part of this work—insider/outsider roles. Interviews were an effective research method tool by which ritual concepts and roles that might be hidden in official written religious texts could be revealed through verbal and non-verbal means. They effectively allowed the voices of the brides and grooms to interpret their weddings apart from the official legalistic rabbinic views. In addition, the interviews also clarified my role as researcher, as being predominantly an outsider who listened, recorded, interpreted and incorporated different viewpoints. An outsider-researcher can collect data from a variety of sources (and informants) and allow unfettered interpretations to emerge.

Conducting interviews with rabbis and Jewish couples defined my role as outsider in terms of religious affiliation. Not being a member of the denominations studied in this work, nor being Jewish, my outsider status was also defined along religious lines. This

religious factor did not impinge upon the work; rather, it heightened the awareness of the role which religion plays in the way individuals and communities re-present themselves. But, being a Montrealer [55] and having experienced meaningful relationships with members of the Montreal Jewish community created some ambivalence in using categorical dichotomies like insider/outsider.

Using dichotomies like insider/outsider would also define the couples' roles as outsiders with respect to their unfamiliarity with written Jewish legal texts. Given Jewish women's restricted position vis-à-vis an all-male Orthodox rabbinate, their status as outsiders becomes even more accentuated. Within Jewish feminist circles, this outsider status has been described as being outside the legal center. Feminist Jewish scholar Norma Joseph has phrased it this way. "Too much of Jewish life has been defined with men at the representative, ritual and legal center. In the Bible, references to the people Israel or the children of Israel is in male grammatical form and is frequently defined by commentaries as applicable to men only. According to the Talmud (TB *Shabbat* 62a) women are a separate juridical group. Many of the laws pertaining to them and their status presuppose an otherness and a subsequent marginality" (Joseph 1995:48). As for current changes within Judaism that point to new approaches towards Jewish law, Joseph says that "there are a growing number of female rabbis, but few are expert in Jewish law. There are also non-rabbi scholars, whose knowledge of the law and judgement is sought. It will take time for the decisions of this group to be acknowledged and become effective precedents" (Joseph 1995: 68, #56).

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[55] I was born in Montreal and have lived in this city all my life.

However, a group of women in Augsburg in 1870, considered to be on the outside of Jewish legal circles, successfully persuaded the Reform rabbis to consider the second ring giving as an official ritual wedding gesture (Plaut 1963: 216). The Reform responsum which was subsequently written as a result of the actions of these women proved to be a milestone in the history of double-ring ceremonies. These women proved that their outsider status in Jewish law did not necessarily apply in the realm of ritual, where their central presence was felt and communicated. For these women the wedding ring was just as much their symbol as it was their husbands' or their rabbis'. Similarly, the interviews conducted in this research evoked the idea of insider/outsider status when dominant symbols, such as the wedding rings, were mentioned.

During the wedding rituals, the rabbis saw themselves as insiders and close to the core of Jewish law. During the same wedding rituals, the couples saw themselves as insiders and close to the core of love and Jewish marriage. Through the polysemy of a dominant symbol, such as the wedding ring, rabbis and couples extracted different meanings from the same ritual source. The polysemy of symbols requires, therefore, a variety of approaches and lenses in order to fathom the condensed and contradictory nature which ritual symbols represent. Striving for a balance between insider and outsider approaches thus seems to be a requisite for ritual studies. However, as Turner reaffirms, in order to synthesize the whole, only the researcher as outsider can access, interpret and integrate highly enigmatic symbols from a variety of classes of data (Turner 1967: 20).

This does not undermine the interpretations extracted from individual ritual participants who each experience and describe their own ritual events in different ways. As Marcel Proust wrote, "I am reminded that it was that same autumn, on one of those walks near the bushy slope that overlooks Montjouvain, that I was struck for the first time by this lack of harmony between our impressions and the way we usually express them...and that identical emotions do not arise in the hearts of all men simultaneously according to a pre-established order" (Shattuck 2000: 109-110). Locating the researcher as outsider and as a critical focal point simply emphasizes the social content and structure which ritual symbols embody and communicate, rather than highly personalized meanings which struggle to exist in the face of social facts.

If wedding symbols relate to some conscious cognitive formulae of law for the rabbis, they belong to the opposite pole of conscious and unconscious feelings of love for the couples (Durkheim 1915; Lukes 1973; Turner 1967; Lèvi-Strauss 1979; Bell 1992). If wine means blessings of fertility within one wedding tradition, it also can mean the transformed blood of a divinity within another. If present-day personalized *Ketoubahs* distinguish Jewish weddings from non-Jewish ones, they also represent the differences between present day Reform and Orthodox couples from those of the late 1940s and early 1950s (many of whom did not know what a *Ketoubah* was). Ritual symbols effectively define identities while still possessing imaginative depths from which other meanings may surface. In the final analysis, however, as Turner, Geertz and Grimes have articulated, "the significant contexts are largely worked out by the [researcher] anthropologist" (Turner 1967:20; Geertz 1986; Grimes 2000).

Chapter 3

Historical Background to Weddings and Wedding Symbols

What one wants, I thought—is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably in parish registers and account books. I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should rewrite history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety?

Virginia Woolf

The history of wedding rituals reflects the transmitting of boundaries of separation while at the same time the joining together of households, bodies, ideas and emotions (Van Gennep 1946). Besides defining boundaries between the sexes and households, marriage and weddings have also been used to shape and repress certain religious and gendered identities (Duby 1978; Roper 1989; Hyman 1991). Before examining specific wedding symbols and identities that were found in Montreal Jewish weddings (as will be done in the following chapters), some general historical background is needed to understand both Jewish and Christian wedding symbols and practices. This does not mean that a biblical, ancient or late medieval context will explain the present, nor that any complete overview is indeed possible, but it will provide perspective and depth. In particular, it will show how at critical times of group identification religious leadership intervened in changing the ways in which new communities of believers would practice their new set of beliefs. Examples of these critical times include: the first centuries of the common era when Christianity was separating from Jewish roots, the 16th century when

Protestant Reformers were separating from Roman Catholic ties, and the 19th century when Jewish Reformers separated from Orthodox Judaism.[56] Ritual changes not only affect external decorum but imprint upon the ritual participants images of their new selves. In the case of the majority Montreal Catholic population, the effects of Tertullian's 2nd century teachings admonishing women to tone down their outward appearance and the Council of Trent's repression of egalitarian wedding rites could still be felt in mid-20th century weddings where Catholic women were encouraged to dress modestly and pledge dutiful obedience to their future spouses.[57] Consequently, the historical antecedents to ritual practices, despite the methodological difficulties involved, remain invaluable in delineating their political, gender or theological motivations.

Recapping a history of Jewish and Christian wedding rituals remains a daunting task. First, retrieving written information about rituals apart from the official ritual manuals, which are frequently not available, involves tremendous searches. Given that descriptions of actual wedding performances are rare, written ritual manuals and Biblical texts serve as important clues as to what might have actually happened in earlier times. However, to rely solely on written texts to trace ritual histories can be misleading since these written texts primarily point to prescriptive norms authored by religious authorities

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[56]Some scholars suggest that the term "orthopraxy", (correct practice), rather than "orthodoxy" (correct doctrine), would be more descriptive of the centrality of religious action in rabbinic Judaism (Seltzer 1980: 585). However, early Jewish Refomers, like Israel Jacobson (1768-1828), exhibited dramatic changes in both practice and doctrine in their new Reform temples built in Berlin and Hamburg, where the founding members were businessmen without rabbinic ordination.

[57]Montreal's Roman Catholic community is also divided along linguistic lines. There are ritual differences between the Franco and Anglo Catholic communities. One prominent Roman Catholic priest in the English community said that he never asked brides to say the word "obey" when speaking marriage vows. He performed his first wedding in the late 1930s (Interview, October 3, 1997).

and legal experts (both civic and religious). An example proving this to be the case is the practice of double-ring ceremonies in contemporary Jewish weddings. If I had relied solely on the rabbinical manuals, and not on the actual practice of the various congregations, a realistic picture depicting Montreal Jewish weddings would not have emerged. Furthermore, ritual practices often pre-date their written format in manuals or else never appear in that format at all. "Ritual practices", understood by Van Gennep as "*folklore*", pre-date written legal prescriptions to practices and have a meritorious history surpassing law in power and societal management. "*Le droit n'est jamais qu'une codification temporaire de la coutume; et la coutume n'a nul besoin du gendarme sans lequel le droit est sans puissance effective*"[58] (Van Gennep 1946: 108). Nevertheless, knowing the difficult terrain ahead in trying to map out a historical background to wedding symbols, the task was undertaken. When most of the rabbis who were interviewed in this study referred to the influence of Christian customs in explaining the introduction of the second wedding ring under the *chuppah*, sorting out the history of wedding customs became imperative.[59]

Biblical narratives that hint at wedding rites are rooted in descriptions of everyday life while finding expression within particular kinds of God-language. Put another way, no marriage ritual is spelled out in any clear-cut written text in the Hebrew Bible or in the

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[58]"Law is never anything but a temporary codification of custom; and custom hardly needs the police without which laws have no effective power."

[59]The history of the second ring will be given in detail in Chapter 7.

New Testament for either Jewish or Christian traditions. Not until the Talmudic and post-talmudic times (4th to 11th centuries CE) will such written ritual texts emerge.

Logical structure appears only in the Talmudic period (200-600 CE) in terms of a Jewish marriage rite as known today. The outlining of a specific sequence of events which include the two main parts: *erusin* (or betrothal also called *Kiddushin* [60]) and *nisuin* were talmudic. The official verbal *Kiddushin* formula spoken by the groom will only appear in part in the Talmudic period (*Kiddushin*: 5b). Later on, after Rashi, it will assume the form used today (Kaplan 1983:180). The Talmudic verbal formula in use until the 11th century was *"Harey at mekudeshet li"*. The words "according to the law of Moses and Israel" are first found in the context of the *Ketoubah*. The later formula in Rashi, which is still exclusively used today by all Jewish males of all denominations, is *"Harei at mekudeshet li betaba'ath zu, ke-dath Moshe ve Yisrael"*, "Behold, you are consecrated to me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel". The earliest use of the word "ring" (*taba'ath)* in the official Jewish marriage formula appears to be from Rashi in the 11th century CE.

In written Christian marriage liturgical texts, the word "ring" appears in the early part of the 8th century in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* from Northern France which was partly based on an earlier Italian text called *Leonianum Verona 85*, dated by Stevenson

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[60]"Betrothal" in the context of contemporary Jewish weddings refers to the first part of the official ceremony, *Kiddushin*. Before medieval times this part was performed about one year before the actual wedding ceremony. Jewish wedding rings were often called "betrothal" rings because of the legal connotations attached to the term "betrothal" or *kiddushin*. "Engagement" refers to the contemporary popular practice whereby the future groom proposes to the future bride and usually gives her an engagement ring. It has no religious significance in contemporary Jewish or Christian practices. A more detailed discussion of the historical antecedents of "betrothal", "marriage" and "engagement" will be provided in detail in Chapter 7 in relation to the rings.

somewhere between the 5th and 7th centuries CE (Stevenson 1983: 37). Within a couple of hundred years, however, one of the most developed egalitarian Christian marriage liturgies surfaced in Visigothic Spain in the 11th century with the appearance of two wedding rings. It seems that eastern Orthodox Christian churches included two rings in their rites in the areas of Syria and Palestine during the fourth century CE. The Eastern Byzantium rites, which have used two rings in the 20th and 21st centuries along with two crowns, go back to the 11th century. But it is not that clear whether the two rings were always used, or where or when. Evidence for two Jewish wedding rings can be found in France as early as the 13th century and the rings themselves reveal interesting possibilities as to their ritual histories (Chenon 1912; Chadour 1994).

The Visigothic ritual described in the *Liber Ordinum* is the first marriage ritual in the west to include two wedding rings, but with two different strata when it comes to the nuptial blessing. In the older version both groom and bride are blessed, whereas in the later version only the bride is blessed. The history within the Christian west of joint ritual gestures like a nuptial blessing for both bride and groom and two rings only reappears in this century in liturgical texts after Vatican II in the late 1960s.[61]

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[61] Interviews with Père Bernard Allard at the Grand Seminaire, Montreal: September 28, 1997 and May 10, 2001. Père Allard was one of the liturgical scholars in Rome during Vatican II who worked on the changes in the marriage ritual. The inclusion of a second ring and a nuptial blessing for the groom as well as the bride were the significant changes that took place. The Roman rite had not been changed since Trent in 1563. Père Allard was also the one responsible for the inclusion of a new Eucharistic prayer to be said only during marriage rites. However, much opposition arose to his suggestion. Only the French Canadian Roman Rite was changed and not the English Canadian one.

For the purposes of organizing a vast history, three different approaches were used in presenting the material in this chapter.

The first section relies on the work of Kenneth Stevenson[62], who traces Christian wedding practices from the present day back to the Biblical past.[63] His approach can be described as ritual and theological. He strongly suggests that present-day Christian wedding symbols have biblical and Jewish roots in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, the latter he interprets as being Jewish-Christian. Despite the fact that formal descriptions of wedding rites only appeared in written texts in Talmudic and post-Talmudic times (alongside early Christian sacramentaries of the 4th century CE), Stevenson claims that the move from informality to formality in writing down rituals does not suggest that wedding rites were previously absent. Stevenson traces the liturgical forms of domestic blessings in pre-Talmudic and pre-Christian wedding rites to biblical material. His ritual-centered approach offers rare insights into the interpretation of biblical texts where clear-cut wedding rites were hardly spelled out. He focuses on the three Jewish biblical themes of marriage, fertility and passion which he claims were gradually subsumed into the metaphor of the God-Israel relationship. His analysis then leads to a comprehensive study of the role blessings play in weddings.

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[62]See Stevenson's *Nuptial Blessings* (1983).

[63]Other than Tziona Grossmark's unpublished thesis in Hebrew *Jewellery and Jewellery-Making in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud* (1994), no works incorporating details of Jewish wedding rites and wedding rings for this early period have yet been found. I have used relevant parts of Grossmark's thesis to inform the "Summary of Rabbinic Weddings" found in the second section of this chapter.

With the second approach, the work of Michael Satlow[64] was used to explore the category of "Jewishness" in understanding differences between Christian and Jewish concepts of marriage and weddings. He suggests that the category of "Jewishness" is fluid and often negotiable. In contrast to Stevenson, Satlow claims that the God-Israel marriage metaphor from Hosea was really first used by the early Christians, when they advocated the Christ-Church marriage symbolism. Subsequently, this metaphor was later borrowed by the Jews. Although the images of Christ as groom and Church as bride were taken directly from the biblical prophets, Satlow argues that such a Jewish image would have made rabbinic Palestinian Jews very uncomfortable. Adapted later by the rabbinic Babylonian Jews, he further states that what can be called today a "Jewish" marriage or "Jewish" marriage symbol derived mostly from the Talmudic and post-Talmudic periods. Less ritual-centered, his approach can be described as legal, textual and sociological. He eagerly searches for commonalities rather than differences in the task of comparing Jewish and Christian marriages. He focusses on proving that marriage concerns are universally experienced (in the context of North America and Israel) through commonly shared economic and legal experiences. He gives cursory attention to rituals and excludes any evidence that points to particular ritual differences between Jews and Christians.

The third approach incorporates legal, ritual and gender lenses within the study of the works of Glückel of Hameln and Beatrice Gottlieb.[65] Writings by Richard Hooker, a

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[64]See Satlow's *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (2001).

[65]See *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*, translated by Marvin Lowenthal (1977), and Gottlieb's *The Family in the Western World from the Black Death to the Industrial Age* (1993).

16th century Protestant Reformer, will also be included in this section.[66] Hooker's writings give valuable historical insights into Jewish and Christian wedding practices of the period. The third section begins with the writings of Glückel of Hameln, whose memoirs give some information, but not complete by any means, of 17th century German-Jewish weddings. Gottlieb's work on the family in the medieval west includes a broad view of Christian, Catholic and Jewish wedding practices.

One major theme pervades all three approaches and the history of weddings in general, the fluctuating movement from the domestic to the civic and then to the religious arena. Family customs, state laws and religious sanctions all play critical and varying roles in weddings. The patterns fluctuating from domestic to civic, civic to religious, religious to civic, and then back to religious arenas represent the on-going historical struggle for power over marital identities.

Biblical Sources to Wedding Rites

Stevenson claims that the first clues to a ritual celebration of marriage are found in the development to be seen in Genesis 2: 18-25 and then in the second creation narrative in Genesis 1:26-29 (Stevenson 1983). It is within the second creation narrative that one reads about God making earthlings (man and woman), blessing them and telling them to be fruitful and multiply. These verses spell out three significant ideas. First, a theological foundation is established for Jewish and Christian marriages by signifying

[66]See *The Works of That Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr. Richard Hooker II* (1845), edited by John Keble.

that the creative act of reproduction involves a benevolent divine power (or divinity) which means "it is a good thing" to reproduce. Second, offspring are told to imitate the creative or reproductive activity of their divine parent(s). Third, some sort of divine or parental blessing is linked to the reproductive activity. Stevenson will conclude that these Genesis verses indicate the earliest form of a wedding rite.

The *wish* of parents to see healthy grandchildren seems to be the earliest form of a family blessing which gets communicated with special words to future spouses. These words appear to be the essential core element of the earliest wedding rites, which were performed at home. Van Gennep will interpret these blessings or *bénédictions* as being fundamentally rites of separation (Van Gennep 1946: 415). Within the context of French wedding rites performed at the beginning of the 20th century, Van Gennep cited that the paternal blessing was given by the fathers to brides and grooms just before they left their respective homes. This blessing was the visible sign that the children were separating from their parental household. Hence, following Van Gennep's line of thinking, when humans are in vulnerable states of transition, special protective devices in the form of magical spells, good luck wishes or amulets are employed. This custom of familial blessing exists to this day in some Jewish and Catholic homes. Jewish grooms are blessed by their fathers before the wedding ceremony when the father places his hands on the groom's head while saying: "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh, may you be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 48:16). A Jewish bride is likewise blessed by her parents before her wedding day as well (Kaplan 1983: 131). In Quebec the practice of

paternal blessings was reactivated in the 1980s in francophone Catholic families (Tremblay 2001:125-127).

The rabbinic tradition, and the early Christians through Augustine of Hippo, stressed the juxtaposition of fertility and blessings in marriage rites (Stevenson 1983). However, with the dawning of the medieval period, in both Judaism and Christianity, nuptial blessings will gradually shift away from the home towards the jurisdiction of religious leaders.

In Judaism the prenuptial blessing with the blessing over the wine does not appear as a universal custom until the 10th century CE. We also know that the two parts of a Jewish wedding, the betrothal or *kiddushin* and the *nissuin* also came together as one ceremony during this time of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105 CE). Originally the groom's role was to recite these blessings, while now this custom belongs normally to the rabbi. Some say that the abandoned practice of the groom's recitation was to save embarrassment for the unlearned who might be unable to recite it (Chill 1979: 283). Others also say that "the rabbi or cantor of today stands in God's place to recite the blessing" (Kaplan 1983: 171). A late medieval move to introduce God in the person of a human (rabbi) has strong parallels in Christian practices of ensuring God's or Christ's presence in the person of a priest. As for the wine that goes along with the blessing, the rabbinic tradition teaches that when God married Adam and Eve, God "took" a cup of wine and blessed them (Kaplan 1983: 170). Not specifically mentioned in Genesis in the creation narratives, wine appears in Judges 9:13 where it "cheers God and man" and in Psalms 116:13 where " I lift a cup of salvation up and call it in God's

name". Wine as a symbol here not only points to the fruitfulness or fertility aspects of a blessed marriage, but also to the relaxation which it brings " and a desirable closeness between husband and wife" (Kaplan 1983: 170). The nuances here of wine, blessings, fertility and procreation give a very different spin on Jewish sexuality within marriage than that given of Christian or Catholic sexuality.

Without overgeneralizing, the idea of pleasure associated with sex became less a Catholic model than a Jewish one as time went on. With the introduction of religious orders celebrating abstinence over a life time, by the medieval period the western Roman Catholic priests were requesting the newly married couple to abstain from sexual relations on their wedding night or for three nights afterwards. "*Les nuits de Tobias*"as they are called, is apparently still encouraged in Quebec in some French Catholic wedding rites.[67]

What should be noted about the nuptial blessings is their close association in the west with the giving of a piece of jewelry (and for the past 2000 years, a ring). The saying of the blessings is immediately followed by the giving of the wedding ring. Immediately after the first two benedictions (the *bore peri ha-gafen* and the *Birkat Erusin*) are recited during the first part of the Jewish wedding rite (the betrothal, *erusin* or *kiddushin* part), a cup of wine is given to both the bride and groom to drink and the groom places a ring on the bride's finger before two witnesses.[68] This close relationship

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[67] No data presently exist as to how many parish priests today still carry on this practice. It seems not to be commonly known or adhered to in Montreal (Interview, May 10, 2001).

[68]The two witnesses must not be related to either party in the marriage nor to each other (Kaplan 1983: 289).

between the ring, procreation and fertility will be discussed again later with reference to to the giving of the second ring.

In Genesis 24:3-4, more evidence for Jewish and Christian wedding symbols can be found which are in use today. With the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, the following wedding practices are described: marriage is subject to negotiation; Isaac receives a blessing from Abraham "to be fruitful and multiply" and an order to not "choose a wife from the Canaanite women"; Rebekah receives a blessing from her family (perhaps mother, father, brothers and sisters) when she leaves home; the blessing focuses on Rebekah's family's desire for her to have children; Abraham tells his messenger Eliezer to find his son a wife and not from the Cannanites; the bride-to-be gives her full consent to her brother and mother; Rebekah demonstrates the virtues of *gemilut hasadim* (kindness and generosity) when she gives water to both Eliezer and his animals; Rebekah adorns herself with beautiful jewelry as a sign of her willingness to be betrothed; Rebekah is beautiful; when Rebekah decides to leave her home, her mother was reluctant to let her go; Rebekah verbally gives consent to leave her home with Eliezer to meet her future groom whom she has not seen; Rebekah receives a blessing from her brothers and sisters "Sister of ours, increase to thousands and tens of thousands!" (Gen. 24:60); Rebekah veils herself when she sees her future groom approaching; Rebekah leaves her parental home and goes into Isaac's tent where they cohabit (a symbol of the new household, sexual intimacy or patriarchal dominance where a woman is covered/*couvert* by a man's physical, psychological or economic powers); Isaac loved her.

These ancient verses provide links to contemporary wedding symbols.[69] The bride's veil, with no evidence that it symbolized Rebekah's virginity, has become one of the most popular wedding symbols used within the past 50 years in both Jewish and Christian traditions in North America.[70] However, Rebekah's story is not the Biblical reference quoted when Jewish brides are *bedekked* or veiled. It is the story of Jacob mistaking Leah for Rachel that is associated with the Jewish custom of *bedekking*. The groom must look into the eyes of his bride and identify her positively as his bride before the wedding commences. The bride must keep her face covered symbolically until the couple are officially married. Based on the evidence from this study, there were often jokes or silent gestures made at the veiling ceremony that indicated the awkwardness and unfamiliarity with a veiling custom or a veiled woman. But the couples seemed to enjoy this moment as the veiled Jewish bride symbolically demonstrated a special status compared to the unveiled groom.[71] Keeping the face hidden, however, remains to this day a Jewish custom and not a Christian one. Connected also to the idea of the "evil eye", the veiled woman would be protected from any glances directed by those not so filled with kindheartedness. Interestingly, in Hindu marriage rites, the male wears blinders or a jeweled covering for that very purpose.

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[69]As will be shown in Chapters 4 and 5, these links with the past have often been fictively enhanced in order to validate the use of some wedding symbol over another.

[70]Chapter 4 will discuss more in detail the history of the wedding veil.

[71] There may be other reasons why this is an exciting part of the wedding. Rabbis today speak of the passion Jacob had for Rachel and many ask the groom to look into the bride's eyes before she is veiled. There is a visible act of separation whereby the bride acquires autonomy and power as she remains secluded within the enclosure of her own garments. Since the veils are usually made of a transparent voile, they play a symbolic role. Yet, their impact distinguishes Jewish from Christian weddings.

As for the symbol of Isaac's tent, one can see a prototype of the marriage canopy or *chuppah* used in Jewish weddings today. The word "*chuppah*" might be derived from "*chafah*", meaning to cover or hide, or from the root "*chafaf*", meaning to protect. Although Isaac's tent covers both him and his wife, denoting a husband's responsibility to provide home, clothing and food, it may also denote Rebekah's role as protector when Isaac brings her into his mother's tent after Isaac's mother dies.

In Genesis 29:22, with the marriage of Jacob and Rachel, the wedding rite takes on a more formal tone with the description of a seven-day feast. In Judges 14:10-18, we will also come across this long week of festivities. The theme of fertility and procreation continues with Jacob, Leah and Rachel. Leah, believing that her husband will love and honor her more with the birth of six children, refers to children as "fine gifts" (Gen. 29:18). The voice of women can also be heard when the text says, "Then God remembered Rachel; he heard her and opened her womb" (Gen. 30:22-23). The text suggests that the words of a woman and not the blessings of a father, brother or religious leader brought about the birth of Rachel's son, Joseph. We also know that Laban gathered all the people of the place together and gave a banquet for Jacob's marriage to Rachel.

The idea that the bride should wear gorgeous clothes comes especially from Isaiah and Jeremiah. She also wears a special girdle, sash or belt and walks in a procession (Jer.2:32). "Look around about you, look, all are assembling, coming to you. By my life–it is Yahweh who speaks–you will wear these as your jewels, they will adorn you as

brides are adorned" (Isaiah 49:18). In Psalm 45:11-12, the bride will be dressed "in brocades with bridesmaids in her train. Her ladies-in-waiting follow".

However, by the beginning of the first two centuries of the common era differences emerge in wedding demeanour that are reflected in early Jewish-Christian texts, such as the New Testament. The women are urged by the new Christian religious leaders to dress modestly without braided hair or gold and jewelry or expensive clothing (1Tim. 2:9-15). Brides now dress themselves in "dazzling white linen", suggesting no brocade, gold or adornment (Rev. 19:8). In one of the most famous texts in the New Testament where Jesus performed his first miracle at Cana, feasting with much food and wine appears to be the normal wedding custom (John 2:1-12). Finally, in the "Parable of the Bridesmaids", a custom is described where bridesmaids escort the groom into the wedding hall (Matt.25:10). Jewish weddings like the one described in Matthew occurred at night, which rabbis encourage to this day (Kaplan 1983:87).

Weddings as we know them from the Biblical texts appeared to have been events where dancing, music, laughing and loud feasting takes place. One of the strains that emerged for religious leaders in both Judaic and Christian circles during those first centuries of the common era was the need to make these boisterous events more solemn and less profane. Yet, regardless of the rules which religious leaders tried to enforce, the feasting that accompanied weddings had long-time ancient roots and did not seem to be waning. As early as the 6th century BCE, we read in the book of Jeremiah about " shouts of rejoicing and mirth [and] the voices of bridegroom and bride" (Jer.7: 34). In the 4th century CE, in Syria and Palestine, John Chrysostom said it was normal for the feasting to

have gone on for seven days, but urges people not to overdo the dressing up. He stated that the bride's real decorations were those virtues which made her marriageable (Stevenson 1983: 23). Jerome (342-420 CE) warned priests to keep away from marriage feasts. Basil of Caesarea (330-379 CE) condemned private weddings at home in favor of more solemn sacred places. In the 4th century CE in the Middle East, religious leaders were advised not to witness "wedding shows". They were to depart before the "players" entered (Stevenson 1983: 26).

With the prophets, imagery of royalty with references to crowns and wreaths worn on the couples' heads abound. In II Isaiah 61:10 we read "like a bridegroom wearing his wreath, like a bride adorned in her jewels". Still in practice today in Eastern Orthodox Christian rites, the crowns were a disputed element in the early Church. Tertullian opposed their use in the 2nd century CE, attributing paganism to them. The Romans used garland-crowns in marriage rites but so did the vestal virgins until their cult was disbanded in the 5th century CE (Stevenson 1983:16; Abbott 1999:30). From early on in the Roman west, the veil would be the primary bridal symbol while the male would have his "veil"—however, not on his head but only covering his shoulders. In the east, crowns and not veils were the norm for both grooms and brides. In contemporary Jewish weddings in Montreal, the bride remains veiled and the groom often wears his special *talit* covering his shoulders.

With the Book of Tobit (200-100 BCE), clearer wedding rites emerged with a written marriage contract authored by the father of the household. "[Raguel] turned to her mother and asked her to fetch him writing paper. He drew up the marriage contract.

Now he gave his daughter as bride to Tobias according to the ordinances in the Law of Moses" (Tobit 7:12-13). After this, they "began to eat and drink" (Tobit 7:17).

Two other significant biblical verses evoke powerful wedding symbols. Both these texts are often read in Jewish and Christian weddings. "Therefore, every man shall leave his father and mother, and join his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:23-24). When religious traditions try faithfully to encourage marriage they rely on this text. To the extent that Christianity tried to encourage marriage, for many centuries (until the post Vatican II period) the validity of the marriage state was subsumed under religious vocations. Standing apart from Judaism, the image of a "bride" became identified with the Church. Priests were considered "married" to the Church, their bride, while sisters in religious orders were "married" to their spouse, Christ. In turn, Christ was "married" to his spouse, the Church.

The second powerful wedding text comes from the Book of Songs, where we read about an intimate and passionate relationship between a bride and groom. "Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth, for your love is better than wine" (Song of Songs 1:2). "At night, on my bed, I sought the one my soul loved" (Song of Songs 3:1). When a Jewish bride speaks under the *chuppah* and gives her groom a ring, she usually says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song of Songs 2:16). In the case of the weddings that were studied in this research, in all four denominations, these were the words most frequently uttered by the brides.

To briefly sum up, the following symbols and practices were mentioned in Biblical texts: betrothal or engagement rites were focused on an agreement to marry and

the woman's consent; bridal price, dowries and gifts of precious jewels were associated with the betrothal or wedding; wedding crowns, garlands, belts, veils and luxurious garments were related to the newlyweds and the wedding party; wedding feasts, processions, bridesmaids and large parties seemed customary; and blessings, fertility, sexual pleasure and procreation were closely related to women through the symbolism of jewelry.

However, through time, the Biblical examples of Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel as model wives were reinterpreted differently by Jewish and Christian traditions. Both Jewish and Christian traditions decidedly shifted from a domestic to a larger religious sphere outside the family.

By the fourth century of the common era, Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) interpreted the nuptial blessing as being solely bridal and believed that marriage was about women changing their status and fulfilling their natural function as mothers. The western Roman churches would finally declare in 1969 that the nuptial blessing must include both groom and bride. While the mandatory presence of priests would only be settled in the late 1500s at the Council of Trent (when marriage would be made a sacrament), Judaism had already laid out a talmudic and post-talmudic structure by the 10th century CE when the presence of rabbis at weddings was vigorously required. By the time the *Sheva Berakhoth* were considered a universal custom around this time, a body of well-defined Jewish marriage rites were written down and governed by an all-male rabbinate (Kaplan 1983: 169). Going back to the earlier Genesis narratives, traces of wedding blessings belonged to parents, fathers, brothers and sisters. By the time the

medieval period arrived, the familial quality of blessings changed into a rabbinical and priestly one, where God rather than the family presided over marriage rites that had once been performed in the sanctity of homes.

Nevertheless, it would certainly be in the area of blessings or magical mantras long associated with the idea of fertility that important clues emerged for this research as to how wedding rings and religious leadership became entangled. Contemporary wedding rings can be interpreted as remnants of ancient protective amulets or fertility charms, which to a great extent have been trivialized by religious leaders of both Jewish and Christian traditions over the centuries.

Summary of Biblical Wedding Customs and Symbols (550 BCE -100 CE)

- agreement to marry at betrothal, a separate formal event from the wedding which could be a period of 30 days, one year or years if the betrothal were arranged when the daughter was a child (Josephus tells of Agrippa's daughters being betrothed at the ages of 6 and 10)
- a bride-price and/or equivalent sum from groom's family , or jewelry given to bride at betrothal
- a ring at betrothal for the bride (Tertullian of Carthage, North Africa mentions the use of the ring in Christian rituals in the 2nd century CE, which was probably known by the Jews as well.) Betrothal rings exist from the 2nd century BCE (Chadour 1994).
- bride accepts betrothal with verbal assent and by wearing the betrothal jewelry
- some sort of blessing by father, brothers, sisters and the groom (*birkat hatanim*)
- a veil worn by bride
- garlands or crowns worn by bride and groom

- bride and groom wore special clothing
- bride rides in a litter
- a procession
- singing and dancing at the wedding
- wine
- bridesmaids
- a written contract is prepared at the house of the groom
- a kiss
- joining of hands shown in *iunctio dextrarum* rings dating from 100 BCE
- a lengthy feast
- bride is handed over to groom by her father
- mother prepares a chamber and bed for bride, bride awaits groom to enter
- daughter needs comforting by mother on wedding day/night
- magical rites performed to purge unwelcome spirits in the bridal chamber
- weddings occur in the evenings
- religious leaders (rabbis) invited to the wedding
- consumation of the marriage

Rabbinic Judaism Defines "Jewish" Marriages and Weddings (200CE-700 CE)

For Michael Satlow, the early Talmudic period from the time of which one finds the theological bridal-groom imagery became key in his understanding of present-day Jewish wedding symbols. His research showed how the use of the bridal-groom imagery of God as groom and Israel as bride, found in Hosea, was first used by the early Christians (and not the Jews) in their adaptation of God to Christ and Israel to the Church. This went along with his claims that until the rabbinic period, the only biblical metaphor used by Jews in interpreting marriage was the creation myths or first marriage narratives found in Genesis.

The rabbinic Jews of Palestine would have been very uncomfortable with the biblical marriage metaphor in Hosea, where God marries Israel, as the idea of having sexual relations with God would have been implied and subsequently disdained (Satlow 2001:42-67). Perhaps with the early Christians, Essenes or Dead Sea community, where an increased number of ascetics appeared, such a metaphor became useful in promoting a less sexualized model of living. For the early Christians, God-Israel as Christ-Church did not create a mental visualization of sexual intimacy with God, but rather mirrored a more platonic view of actual lived human relationships at that time. The theme of fidelity and intimacy implied in Hosea would be translated by the Christians as being faithful to an eternal Christ and not to any other mortal human. Now marriage consisted of joining a religious order where one became a celibate spouse of Christ. For Christian women, this option, not permitted to Jews, created a possible way out of undesirable marriages.

Satlow further maintained that the theological or religious connotations given to marriage were not characteristic of Palestinian Jews. For Rabbinic Palestinian Jews, the Greek notion of *oikos* dominated their view of marriage where household, wife and children without God *per se* formed the center of their world view. The image of Israel being the son of God was preferred to the idea of being God's spouse. For rabbinic Babylonian Jews, however, marriage was more ambivalent. The competition between domestic responsibilities and rabbinic study revealed a stronger belief that marriage was linked to a supernatural good and was a way to avoid sin and to reproduce.

Satlow argued that previous to the rabbinic period and the ascendancy of Christianity there was no specific "Jewish" idea of marriage or unique "Jewish" marriage rite. As such, he emphasized that there were more differences in antiquity (500 BCE-614 CE) between Jews concerning marriage than between Jews and non-Jews. According to Satlow, Jews from Persia, Babylonia, Palestine and Rome differed from each other more substantially than Jews from non-Jews who lived side-by-side within each of these territories.

"With marriage, as with so many other areas, the adjective 'Jewish' is fluid and often negotiable. What connects and distinguishes the polygynous marriage of Yemenite Jews, the modern Orthodox marriage of Israeli *kibbutzniks*, and the marriage of an intermarried couple, with a wedding performed in accordance with a Jewish rite? Modernity has fractured and weakened the unifying function of rabbinic law...most people would probably agree that a few distinguishing Jewish wedding customs, such as

breaking a Jewish glass, are insufficient for constituting a Jewish wedding" (Satlow 2001:270).

But Satlow minimized the existence and significance of ritual practices and was more impressed by the evidence of wedding contracts that survived from antiquity, including the mini-archives of Jewish women from Elephantine, Egypt in the fifth century BCE. He concluded that wedding rituals were either of little importance or like their marriage contracts resembled the rites of other communities in Elephantine, in light of the overwhelming economic concerns expressed by these women in these documents. Both his conclusions did not bear weight. If one examined the equally significant contractual evidence from medieval Florence where three betrothal/marriage documents were drawn up, signed and registered with a notary, the secondary role of a wedding ritual does not necessarily follow.[72] The evidence from Florence showed that elaborate and different kinds of rituals accompanied these universal "Florentine marriage documents". These rituals usually were conducted with a notary, and hardly ever a priest, and could take place near a church or inside, at the bride's or groom's home, or under a *chuppah* held in the outside air. Just because women or men participated in common economic systems (as they did in Elephantine and do today in North America), they still performed particular rites of identity. As Gottlieb said: "if you want to prove that you are married you can refer to a document on file or in a government office, just as there is a document recording your birth and there will ultimately be one recording your death. A marriage

[72]Beatrice Gottlieb's research in the area of Medieval marriag contracts informed this idea (Gottlieb 1993).

certificate is not the same as a wedding, any more than birth certificates and death certificates are the same as being born or dying. People express ambivalence on this matter when they sometimes regret that they did not have a 'real' wedding even though all the legal requirements were satisfied" (Gottlieb 1993: 71, 79).

Two other points need to be said about ritual. First, religious ritual expression from generation to generation was rarely written down or recorded for a variety of reasons. Certainly in the case of Judaism, until Rashi in the medieval period, recording ritual blessings seemed to be anathema. Although one might find roots of ancient prayers in the Siddurs, the main method of transmitting traditional religious practices was orally from parent to child, teacher to disciple, rabbi to community. The idea of writing a prayer was compared to burning the words of the Torah (Steinsaltz 2000). Orality as a value can be also seen in the cantillation of Jewish prayers and in the mystic traditions. Second, family life-cycle events like birthday celebrations, weddings or burials were done so frequently by all members of the community that recording for fear of losing the tradition or for teaching purposes to an exclusive group was not necessary.

Applying Satlow's ideas to the present-day, his final conclusions reflected a rather culturally homogenized view of the Jews and non-Jews who lived in each of the places he mentioned above. There are certainly similarities between Jewish and non-Jewish contemporary weddings (as will be shown in the next chapter), but based on the findings from this study of Montreal weddings, more significant differences emerged between Jewish and non-Jewish weddings than between different Jewish denominations in the city.

Recapping his main idea that the shift from biblical to rabbinic times remains critical in understanding present-day Jewish wedding customs, Satlow claimed that the adjective "Jewish" used today to describe present-day wedding customs exists *only* because of Talmudic and post-Talmudic history. One particular wedding custom which benefits from Satlow's scholarship is the issue of the bride not speaking under the *chuppah* or not speaking the same words as the groom. While the rabbis (Orthodox and Conservative) might claim that "tradition" supports contemporary practices, Satlow points out that both biblical verses and rabbinical texts suggest two different interpretations. If one were to adhere to the biblical verses found in Genesis 24:8, one might follow Rebekah's lead as she spoke and thereby gave verbal consent to her betrothal to Isaac through his messenger Eliezer. One might claim that the Bible text provides roots for the bride to speak words of consent. However, Satlow will point out that a retelling of this story in Genesis *Rabba* 59:10 during the first four centuries of the common era was the actual root of today's Jewish practice of having some women remain silent. In the midrashim on Rebekah's betrothal, the rabbis have killed off Rebekah's father, Bethuel. Thereby, they have made the reason for her verbal consent dependent only on the fact that her father was dead, and so she had to speak in his place. Relying, therefore, on biblical roots alone would not satisfy all the answers to questions regarding the meanings and origins of Jewish wedding practices.

Only one modern Orthodox rabbi in my study pointed out that the custom of a woman giving verbal consent under the *chuppah* seemed only logical, but this custom was still not practiced by him or by any other orthodox rabbi in the city. He produced an

orthodox rabbinic manual published in New York by Goldin (1939) in which both groom and bride speak and say: "I take.....to be my lawful wedded husband (or wife)". Admittedly, he also said that "those exact words sound too Christian" [73]. But he reiterated that the idea of the bride saying something at the critical betrothal or *kiddushin* moment under the *chuppah* made more sense than the present-day custom of her remaining silent or saying words that really did not specifically respond to the groom's betrothing gesture.

To briefly sum up, Satlow's work, although not primarily concerned with ritual practices, highlighted the influence of a rich and complex rabbinic tradition upon Jewish weddings from the Talmudic and post-Talmudic periods. However, his conclusions about homogenous Jewish and non-Jewish wedding practices existing in the past and present overlooked the following: written legal documents that apply to all members of a city or country (taxes, real estate, civic laws) do not necessarily reflect differences in religious ritual practices; connecting weddings from the Talmudic period to those of the present-day requires ritual evidence; the fact that some present-day American or Israeli Jewish and non-Jewish families share similar economic concerns does not mean that they celebrate the same wedding rituals or religious values; the fact that some American Jewish and non-Jewish families share similar values does not mean that Jewish and non-Jewish families elsewhere share these same values.

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[73]Interview, April 24, 2001.

Summary of Wedding Customs and Symbols During the Rabbinic Period (200 CE-700 CE)

- there are now two distinct legal parts to Jewish marriage: betrothal/ *kiddushin* or *erusin,* and wedding/nuptials or *nissu-in* or *chuppah*
- after the 3rd century CE there is an engagement previous to the betrothal called *shidduchin* (it was improper to effect a betrothal without a previous engagment)
- domestic weddings led by a family member are now led by a rabbi (but this is still not the norm); the same is true for Christians with bishops, clerics or presbyters presiding, but still optional until late middle ages
- religious blessings simply take over words of consent
- in Palestine, brides' hair was braided (Gen. Rab. 18:1)
- in Babylonia, grooms placed ashes on their forehead, and wine, corn and oil were thrown before the couple
- processsion ends at the *chuppah*, a free-standing private place or a room in a pre-existent house
- whole village watches procession
- Christian differences in the east exist as to who should crown the couple—the father of the groom or the priest
- Ring for the woman until late antiquity, used as a sign of betrothal during some kind of betrothal ceremony (Tertullian)
- Two rings for bride and groom as a sign of marriage. The reference here again is a Christian one: Isidore of Seville, Spain (560 CE-636 CE).
- Clergy blessing imperial weddings more common than for the average household
- John Chrysostom (4th century CE) prefers that the blessing be given on the eve of the wedding so that the priest would avoid the festivities
- three rings occur, one called *annulus pronubus* for the bride at her betrothal, two for the couple's wedding day
- the rich wore gold rings, while the majority wore silver, bronze or glass replicas

Wedding Customs and Symbols in Western Europe from Late Medieval Times to the 1700s (1400 CE to 1700 CE)

From *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln* we learn about Jewish marriage practices among the upper classes in Germany in the late 17th century. Despite the increasing practice of merging the betrothal and marriage ceremonies into one day during the medieval period (Gottlieb 1993), Glückel's writings revealed that betrothals and marriages were still separated in time and were still arranged by the parents. In the case of the troubled betrothal of her daughter, Esther, who was "long betrothed", she could neither find the means of "breaking nor of consummating the match...So for more than a year the match advanced no further than the passage of unpleasant letters [between Glückel and the betrothed goom's family]" (Glückel 1977: 158). As for Glückel herself when she finally accepted a second marriage, "the betrothals were concluded in Sivan 5459 [June 1699] and the wedding was set for Lagbeomar 5460 [May 7, 1700], but actually took place on the 1st of Tammuz [July 1, 1700]" (Glückel 1977: 232). Glückel described her own wedding day—she was married under a canopy in a summer-garden neighbouring her husband's house at noon. She was led to the *chuppah* by two women, Frau Breinle (the rabbi's wife) and Frau Jachet, and was "wedded with a costly ring weighing an ounce of gold" (Glückel 1977: 242). After the ceremony, she was led to a chamber where food and the wedding cake were served to her. And although she fasted the entire day before the wedding, she could not eat because her "heart still overflowed with tears". There was also a "princely dinner" served that evening. We might guess that

the couple spent time alone after they left the "[bridal] chamber" in mid-afternoon until the evening.

These details and others which she provided give some idea as to how Jewish weddings were practiced during this period. Weddings were performed under a *chuppah*, a vase was broken to solemnize the signing of the contract at the betrothal ceremony, monies were exchanged between the two marrying families, parents did the betrothing (father, or mother in the case of a deceased father), marriage brokers were also available for hire in securing good matches, sons received marriage proposals as well as daughters, and betrothal ceremonies could be large public celebrations. In regard to the last point, we read about Glückel's efforts to conceal her betrothal in the "deepest secrecy", so that she would not have to pay the high taxes due to the Town Council upon departing for good from the city (Glückel 1977: 228). Betrothals must have been large celebrated events, especially with the elite.

Besides relying on the memoirs of a German Jewish widow, 17th century liturgical details and marriage customs of Jews, Catholics and Protestant Reformers can be gleaned from the works of Richard Hooker, the liturgical Protestant Reformer. His writings about Jewish customs mentioned that betrothal and marriage rites were merged into one by the medieval period. The espoused couples were under a chuppah while their betrothal was in the making. "He that should have beheld the Jews when they stood with a four-cornered garment [74]spread over the head of espoused couples while their espousals were

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[74]Van Gennep wrote about the French custom of the bride and groom being covered by a sheet or piece of cloth called a *pallium*, which was similar to the Jewish *chuppah*. *"Cette étouffe parfois précieuse, plus récemment simple voile ou drap tendu au-dessus de la tête des époux pendant toute la céremonie, ou*

in making [referring to the giving of a ring which he mentions beforehand], he that should have beheld their praying over a cup and their delivering the same at the marriage feast with set forms of benediction as the order amongst them was" (Keble 1845: V, 431).

With the tremendous turmoil in the Catholic world after Luther's new Reformed Churches began to spring up, the Council of Trent finally decided in 1589 to declare marriage a sacrament. In the wake of a counter-reformation, many of the new Reformers balked at all remnants of popish Catholicism and wanted to throw the baby out with the bath water. A significant body of texts written during the 16th century by these reformers pointed to the Jews and their traditions when Christians were arguing for their particular position regarding ecclesiastical ceremonies. Two such reformers, Richard Hooker and Charles Wheatly[75], gave us some insight as to what Protestants, Catholics and Jews were doing in their respective marriage rites.

Interestingly, one of the debates at this time was whether the ring should be kept in the new Reformed marriage rites or thrown out. Hooker, an advocate of keeping the sign of the Cross along with special feast and fast days, referred often to Jewish traditions as testimonies of a religion that had to adapt to many oppressive situations. He also was able to argue for a strong ecclesiastical tradition that did not undermine a divine tradition by appealing to Jewish models. As to whether Paul or Daniel were to be cited as

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seulement au moment de la bénédiction, était d'un usage général en France au moyen age" (Van Gennep 1946: 453-454). The Roman Rite of 1850 suppressed its use but local observers claim its use continued until the 1870s and 1880s. Van Gennep suggested a couple of meanings for this head covering ritual: one, the couple needed protection from dangers from the skies above; two, the couple needed privacy to express loving embraces like kisses. Other French ritual practices which were similar to Jewish ones were the breaking of a wine bottle and the two spouses being tied together under the canopy with belts.

[75]See Wheatley's *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer* (1858).

authorities for all Church observances, Hooker dismissed the dilemma using Judaism as a case in point. The Jewish people, like the Reformers, could create and observe feast days without necessarily associating them with the beginnings of their religion. The term "holy" had a fluid meaning here. The Feast of Purim in the Book of Esther was one example he used to show how a religion mandated a feast that originated by human and not divine decree, and with some variations of practice according to place was accepted by Jews everywhere (Keble 1845: V, 397).

In the case of marriage, he argued for the wedding ring because the Jews used it. We also learn through his writings that during the 1600s Jews got married under a *chuppah* with a cup of wine. What was remarkable was the extent to which Christians had knowledge of Jewish traditions and rites which would certainly not be the case today. He stated: "The ring hath been always used as an especial pledge of faith and fidelity. Nothing more fit to serve as a token of our purposed endless continuance in that which we never ought to revoke. But what rite and custom is there so harmless wherein the wit of man bending itself to derision may not easily find out somewhat to scorn and jest at?" (Keble 1845: V, 431).

Hooker's writings were especially relevant to one of the main ideas argued in this dissertation, namely that religious leadership (Jewish and Christian) often disregards the primary significance of ritual objects. (Several ideas found in these 17th century works could also be found in the interviews that I conducted with the rabbis and priests in Montreal in the late 1990s.) In the section on Matrimony, Hooker quoted those who opposed the late 1500s decree from Trent making marriage a sacrament (which Luther

eliminated) and who wanted to remove the wedding ring from the newly Reformed rites. Again, the communities of believers continued to bring into their sacred ritual spaces those symbols which had meaning for them, despite the opposition from official rulings of the religious leadership. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, the history of wedding rings proves this point. The following excerpts reflect the ideas of Hooker and his opponents debating the issue of the ring.

"As for matrimony, that also hath corruptions too many. It was wont to be counted a sacrament, and therefore they [the Roman Catholics] use yet a sacramental sign to which they attribute the virtue of wedlock, I mean the wedding ring, which they foully abuse and dally withal, in taking it up and laying it down. In putting it on they abuse the name of the Trinity. I know it is not material whether the ring be used or no, for it is not of the substance of matrimony; neither yet a sacramental sign, no more than the sitting at communion is: but only a ceremony of the which M. Bucer...saith on this sort; 'This ceremony is very profitable, if the people be made to understand what is thereby signified: as that the ring and other things first laid upon the book [referring to gold and silver coins] and afterward by the minister given to the bridegroom to be delivered to the bride, do signify that we ought to offer all that we have to God before we use them, and to acknowledge that we receive them at his hand to be used to his glory. The putting of the ring upon the fourth finger of the woman's left hand, to the which, as it is said, there cometh a sinew or string from the heart, doth signify that the heart of the wife ought to be united to her husband; and the roundness of the ring doth signify, that the wife ought to be joined to her husband with a perpetual band of love, as the ring itself is without end'.

If it be M. Bucer's judgment which is here alleged for the ring, I see that sometimes Homer sleepeth. For first of all I have shewed that it is not lawful to institute new signs or sacraments, and then it is dangerous to do it, especially in this which confirmeth the false and popish opinion of a sacrament. And thirdly, to make such fond allegories of the laying down of the money, of the roundness of the ring, and of the mystery of the fourth finger, is (let me speak it with his good leave) very ridiculous and far unlike himself. And fourthly, that he will have the minister to preach upon these toys, surely it savoureth not of the learning and sharpness of the judgment of M. Bucer" (Keble 1845: V, 431).

The writings of Richard Hooker revealed another important theme in the evolution of rituals. Despite close similarities between customs, as has been indicated above with the use of the wedding ring in medieval Jewish and Catholic rites, there was a conscious desire on the part of religious leaders to create new names and words for similar practices. New wording would evoke differences in the minds of the communities that with time would eventually lead the communities to believe that these customs were in fact different from the start. With the case of a new mother giving birth, Hooker once more mapped out the need for a new Reform ritual. But here the connections between Judaism's purification rites and Christianity's churching rites were too close for comfort. So, although he adhered to the practice carried out by both Jewish and Catholic women, Hooker renamed the rite as "The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth". His opponents to the wedding ring now said "Churching of women after childbirth smelleth of Jewish purification: their other rites and customs in their lying-in and coming to church

is foollish and superstitious as it is used" (Keble 1845: V, 436). Hooker's aim was to keep the old rite under a new name, "bing done not Jewishly but Christianly, not of custom but of duty, not to make the act of lawful matrimony unclean but to give thanks to God for deliverance from so manifold perils; what Christian heart can for the name's sake thus disallow of it as you do" (Keble 1845: V, 436).

Hooker's texts revealed that marriage and purification rites after childbirth expressed different religious identities, despite their commonality among Jews and Christians. As to how powerful the role of religious leadership was in the shaping of these identities was critical. When new identities were formed, such as during the Reformation period, the need to mark distinct boundaries escalated—became urgent. When Christianity in the first two centuries broke away from Jewish roots, when Protestantism broke from Roman Catholicism, the creation of new written texts alone would never suffice. Visible concrete symbols defining one's new identity within the context of public rituals were essential to validate and initiate a new collective memory. One of the major debates in medieval Europe centered on whether wedding ceremonies should be civic or religious. How did medieval Jews relate to the on-going secular/sacred marriage debate within Christianity? Beatrice Gottlieb's research on medieval marriage patterns and wedding customs will provide further insights into wedding practices during this period.

Gottlieb's research revealed important insights about medieval marriages and how Jews and non-Jews resembled and differed from each other in the west. According to Gottlieb, Jewish marriage patterns were less varied than those of non-Jews. She claimed

that Jews married at a rate of 100 % in the medieval west compared to others who had options like entering the monastery or convent. Gottlieb provided a sociological picture of medieval marriage and weddings that challenges those who claim that love rarely entered into what seemed like a typical business-natured marital negotiation. Reading about Glückel's many financial negotiations involving her children's betrothals and weddings, one may assume that love and emotions rarely entered a late medieval or 17th century wedding picture. But Gottlieb described what may be called a typical medieval courting scenario: "members of the opposite sex would meet at work in the fields and the threshing barn or at play in seasonal village festivities at fairs, and on pilgrimages to local shrines. They singled each other out, exchanged words and caresses and gave each other presents, couples often said that they had picked each other out and that they were in love. There was no moment in history when love suddenly emerged as a conscious motive for marriage; it was there all along" (Gottlieb 1993: 54-55).

However, what did emerge in the late medieval period were the roots of religious denominationalism in ritual practices in the wake of the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent in 1563. With so many clandestine weddings taking place in the medieval period, where notaries or lawyers were all that was needed to sanction a legal union, the Roman Catholic Church who had remained marginal in the wedding ceremony now made two assertions: one, marriage would now be considered a sacrament; and, two the presence of a priest was mandatory at all weddings. The medieval Christian world was split between those who favored a more sacramentalized ritual approach to religion and those who preferred the less clerically-driven path. The move away from large public

weddings with noise makers and charivari customs towards more private intimate weddings (like the painting by Jan van Eyck of the Arnolfini Betrothal, *The Arnolfini Portrait* 1434 CE) signaled a movement away from the superstitious to the secular. The ancient roots to the charivari customs were grounded in beliefs that rites of passage were vulnerable occasions when evil spirits might penetrate. But since the biblical and early Christian times, these practices were both sanctioned by the religious elite and condemned. The Catholics did not want to encourage private clandestine weddings, yet they did not want to endorse obscene charivari activities. The Protestants would prefer the more quiet sober and intimate weddings, preferring to separate themselves from any activity that touched upon superstition. Today, one still finds remnants in Protestant weddings of sober rituals where alcohol is prohibited and feasting is limited.

The need to have some visible outward sign as to the validity of the marriage became a serious concern in the medieval period. If elopements today have less import since the sexual revolution in the 1960s, the medieval period had more than its share. The "Reno" of western Europe was called "Gretna Green". A trip to Gretna Green in Scotland was a sure way to avoid parental interference or church control. Any minister there would marry any couple. Perhaps in trying to sort out the many legal cases that appeared in courts, based solely on words of consent, more formalized ritual signs were needed. Ecclesiastical courts did back up couples who claimed that they pledged themselves to each other, regardless of parents' wishes. But with the official presence of priests, weddings abandoned public profane spaces, such as taverns and inns, and entered the sacred spaces of church buildings. Jewish weddings already had a history of being

performed outdoors under a canopy, not always needing the confines of a specific sacred space like a synagogue. (A number of present-day Montreal Jewish weddings are performed in hotels or rented halls). In this way, a non-religious institutional tone could be said to characterize Jewish rather than Christian weddings. Religious contrasts, however, between Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities became dramatically accentuated after the Council of Trent. Marital identities now took on a religious aspect which would dominate the values of courting, sexual relations and gender roles. Religious markings of these identities were solidified by the use of betrothal and wedding rings. With marriage becoming a sacrament, it *had* to last forever, "until death do us part". The Christian betrothal rings of the next two centuries after Trent demonstrated this Catholic marital value with a skull and bones depicted on their "engagement" rings. Jewish rings never displayed death symbols alongside marital ones. More significantly, however, was Trent's decree that single-ring wedding ceremonies were to be the norm. In areas such as Bordeaux and Bayonne in southern France and in areas in northern Spain, where double-ring ceremonies were practiced, Trent forcibly repressed these customs. After 1563 in Catholic ritual manuals from these areas any reference to them disappeared (Mutember & Molin 1974). However, for Jewish couples who lived in these areas and others as well (Alsace and Vienna), two wedding rings were not suppressed.

Summary of Wedding Customs and Symbols from Late Medieval times to the 1700s

- many varieties of betrothal practices existed (private, public, informal, formal)
- exchange of gifts or gifts only from groom to bride

- marriage was a process, not a single event
- legal ties of betrothals were powerful and often difficult to get out of
- betrothal ceremonies included a drink of wine from a common cup
- exchange of promises in public of betrothed couple, rather than only considering parental negotiations
- betrothals could last from 3 months to 10 years
- pregnancy could occur before marriage, along with cohabitation after betrothal
- Jewish and some Christian weddings performed under a canopy
- feasting included cake, music and dancing
- outdoor wedding processions were elaborate (and often men separated from women)
- betrothal and weddings merged into one day, although at betrothals saying words of consent, joining hands, kissing and a ring become the norm
- bride wore her hair down and loose for the last time at her wedding
- priests blessed the marriage bed and the couple were placed in it in view of guests
- blessings in Jewish weddings are given to both groom and bride, whereas Christian brides may only receive blessing
- aristocratic Protestant weddings were small with a modest lunch, avoiding dreadful public displays
- women said they must "obey" their husbands in their Christian wedding vows
- parents were slowly being excluded from the choosing of spouses
- Jews and Muslims were the only ones who could divorce
- church weddings meant the receiving of the Eucharist on the wedding day which led the couples to abstain from sex on their wedding night (and 3 nights afterwards)

Chapter 4

Jewish Wedding Symbols

Le rituel [populaire du mariage] s'exprime, non pas par des paroles, mais par des gestes corporels et des objets manipulés.

Nicole Belmont

This chapter will present the results of the first part of the research work that involved a photographic study of 140 Montreal Jewish weddings from 1947 to 1964. The second part of the research involving Jewish weddings from 1990 to 2001 will be presented later in Chapters 6 and 8. An initial question which motivated the photographic research centered on whether Jewish grooms in Montreal wore wedding rings before 1975. A second question centered on whether Montreal Jewish wedding symbols were similar or different from Christian and Catholic ones. These questions would eventually lead to an investigation into the history of the second wedding ring, which will be covered in Chapter 7, and to inquiries into the origins of contemporary Jewish and Christian wedding symbols, which will be included in this chapter.

Having the means to *see* rituals enacted from the past presents an excellent opportunity to study ritual histories when written documentation of these histories does not exist. Given what was said at the beginning of the last chapter concerning how enacted rituals often differ from their written ritual histories, the use of photographs becomes a fitting research tool for the study of such histories. Central to this research, then, and as will be demonstrated in this chapter, has been the study of material objects and non-verbal means of communication within the context of rituals. This chapter will

emphasize that lived religious traditions are represented by what people do and not always what the official religious or legal scripts say they do. These wedding symbols mark actual lived identities. The photographic evidence will demonstrate that Montreal Jewish weddings from the late 1940s to the early 1960s were precursors to present-day weddings, not only with respect to a continued practice of Jewish brides giving their grooms rings, but also in the way that gendered and religious identities were prevalent. As markers of identities, the photos from this period showed brides and grooms presenting Jewish "pictures" of themselves as feminine brides and masculine grooms to a, usually, very large group of people. The pictures also reveal definite styles that characterize each decade, suggesting that our own individual identities live within larger contexts.

Photographs serve as "primary documents and not just as illustrations for textual information" (Hockings 1995: 205). As Barthes claimed, photographs are a kind of speech, to be included under the umbrella of language. "Language, discourse, speech means any significant unit of synthesis, whether verbal or visual: a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even objects will become speech, if they mean something" (Barthes 1971: 111).

The sheer volume of images and the repetitive nature of some of the elements found in the Drummond Collection called for a structure for categorizing a number of recurring symbols. I have identified these recurring symbols as "key Jewish wedding symbols". With special focus on gender roles and the use of wedding rings, these images showed that in 100% of the weddings the bride wore a wedding ring. In 84 of the 140

weddings, both groom and bride wore wedding rings. Although I could not say whether the second ring was given under the *chuppah*, the groom was definitely wearing his wedding ring at the reception. He was given the ring either before the ceremony, during the ceremony under the *chuppah* or after the ceremony (in the privacy of the bridal chamber or before the couple sat down to eat at the reception). I could conclude that in Montreal in the early 1960s two wedding rings were being worn on wedding days, may have been exchanged under the *chuppah* and were in the consciousness of many Jewish couples, including Orthodox and conservative ones.

As for the photographic material that I found in the Allan Raymond Collection, one particular wedding from August 1953 demands special mention. Compared to the weddings included in the Drummond Collection (many of which occurred at the very same time as this 1953 wedding), this wedding represented what could be called an "ultra-orthodox" wedding today. With the *chuppah* outdoors and the groom wearing his white *kittel*, this wedding revealed interesting contrasts and similarities to the Drummond weddings and showed another view of Montreal's diverse Jewish communities.

Finally, an important question needed to be addressed. "Could all the wedding symbols viewed, like the bride's white wedding dress, be called 'Jewish'"? Defining these symbols as "Jewish" followed from the facts that the photos belonged to a Jewish organization (CJC), the weddings were performed by rabbis, and the weddings often took place in synagogues. Anything which I saw in these photo negatives, therefore, became named "Jewish symbols"—the mirrors, the bridal gowns, the flowers, the two rings, the bridesmaids, and so on. In a similar vein, but on a smaller scale, the Allan Raymond

Collection was called "Jewish" because it was housed in the Jewish Public Library, the Jewish brides were from Montreal Jewish families, and rabbis and synagogues were sometimes evident. How meaningful, though, could this be in understanding the word "Jewish"?

The subjects were Jewish and therefore performing Jewish gestures, but some of them also looked like non-Jewish subjects performing non-Jewish gestures. Answering the question, "What were *true* Jewish wedding symbols?", would involve more than observing Jewish wedding photos. Some comparative work was required, not only with other non-Jewish weddings but within Judaism itself. Only by understanding other Jewish symbols within Judaism and the interplay of these symbols with the wedding symbols can one come close to defining "Jewish wedding symbols". It is only within such a complex of symbol systems that any particular symbol can be understood. In addition, further research was required which included the interpretations of actual ritual participants. As will be shown in Chapters 6 and 8, the voices of Montreal Jewish couples and rabbis were documented as they expressed what their "Jewishness" meant in relation to the wedding symbols shown here.

Identifying "Key Jewish Wedding Symbols"

From the viewing of the 12, 580 photographic negatives in the Drummond Collection, some symbols were observed to be consistently repeated. These prominent wedding symbols will be briefly described along with some comparative material in order to bring out some significant historical feature. Numbered Plates illustrating these

symbols have been placed after the Bibliography and Appendices. Readers need to refer back to a List of Plates included before Chapter 1 (Introduction) for further information about each Plate.

The consistent recurring symbols found in the 140 weddings were: *chuppahs*, flowers, mirrors, veils, bridal gowns, tuxedos, top hats and *kippahs*, handkerchiefs, elaborate food tables, wedding cakes (and the cutting of cakes), processions of people (bridesmaids, ushers, pageboys, flower girls, parents), dancing, kissing, the signing of papers, rabbis cutting bread (*challahs)*, garters, tuxedos, rings and jewelry. A couple of unique images were the crowning of parents with wreaths of flowers (representing "*mezinke or mezink*"which marked the marriage of their last child) and a belly dancer performing at a Sephardic wedding.

Jewish wedding symbols that were completely absent or rarely shown in the photos during this period (1947-1960s) were: the circling of the bride around the groom, the *Sheva Berakhoth*, the drinking of the wine, the giving of the ring or rings[76], the groom wearing a *talis* or *kittel*, and the breaking of the glass under the *chuppah.* This does not signfiy that these events did not take place, as one wedding from the JPL Archives shows clearly the groom wearing a white *kittel.* However, these symbols were not in evidence in the Drummond Collection. There was also a restriction on *chuppah* shots before the 1970s.

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[76]One exception was a 1970s wedding where the photograher captures the moment under the *chuppah.* We see the bride's right index finger extended and the ring placed on the middle joint (P16A/1/77).

Chuppahs and Flowers

In all 140 weddings that I viewed, whether the wedding took place in a synagogue, hotel or on top of an apartment roof, a canopy defined the ceremonial sacred wedding space. Most of these canopies were stationary and decorated with flowers. The use of fresh cut flowers in Montreal Jewish weddings took on huge proportions and still plays an important role today. Unlike Christian and Catholic weddings, however, where no canopy exists, the use of flowers in Jewish weddings need not be limited to the bride's bouquet, the banquet tables, benches, corsages and boutonnieres. Flowers assumed prominence of place in the decoration of *chuppahs* (Plate 1, Plate 2). With so many fresh cut flowers, the *chuppah* takes on a new meaning, that of a rich garden or paradise. In a description of a Jewish wedding celebrated in London in the late 1800s, flowers decorating the *chuppah* were mentioned. "In front of the reading desk is placed the canopy or *chuppah*, supported by four slender posts and beautifully decorated with white flowers and green leaves" (Hutchinson 1897: 312).

Besides the obvious symbolic meaning of conspicuous wealth which huge quantities of fresh cut flowers denoted, the floral wedding canopy evoked the idea of nature, of a pleasurable sweet smelling garden. Even Glückel's wedding cited earlier took place in a "summer garden". In the east, fragrances attracted the gods and acted as an effective communication device to contact spiritual powers throughout the history of religious rituals. Sweet smells, in the west at least, have been frequently associated with women more than men (Goody 1993). Resembling more a bridal than a groom's chamber, ("Let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber, and the bride from her

chuppah" [Joel 2:16]), the ceremonial wedding space of the post 1960s looked quite different from those portrayed before the 20th century. The focus on flowers associated with the feminine appears to take precedence in the way wedding ritual spaces and bride's bouquets have developed. Moreover, even in the photos of Jewish brides that I saw dating before the 1940s, conspicuous huge bouquets of flowers, roses or lilies (calla lilies with heart shaped leaves) were very prominent (Plate 3, Plate 4). There were also similar examples of Catholic brides in Montreal from the same era. One outstanding element in all weddings in Montreal—both Jewish and non-Jewish—regardless of their simplicity or opulence, whether the bride wore a long or short dress, white or turquoise, veiled or unveiled was that flowers in some shape were present (Plate 5). Even when there was no bouquet, the bride wore a corsage on her lapel or on her handbag. The groom usually always had a boutonniere. However, the absence of flowers was conspicuous in the earlier representations of Jewish weddings from the 17th to 19th centuries (Plate 10, Plate 13, Plate 14, Plate 15, Plate 16).

There were examples, nevertheless, of simpler and less decorated *chuppahs* from this century. I found two examples of outdoor *chuppahs* from Orthodox weddings, one dated from 1953 which took place at nighttime (Plate 6, Plate 7), the other from 1970 (Plate 8) took place on a roof top during the daytime. A third example showed a 1996 Conservative wedding with a simple portable *chuppah* (Plate 9). Along with a less ornate canopy, other features of the 1953 outdoor wedding became more apparent. In that wedding, freer movements and physical closeness on the part of the community members were depicted when compared to the indoor weddings that were viewed. Whereas the

interior weddings were confined to a more restricted seating arrangement, they also generally conveyed more formality in the way the entire bridal party was positioned.

For the very Orthodox in this city, weddings still take place outdoors, even in the coldest month of February. As one informant from an Orthodox synagogue told me:

> "99% of all our weddings are performed outside, even in winter, and there is never a storm when the day of the wedding arrives. Or if the weather is not great on that day, by the time that the wedding is performed it turns out nice. Mostly Ashkenazim...no, we do not have a special place outside, it is just on a cement platform, with a *chuppah*. Most of these weddings are performed by ultra-orthodox rabbis and couples, not from our congregation. They just use the facilities. Only when the external rabbi does not have jurisdiction in Quebec to sign the official marriage documents does our Rabbi help out, by signing and preparing the official marriage documents. But he does not perform any part of the ceremony. Our rabbi performs 5 of the 20 weddings performed here. The Ultra-orthodox who marry in our synagogue bring their own koshering experts. Even though our facilities are kosher, they don't trust anyone about this matter. They blow torch our stove every time they have a wedding banquet.They never get married on a Sunday. Any day of the week, Wednesday, Tuesday, Thursday, usually around 7 p.m. at night. Our members were originally Hungarian and Roumanian Jews. Temple Emmanuel was always certainly in the 1930s and 1940s a high toity kind of place, aristocratic, not where Roumanian or Hungarian immigrants flocked to" (Interview).[77]

According to Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, the wedding canopy brings to mind ideas of protection and covering found in the rooftops of our homes, the canvas tents of biblical days, the skies of divine origins, the garment which the groom must provide for his bride,

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[77]Interview February 19, 1996.

the bed sheets of conjugal intimacy, the new joint household of the married couple, the extended household of the parents who also stand with the newlyweds and the larger Jewish community who stand in witness of *chuppah* (Kaplan 1983: 133-148).

Although biblical sources are given as evidence from the past of the symbolic meaning of a wedding canopy (Psalms 19:6; Joel 2:16; Exodus 21:10), Jewish scholars differ in their interpretations as to when and where it was originally used (Kaplan 1983: 140). The possible confusion of the wedding canopy with the groom's *talis* enters the picture as well (Plate 10). Yet, there are clear examples where no wedding canopy was evident in Jewish weddings. In Josef Israels' wonderful intimate depiction of an early 20th century Dutch wedding, there is no visible *chuppah* (Plate 11). In a 1950 Reform wedding, at a hotel in New York City, a Montreal groom married a New York bride without any visible *chuppah* (Plate 12). We do know, however, that from as early as Glückel's writings in the mid 17th century, a "canopy" (not to be confused with a veil or *talis)* was used.

"The wedding took place at noon, in our summer-garden. Frau Breinle, the wife of the rabbi, and the rich Frau Jachet led me beneath the canopy, and my husband wedded me with a costly ring weighing an ounce in gold" (Glückel 1977: 242).

Earlier, in fragments from Ketoubahs and manuscripts dating from the 15th and 16thh centuries, representations of wedding canopies are found that clearly show four poles that clearly distinguish it from other representations showing a piece of cloth (*talis*) touching the couples' heads (Klagsbald 1981: 43-44). In Moritz Oppenheim's painting dated 1800-1882 (Plate 13), we see in fact both a canopy with four poles covering the

couple and a piece of cloth touching their heads. And, in the 18th century engravings done by Picart, we find an example of a canopy attached to a wall (Plate 14) and again the use of a *talis* or cloth to cover both the bride's and groom's heads (Plate 10). We find other early examples of both portable and stationary *chuppahs* on Torah binders of the 18th and 19th centuries (Plate 15, Plate 16).

During the 1950s and 1960s, photographs under the *chuppah* were restricted if not forbidden. As more cameras with telephoto lenses developed in the 1970s, along with a new wave of video technology, the 1980s recorded every minute of a wedding. Today photographing and videotaping every moment of a wedding, whether it be Orthodox or Reform (or any other religious denomination), has become an essential feature of the wedding experience and cost[78].

A striking feature that was evident in the earlier 18th and 19th century *chuppah* representations, but absent from the pictures dating from the 1950s onward, was the fact that couples in the pre-20th century images usually stood alone under the *chuppah* with an officiant. The Oppenheim painting (Plate 13) shows this well. Today, on the other hand, couples do not stand alone under the wedding canopy. The inclusion of the couples' parents as well as the rabbi creates a crowded space not previously observed. Perhaps the inclusion of the parents of both bride and groom under the *chupah* has been a 20th century development, signaling a change in family dynamics. In the past, however, if we consider the pictures dating before 1903, we see only the couple (and an officiant)

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[78]Wedding photo albums and videos, as a package deal, can range from $3,000 to $10,000 (Interviews June 25, 1997; June 1, 2001).

under the *chuppah* or under an intimate *talis*. Related to this change has no doubt been the change that has taken place with the concept of "family" (Westermarck 1926; Cohen 1948-49; Duby 1978; Gottlieb 1993; Yalom 2001). Yet, in today's global world where couples seem more autonomous and separate from their parents than in previous generations, the *chuppah* configurations tell a different story. The bodies huddled under today's *chuppah* convey the idea that parents are closely implicated in their adult children's lives. Couples in the earlier depictions are more dramatically alone under the *chuppah*, marking more clearly their separation from parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents who have gathered around them but remain at some distance.

Although many couples in the1980s and 1990s contributed in large part to the payment of their own wedding celebrations (Girard 2000; Trembaly 2001; Ingraham 1999; Interviews 1996-2001), parents also were solid defrayers of the enormous rising costs of weddings. As financial contributors to their children's weddings and education, parents are still attached to today's newlyweds when it comes to financial assistance. Paying for a child's education through graduate and post-graduate studies is not uncommon for post-modern parents. The sociological configuration of the family has changed in the past one hundred years, and the presence of two generations under the *chuppah* demonstrates the prolonged role which parents today play in raising children. Furthermore, in today's urban mobile lifestyle many invited wedding guests have not yet met the couple's parents or extended family. Thus, clearly displaying the parents under the *chuppah* identifies them to all the family members and guests who have come from near and far to attend the event.

Surprisingly, in interviews with couples, the *chuppah* was never mentioned as a distinctive "Jewish symbol". Taken for granted as a "natural" symbol, never disputed amongst Orthodox, Reform, Conservative or Reconstruction denominations, the *chuppah* was silently invisible in the interviews.

With reference to the way other religious traditions use wedding coverings, two examples are:[79] 1) In the Hindu tradition, the couple sits under a canopy to receive their guests after they have completed the wedding ceremony (Hutchinson 1897); 2) As to the use of a nuptial cloth which was spread over the heads of the married couple, we find a reference from a 14th century Christian wedding of King Edward II's niece, Isabella, to a son of the Earl of Arundel in 1321. "Delivered for a veil to be spread over the heads of Richard and Isabella at their nuptial mass—a piece of Lucca cloth" (Cunnington 1972:63). However, the word "veil" here does not refer to the exclusive bridal veil which has a whole history onto itself.

Mirror, Veils and *Bedeckung*

One striking image in the Drummond Photo Collection which recurred over and over again was the bride gazing at herself in a mirror with another woman (mother, bridesmaid, sister, friend or other female relative), usually in her home and before going

[79]Covering the head has been a long standing tradition in religious rites. One striking example of how ancient traditions persist over time comes to mind. When the young Dalai Lama rode in a car in a public meeting with Mao Tse Tung in the early 1940s, a devout monk ran next to the vehicle holding an open umbrella over the car to make sure the Lama's head was covered.

to the ceremony (Plate 17).[80] Sometimes the bride was touching her hair, putting on lipstick or touching her veil. This association of mirrors with females has a long history. The photos presented various kinds of mirrors: full-wall, portable standing, half-wall, antique framed or small hand-held ones.[81]

Mirrors have had a long history in legends and religious myths, and have often been associated with women and adornment. Rivers, lakes and oceans were the original natural mirrors of colors as the sun set or the moon reflected in the dark of the night. Images of the moon on bodies of water have been long-standing symbols for feminine beauty and fertility. The watery substance of the earth, its primary life-force, has led to a close association of women with fertility, child-bearing and water. In ancient myths from India, we find images of *Yaksis* living in trees or near rivers and adorning themselves with jewels and using mirrors (Coomaraswamy 1971). Mirrors have been likewise associated with women and deceit. During medieval times, as is still observed today by some wiccan high priestesses, mirrors were absent in homes. This custom was based on the pagan belief that wandering negative energies or spirits that enter a house could be drawn into the mirror and reflected back on the person looking into them. In Tibetan rituals, after the ritual space has been purified, mirrors are often used by the monks to reflect back the positive energies produced by the ritual into the outer space beyond the

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[80] In Tremblay's book on Catholic weddings in the Haut-Richelieu valley during the1980s, she cited the custom of the mother and bride being photographed together while fixing the bride's hair or veil (Tremblay 2001: 116).

[81] Wedding videos of the late 1990s didn't include "mirror shots", but frequently had a scene where the bride was at the beauty shop having her hair, make-up or nails done. Sometimes both bride and groom nowadays go to a spa to have massages before their weddings. More frequently, though, a bride has a beauty treatment on the morning of the wedding.

confined ritual space. The monks refer to this "mirror reflection" rite as a concrete way by which invisible positive energies can be transmitted to others not actually present at the ritual.

In Jewish symbolism, the clarity and transparency of mirrors have been used as symbols for religious and mystical meanings. Ezekiel 1:26 states "And above the firmament that was over their heads [of the angels] was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone." This is interpreted as meaning: "When he saw the image of the throne, which is meant for the King to sit upon, from there will go forth His reign over the world and His judgments. And the throne was made of the sapphire stone, which resembles a transparent mirror so much that it looks like a looking-glass" (Rabbi Ilani undated: p. 74).

As for the practice of women and men beautifying themselves by means of make-up, hair styles or jewelry, cultures everywhere have partaken in this human preoccupation. Two contrasting examples of how the early Christian and Jewish leaders dealt with such questions of adornment will conclude this section.

In Tziona Grossmark's work on jewelry and jewelry-making in Israel at the time of the Mishnah and Talmud, she describes the following practices and sources. "In the Babylonian Talmud at the beginning of the 4th century, a sage taught that 'the custom of make-up and beautifying were part of the adornment of the ancient Israelite bride and should be continued and encouraged. And the ancient sages put much emphasis on the beautifying of the bride. She was allowed during Yom Kippur to rinse her face and brides were not prevented from wearing their wedding jewelry at a bereavement [during her first

year of marriage]'. And in the Mishnah it says that avoiding jewelry and adornment was like self-flagellation and this [ascetic] practice was permitted by the sages. The sages decreed that a husband who has prevented a wife from wearing her jewelry had to give her a divorce (Ketoubot 7:3)".[82]

Women who did not beautify themselves might become responsible for their husbands not fulfilling their marital duty to procreate. "When Sages first felt a woman should not use cosmetics or wear pretty dresses during her menstrual period lest she tempt her husband, Rabbi Akiba argued that she would become ugly in his eyes and he might divorce her, so the ban was removed" (Lewittes 1994: 126). So Rabbi Akiba allowed women to wear jewelry during their *niddah*[83] (Grossmark 1994: 173). Adornment was linked to ideas of procreation and sexuality, and as such it became instrumental for religious leaders at certain periods of time to construct distinct gender and religious identities.

For the early Church Father, Tertullian of Carthage, the 2nd and 3rd centuries of the common era were times of religious and cultural change. Preaching mostly to newly converted Christians, many of whom were probably from Jewish families, he stressed the need for Christians to distinguish themselves from the pagans or Gentiles. "You should hate that which ruined your fathers, that gold which they adored when they abandoned God, for even then gold was food for the fire" (Tertullianus 1959: 148). He condemned

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[82] See Grossmark's work *Jewellery and Jewellery-Making in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud*, Ph.D. thesis in Hebrew (1994: 170).

[83] *Niddah* refers to a menstruant Jewish woman who is rendered sexually prohibited to her husband during her time of impurity (Lewittes1994:118).

the madness of the Roman circus, the cruelties of the arena, the foulness of the theatre and the multitude of Roman cults. "Just because God created horses, panthers and the human voice that is no reason why a Christian should devote himself to [this] madness" (Tertullianus, 1959: 127). About women beautifying themselves, he said:

"I see some women dye their hair blonde by using saffron. They are even ashamed of their country, sorry that they were not born in Germany or in Gaul. As a matter of fact, the strength of these bleaches really does harm to the hair, and the constant application of even any material of moist substance will bring ruin to the head itself, just as the warmth of the sun [will also produce]. How can they achieve beauty when they are doing themselves harm? Why, you will even find people who are ashamed of having lived to old age and try to make their hair black when it is white, missing the chance to show some maturity? The harder we work to conceal our age, the more we reveal it. For, surely, those women sin against God who anoint their faces with creams, stain their cheeks with rouge, or lengthen their eyebrows with antimony. Obviously they are not satisfied with the creative skill of God." (Tertullianus, 1959: 135-137).

Given that Tertullian had many more admonishments for women, his rare comments to men revealed that men had similar worries about appearance, but they were not harried in the same way as were the women. He wrote: "cutting the beard a bit too sharply, shaving around the mouth, arranging and dyeing the hair, darkening the first signs of grey, disguising the down on the whole body with female ointments, smoothing the body with gritty powder, always looking in a mirror gazing anxiously in it" (Tertullianus, 1959: 140).

Although differences in time and place separated religious leaders of the first four centuries of the common era from those of today, what remained noteworthy was the role which adornment played and still plays in representing religious identities.

Frozen in time, the mirror shots in the Drummond Collection which focused on the bride's hair and veil related to another group of pictures depicting the bride's *bedeckung*. The Jewish ritual of veiling—in Yiddish, the bride's *"badeken die kallah"* or *"bedeckung"* [84]—is unique to Jewish weddings. The *"bedeckung"* photos showed the bride, usually in the rabbi's study, being covered with her veil. Having biblical antecedents, the Jewish custom of veiling the bride has been linked to Genesis 24:65 when Rebecca "took a veil and covered herself" just before meeting her betrothed, Isaac. The fact that Rebecca covered herself points to a difference, however, in the way the custom is practiced today.[85]

In most of the photos, the grooms and rabbis (sometimes fathers and mothers) did the veiling. Most of the time this action was performed by males. Moreover, the mirror pictures with only females were present seemed to convey more accurately Rebekah's situation in the verse just quoted from Genesis. Rebekah's story (as partially reconstructed to fit present-day symbols) is presumed to include a full sense of consent on the bride's part before she goes to meet her betrothed. The mirror pictures represented

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[84] Others call it "badekunish" (Kaplan 1983:124).

[85] Abraham Chill offered several reasons for the custom of "veiling the bride". Protecting the bride from *ayin ha-ra* or the "evil eye" resembled the Hindu custom of "veiling the groom". Another was the custom of covering the eyes when the *Shema Yisrael* was recited, indicating blind faith in God. So it is with the bride who demonstrates her whole commitment to her husband. Or, the veiling prevents any embarrassment to the groom who might notice some last minute blemish on the bride's face (Chill 1979: 280-281).

the consensual aspect of the bride as willingly placing a veil on her own head and having her mother witness her own veiling. But they also expressed a tinge of sadness, reflection and even uncertainty. They show one of the bride's last moments with her mother as an unmarried daughter. The 1960s photos communicated these emotions and realities. Today, the usual custom of the bride and other females who attend to her make-up and dressing does not suggest the same expression of "I am leaving home and my parents".[86] After viewing the mirror shots it seems plausible to argue that present day weddings are not transformative rites of passage, in the sense that couples are not moving from known to unknown territories. The mood today is much lighter, since most brides have already left home and their mothers to live on their own.

In today's world where veils and long dresses are not everyday wear, their use as reified ritual objects becomes more apparent. Interpreted along feminist lines, the veiling of the bride has been interpreted as a patriarchal gesture, and where the groom covers her eyes, a sign of subordination (Schneider 1984: 324). Because of the presence of official witnesses it can be interpreted as reflecting the groom's *halachic* (legal) obligations. The groom must provide clothing for his wife and in placing the veil, he is symbolically doing this. Accordingly, this may constitute *chuppah,* meaning that he is placing his garment over her (Ruth 3:9) or setting up a household together (Kaplan 1983:126). Symbolic as well of the groom's control over the bride's appearance, clothing and future material goods, the veiling when touched by the mothers or mother-in-laws takes on a whole set of

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[86]This observation was made by viewing several wedding videos of couples married within the last ten years.

different meanings. When mothers and fathers touch the veil with the groom, they may act as witnesses to ensure the proper identification of the bride or, more importantly, they may symbolize a much older tradition, the blessing of the bride by the parents. [87]

Touching and blessing the head, moreover, is distinct in action and meaning from veiling which connotes covering or hiding. Hiding or covering points to the idea that the brides are objects of beauty or value to be cherished, protected and kept from the view of others. However, there is a dominant/subordinate dynamic at work here. The groom does the covering action and the bride is covered up. Whereas, if we return to Josef Israels' painting (Plate 11), the two being covered together evokes no such opposition. Men also have their eyes covered when they perform the priestly benediction in the synagogue during the *Rosh Hashannah* service (Plate 18). Their bodily posturing does denote subordination, but not to other men or women—only to their God.

What do the pictures communicate as the bride is veiled? There were many to choose from. One bride stared adoringly at her groom while he returned her glance. And parents in the background smiled proudly. The rabbis seemed attentive, whereas the *hazzan* was staring right out of the picture, not very interested (Plate 19). In another, the bride wore a tiara and seemed stunned or very tired. Her eyes caught the photographer's and not those of her intended groom (Plate 20). In a later wedding from 1970, a significant change occurred. The veil was lifted by mother and mother-in-law while groom stood at the back, never actually seeing his bride's face (Plate 21). The women

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[87]When rabbis recommended that transparent veils be used so that the brides might see the ring and what was going on in the ceremony, that may have been simply evidence of the later custom of the fashionable use of veils which previously were not seen under the canopy (Kaplan 1983:127).

had center stage in this ritual. Careful as well to not disturb the bride's hairdo, the mothers displayed a sensitive yet confident touch not seen in the men's gestures. The seated bride showed a rather submissive pose as all the dominant actors were standing over her. The rabbi appeared like a director on a stage set, supervising or giving directions to actors carefully rehearsing their unfamiliar parts.

In another early example of a 1953 ultra-orthodox wedding, the bride's veil was touched by another female (not her mother or mother-in-law) and two men (the groom and a young man) (Plate 22). The rabbi did not touch the veil, as was also the case with most of the photos from the Drummond Collection. The bride's veil in this 1953 ultra-orthodox wedding was much more opaque than most of the other veils that were viewed. Since this wedding *chuppah* took place outdoors, the groom and bride were led outside by their parents. Again, the segregation of the sexes predominated as the mothers led the bride and the fathers led the groom.

The procession of bridesmaids and ushers was not evident in this wedding (Plate 23, Plate 24, Plate 25). The groom could be seen wearing his white *kittel* and a fashionable hat of the 1950s, but not a *kippah*. Given that the wedding took place in August (short sleeves were seen on guests), the groom wore a long dark topcoat over his *kittel*. Later at the reception he has taken off the white garment and is seen wearing a dark formal dinner jacket.

Very little of today's wedding practices, like the "bedekung", resembled those of the world in which Rebecca lived. Yet, the appeal and desire for brides today to wear veils persist, whether they be Jewish or not (Plate 26, Plate 27, Plate 28). Entangled

within this web of veils and women are ancient myths of mirrors, beauty and female adornment coupled with historical facts.

We know that in England in the late 1800s Jewish brides were veiled during the ceremony under the *chuppah*. "The cup is then handed to the father of the bridegroom, who gives it to the bridegroom to drink. It is then handed to the mother of the bride, who gives it to the bride to drink. To do this, she lifts up the bride's long white diaphanous veil which covers her head and most of her dress" (Hutchinson 1897: 313). We find examples in the 18th and 19th centuries of Jewish brides' faces being covered (Plate 14, Plate 16) and uncovered (Plate 13, Plate 15). We also find examples of Christian brides' faces being covered in the 19th century (Plate 29, Plate 30). Within the first part of the 20th century, we find many Catholic brides in Montreal not wearing veils or white dresses (Plate 31, Plate 32). According to Girard's study of 36 weddings from 1915 to 1940, 12 brides from *la classe Bourgeoise* wore veils and white dresses, three from *la classe moyenne*, and two from *la classe ouvrière* for a total of 17 out of 36.

Tremblay's research of brides married in the Haut-Richelieu (south of Montreal) from 1980 to 1995 reported that one half of the brides married in 1980[88] wore no veil, but all those married in 1995 wore a veil. In the late 1990s, most Jewish and non-Jewish brides were all wearing veils and long white dresses.

The evidence above shows that both Jewish and Christian women in the past covered their faces in wedding rituals, at least in parts of Europe and Great Britain in the

[88]In the Drummond Photo Collection of weddings during the 1980s, all the brides wore veils and long white dresses (Interview with Ruby Shulman, Drummond Photographer, October 12, 2001).

19th century. Suffice it to say that the general practice of brides wearing wedding veils as we know it today began only in the nineteenth century (Cunnington 1972: 60). In Montreal, covering one's face may not have been that prominent, at least with the French Canadians. The tradition amongst Montreal Catholics seemed not to have been so much an issue of covering one's face, but whether one wore a veil at all. It would appear that more Jewish women before the 1940s wore veils and white dresses, whereas many Montreal Catholics did not. For Catholic brides the veil went hand in hand with a long white dress, which went hand in hand with several bridesmaids, all unaffordable for most working and middle class families. Whether the Catholic brides who did wear veils covered their faces seems highly unlikely .

For the present day (at least since the 1980s) in Montreal, Jewish brides wear veils and have their faces covered whereas Catholics and Christians wear veils but don't cover their faces. On the subject of women veiling their faces in ordinary life, but not specifically for the purposes of weddings, one must review a long history of women and their roles in society (Stauben 1860; Heath 1885; Laver 1982; Hunt 1996).

Surveying the particular histories of female head-gear according to country and local practices is too vast a task indeed. For our purposes, only a few examples will be cited to show how the diverse practices of veiled women did not in the past signify wedding apparel. Depending on the sumptuary laws and the added restrictions upon Jews, the following are some examples showing the story of women and veils in the west. "In England in 1541, under penalty of 3s. 4d. no unmarried woman should wear white or colored caps, and that none but the sick and aged women should wear a hat unless riding

or going into the country. [During] the 1500s in Germany, free married women of Nuremberg were covering their head and not infrequently covered up their mouth and chin with the liripipe. This was not enforced on the unmarried, who wore their long plaits in divers forms" (Heath 1885:434). Generally women in western Europe before the 15th century wore hoods, not only in Germany but in Ireland and Portugal as well. Afterwards, three common articles of head wear were used by women: a hat, a muffler (placed over the lower portion of the face) and a kerchief. According to Heath, the object of the muffler was to prevent the wearer from being recognized. However, other usages for mufflers have suggested that the face needed protection from insects or the sun. Women might use to their advantage the freedom of being unrecognized in order to wander more freely in public places. Medieval hoods and caps gave way to feathers and hats. Hair ornamentation became extravagant and, once more, a female's head could set the rich apart from the ordinary folk. The demands of female ornamentation from the past or the present have also provoked questions of ethics. When wigs and false hair were at the height of 16th century fashion in England and France, stories circulated of women decoying wandering children into private places to cut off good locks of hair (Heath 1885: 438). Hints that there was a horrible source for the supply of false hair coming into England after the massacres of Paris in 1572 were echoed in Drayton's "Mooncalf".

"And with large sums they stick not to procure

Hair from the dead, yea, and the most unclean

To help their pride, they nothing will disdain."[89]

As the advertisements in bridal fashion magazines of the 1990s and early 2000s showed, brides with veils covering their faces appeared frequently. With one particular advertisement (Plate 31), the popularization of the veiled face has now assumed a romantic sex appeal. When linked to romance and seduction, contradictory images are portrayed of women being dominated by males who "veil" them while at the same time the males are under the control of the brides who have "captured" or "netted" them. In Plate 32, the bride's hand suggests that she is the one who is "capturing" him in her webbed net. The bride here holds the veil around her groom, she is enveloping him, she is veiling him. However, this is not a Jewish *bedeckung*. The bride is not Jewish, but Christian. She wears a cross on a chain around her neck, clearly showing her religious identity. In addition, her bare shoulders reveal the unlikelihood of her being an Orthodox Jewish bride. But this image will reach many segments of the female population, Jewish and non-Jewish. And, in so doing it will perpetuate the sale of veils and the ideas that go

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[89]We read about a similar situation that occurred in the use of slave and penal labor to mine gems in ancient times.

> "For, wet with tears of those condemned to penal labor in the deadly foundries of the accursed mines, those 'precious' metals leave the name of earth in the fire behind them and, as fugitives from the mines, they change from the objects of torment into articles of ornament, from instruments of punishment into tools of allurement, from symbols of ignominy into signs of honor" (Tertullianus 1959: 123).

Today, the same might be said about "blood" or "conflict" diamonds used in the production of the universal engagement ring. These "conflict" diamonds, coming mostly from the Sierra Leone region, have caused little public protest from world religious leaders. These diamonds have been mined in an environment where extreme, repressive labor conditions have led to many deaths. Not unlike the story of gems that were mined in the ancient past, the question of ethics also enters the practice of wedding symbols.

along with this so-called "ancient tradition". Selling "sex-appeal" and "feminine mystery" may have been what Rebekah had in mind. Religious traditions need not have to worry about maintaining rites such as "veiling the bride" when a healthy American fashion industry is selling both the material and mythological accoutrements keeping such "traditions" alive.

White Wedding Gowns

"The traditional color of the wedding gown today is white. Unlike other traditions, Judaism does not see the white gown as denoting virginity. Rather, it suggests purity from sin, since all couple's sins are forgiven on their wedding day. There are no requirements as to the style of the wedding gown. To a large degree, it depends on the tastes of the couple. It can be knee length, but not shorter or long. However, there are some minimal requirements of modesty required by Jewish law, and these will affect the design of the gown. The sleeves of the gown should reach at least to the elbows. Also, it should not be cut low in front or back. It should not be made of a sheer material through which the bride's body would be visible. This is also true of all other people in the wedding party. Where mothers and bridesmaids choose gowns, these gowns should also conform to the Torah standards of modesty." (Kaplan 1983: 60-61).

In the wedding photos, wedding gowns revealed brides' elbows and sheer material was used through which skin could be seen. Most of the time the sheer material was used to create an illusion of long sleeves. (Plate 6, Plate 33, Plate 34, Plate 35). Likewise, bridesmaids, maids of honor and mothers wore sleeveless gowns and

revealed elbows (Plate 36, Plate 37, Plate 38). There were other gowns which did cover up more (Plate 39, Plate 40).

The question, "Why did the dresses of Jewish brides resemble those of Christian brides in this city?", relates to the fact that everyday clothing for both Jews and non-Jews was similar as well (Plate 41). However, brides today who may not pay particular attention to rabbinic decrees on how to dress in everyday life are careful to adhere to the rabbis' wishes at weddings. Plate 42 shows a Conservative wedding from 1996 where the bride wore a wedding dress with little skin showing and the groom wore his traditional prayer shawl (*talis*). This "traditional" style of both the bride's dress and the groom's prayer shawl was absent in the photos that I viewed from the earlier period (1947-1960s) in the Drummond Collection. Are the Montreal rabbis in the last 20 years more insistent about dress codes under the *chuppah*? Perhaps the rabbis' concerns might be understood in light of an increase in religious conservatism and in the politicizing of religious denominations.

Montreal weddings before the 1940s (during WWII many brides wore colored dresses or suits) saw white gowns worn by those who could afford them (Plate 43). Because most of the photos that I viewed dated before 1947 represented the more privileged families in the city, a complete picture of Montreal weddings during these early years is far from complete. It may very well be that during this early period more Jewish than Catholic brides wore white gowns in a city that was predominantly Catholic. One Montreal Jewish bride married in 1947 reported the following:

"When we decided to get married, I did not want my parents to spend a lot of money, and so I decided not to wear white. But my mother insisted and she said she would make the gown. My aunt made my veil and sent it to me from London, Ontario. In the end, my parents had to borrow money from an insurance policy to pay for the dress ($250) and the wedding" (Interview).[90]

In the province of Quebec, white wedding gowns only became the norm after WWII. "*[1935] Ma robe était en velours chiffon noir. J'avais un chapeau et des souliers noirs. J'avais pas de voile, juste une belle boucle de ruban*" (Dionne 1994:21). After the 1950s, a time of post war prosperity, the "universal" western wedding custom of wearing white was set in motion.

Van Gennep likewise indicated that the white wedding gown in France did not become popular until the late 1940s, the post WWII days (Gennep 1946: Tome I, Vol. ii, 390). Both overseas and in the province of Quebec, the norm was not the white wedding dress. If brides wore a long gown it was colored, but more frequently brides wore a two-piece suit and hats. "*De la fin des années 1920 jusqu'en 1945, les mariées des milieux modestes et ruraux vont porter un tailleur deux pièces (jupe et veste) réutilisable. Si elles optent pour une robe, cette dernière n'est généralement pas blanche mais choisie en fonction d'être reportée. La robe de mariée longue et blanche est d'abord un phénomène bourgeois et urbain; elle se démocratisera et gagnera le monde rural après la Seconde Guerre mondiale*" (Dionne 1994:21).

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[90]Interview May 24, 2001.

Historically, the popularizing of wearing white has usually been associated with Queen Victoria's wedding. "Following this [Queen Victoria's wedding in 1840] grand event, many white Western middle-class brides imitated Victoria and adopted the white wedding gown. By the turn of the century, white had not only become the standard but had also become laden with symbolism–it stood for purity, virginity, innocence, and promise, as well as power and privilege" (Ingraham 1999:34). But, one must remember that this "standard" was restricted to royals and families of wealth, for wearing white was not a wedding norm even in the 19th century.

Cunnington cited the trend beginning earlier in the 1700s in England, but not among the working class or rural families. In a play, "The Belle's Stratagem" performed in 1780, the bride expresses the following uncertainty: "Whether I should be married in white or lilac, gave the most cruel anxiety" (Cunnington 1972:61). Belonging strictly to royalty and the urban rich of the 19th and early 20th century, white bridal gowns were a rarity. The Quebec example of "*Les Enfants de Marie*" (Plate 29) showed clearly how white was synonymous with virginity and material wealth. This Catholic custom identified both unmarried females and families of good financial means at community weddings. Beginning in the late 19th century and associated mostly with non-rural parishes in the vicinity of Montreal, these white gowns and veils were not always thought of in a positive manner, especially by parents with modest incomes. One father who did not want his daughter to become a member of *Les Enfants de Marie* gave the reason that the cost for all the wedding paraphernalia would be too high. *Les Enfants de Marie* were a religious and financial marker in the community. Moreover, ritually *Les Enfants de*

Marie reinforced the difference between the veiled unmarried virgins and the newly unveiled married bride. As the photo indicated (Plate 29), the bride no longer wore a veil, but a hat. After the wedding, she would leave *Les Enfants de Marie* to join another group of married women, *Les Dames de Sainte-Anne* (Tremblay 2001:162). Yet the focal point of one bride with one white dress was diminished in these weddings where the bride was surrounded by many white gowns and veils. Identifying the bride was not always easy when several other females were wearing identical outfits. The Catholic Church's ambivalence toward marriage—encouraging young females to consider celibate convent life—was demonstrated with this Quebec custom.

There were other religious rituals besides *Les Enfants de Marie* which influenced the wearing of white at weddings and its "virginal" or "purity" connotations. Besides the Catholic ritual of First Communion, Reform Jews in Montreal also wore white at their confirmation rites[91]. These Jewish Confirmation photos were in some ways rehearsals for a young girl's and boy's future wedding day (Plate 44, Plate 45). The young girls in the Confirmation photos (Plate 44) wore white, pearl necklaces and held bouquets of flowers. The boys wore wedding symbols also, dark formal suits and white carnations as boutonnieres. White was associated with coming of age (hence focused on the value of sexuality and virginity), spiritual attainment, and was displayed with material finery.

When looking back at Kaplan's comment about the meaning of white wedding gowns in Jewish practice (which was written in the early 1980s), several questions arise.

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[91] Whether Reform Confirmations had any impact on Orthodox weddings in the city is doubtful. Certainly, the white Confirmation dresses encouraged Reform brides to anticipate their white wedding day.

He wrote that "unlike other traditions, Judaism does not see the white gown as denoting virginity". Kaplan, in emphasizing the Jewish idea of atonement and purification from sin rather than virginity, shifts the focus of white from weddings to Yom Kippur. Accordingly in Talmudic times, "we are told (Ta'anit 26b) maidens would dress themselves in white robes on Yom Kippur and go out into the fields to sing and dance" (Chill 1979: 204). On Yom Kippur, both men and women don white robes before leaving the synagogue. In shifting our focus to this purification and atonement ritual, our gaze thus turns to both groom and bride, rather than just to the bride. We see the groom's white *kittel* and prayer shawl which mirror the whiteness of the bride's dress. In this visualization, the bride's white presence has slightly less impact when she is standing next to another white garment. When the groom is entirely dressed in black, the contrast between bride and groom is more clearly demarcated.

Or, was Kaplan's comment motivated by other concerns? Did he realize that virginity for newlyweds in the 1980s (when he wrote this) was probably a fiction? The need for a tradition to maintain a valuable "white symbolism" for its wedding ritual was greater than a fading reality which no longer applied. In tune with changing sexual mores and a steady "white wedding industry", Kaplan reiterated a purely "Jewish" symbol for the bride's white dress. For today's couples, where co-habitation is the norm before marriage, white and virginity remain fictional. Yet, in today's pre-wedding rituals, most brides go home to their parents' house the night before the wedding, re-enacting a "virginal" scene. It does not really matter whether the groom goes home the night before, as it seems to matter less what the groom's sexual status is. This imagined script re-

creates the scene where the daughter leaves her parental home and enters for the first time the husband's (or the couple's) home, even if the reality is otherwise. Wearing a white veil and gown enables this fiction to prevail.

There has been a move in the wedding fashion industry to introduce colored wedding dresses in the late 1990s . Whether this new colored tradition will last, only time will tell. Is it entering the culture because there are so many second or third marriages (Plate 46)? Do brides more than grooms need to identify with each successive marriage their "new married" status with an elaborate but totally different wedding gown? Weddings represent gendered identities where females are "transformed" by their status, whereas males wearing the same black tuxedo are less marked and so less "transformed" (Plate 47, Plate 48).

Top Hats, *Kippahs*, Handkerchiefs and Signing Documents

"The bridegroom is decked with a crown at marriage, too, and that is the reason why we do not marry pagans, lest they drag us down into idolatry with which their marriage ceremony begins" (Tertullianus 1959: 262). Wearing garlands or crowns, described by Tertullian in the 2nd century CE as a pagan practice, was rejected by both the early Christians and Jews in the attempt to set themselves apart from icons representing unfavorable cults.

Could top hats and tails not also be defined as "pagan" symbols belonging to a more modern era? Before answering such a question, the history of sumptuary laws and religious negative discrimination must be considered. Jews and non-Jews in the medieval

era were restricted in terms of headgear, jewelry and clothing (Hughes 1986). But in addition to discriminatory sumptuary laws aimed at differentiating social, gender and economic groups, Jews were also subjected to defamatory treatment with regards to their appearance. When emancipation arrived in the 18th century, European Jews were eager to live, dress and breathe equally amongst their non-Jewish neighbours (Seltzer 1980). Yet, the past 20th century still had its horrific share of anti-Semitic events, culminating with the murder of millions of Jews during the Holocaust. Post WWII identities were once again thrown into question as Jewish men and women took various stances as to who they wanted to be and who they could be within communities where they were still a minority. These different identities found expression through different ways of dressing.

In the photos of the 1950s and 1960s, representing a middle to high class Jewish population, almost all the men wore top hats and formal jackets or tails. (According to the Drummond photographers, top hats went suddenly out of style after 1970). During the post WWII years up until 1970, Jewish grooms did not always wear *kippahs* under the *chuppah*, while signing the *Ketoubah* in the Rabbi's study or at the banquet table. However, in the photos of the 1970s and even those of the 1990s, one can see a change in the head attire of the invited guests and the grooms. More men are wearing *kippahs*, including both the invited guests and the grooms. In Montreal in the year 2001, whether they are Reform, Orthodox, Conservative or Reconstruction Jewish males, grooms now all wear *kippahs* for their wedding ceremony. In addition, as was previously mentioned (Plate 42), what was dramatically missing in the 1950s and 1960s photos were prayer

shawls, even in the Orthodox weddings. Today, on the other hand, even in Reform and Conservative weddings, one can see the groom wearing his prayer shawl.

The use of handkerchiefs or touching the rabbi's prayer stole was observed in almost all of the 140 weddings in the Drummond Collection. The most frequent example took place in the rabbi's study showing the couple signing documents or when the bride was veiled. Called "*sudar kinyan*", this ritual represents one of the concrete ways in which the groom accepts the conditions of the marriage contract. The photos demonstrated non-verbally that the grooms and rabbis were connected in a way that the brides were not. The men visibly shared something in this touching ritual, whereas the women did not. Frequently, the rabbis were standing and the grooms assumed a subordinate seated position. The rabbis also appeared as if they are saying something, while the grooms remained silent. In many of these photos, the brides looked bored, showing little interest (Plate 49). In one example both bride and groom were active participants, holding on to a handkerchief while being hoisted up into the air at the reception. This use of a (piece of white cloth) handkerchief showed much more excitement, joy and interest than the handkerchief touched by groom and rabbi. When both husband and wife were "dancing in the air" trying to hold on to each other with this small white handkerchief, a more inclusive community feeling was portrayed.

In all the wedding photos that I viewed, both brides and grooms were seen signing some document before the wedding ceremony began[92]. In these photos, the rabbis were frequently present, and thus helped in the identification of the synagogue or religious

[92]I could determine the sequence of events by the number on the negatives.

denominational affiliation. Despite the viewer not knowing the contents of these documents, these "signing photos" communicate a rather egalitarian gendered activity (Plate 50). Both groom and bride appeared to be on the same footing, following gestures and directions from a rabbi who often was giving a pen or watching the signing. Whether they were signing a civil marriage certificate, a synagogue registry or a Jewish *Ketoubah*[93], however, was difficult to discern from the photos.

Processions, Reception Lines, Bridesmaids, Ushers, Flower Girls, Page Boys

When couples used to elope (today an almost non-existent practice[94]), all the legal requirements of a wedding were met: the signing of the marriage certificate, the presence of witnesses, the vows spoken, the ring(s) exchanged. However, absent were the processions, reception lines and elaborate entourage of ushers and bridesmaids. Van Gennep would use elopement *(fiancée cachée, fuite de la fiancée)* as an example to point out the absence of important ritual elements like the *cortège* or procession. Without these important ritual elements, the wedding event accelerated too quickly—"*[trop]*

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[93]Although today the *Ketoubah* does not exist in Catholic tradition, in the Roman Catholic Rites in at least 12 dioceses during the 16th century,"*la charte nuptiale*" did. It would be presented and blessed immediately after the giving of the ring. Mutembe explains this custom as being a remnant of "*de coutumes séculières et familiales, qui se sont tout naturellement insérées dans la liturgie*" (Mutembe 1974: 157). Again, in the north of France, "*la charte*" disappears by the 16th century, but not in the south, in Avignon and 10 other districts. It is called by various names: *carta, cartula, pagina, littera*. Mutembe suggests that these "*chartes nuptiales*" should make a come-back. He urges young couples to write their own "*charte nuptiale*", which would become part of the opening marriage ritual, to be read out loud. Strangely, he makes no comparison with the Jewish custom of *Ketoubahs*.

[94]One of the main reasons why elopement has declined lies in the fact that co-habitation before or outside marriage is acceptable practice. In North America, 40% of first babies are born out of wedlock (Yalom 2001:353).

brusquement" (Van Gennep 1946: 325). Elopement without a procession produces a shortened and condensed wedding event, with too little time and space available to absorb the critical movement from the single to the married state. Processions actually slow weddings down, and take up space. When such ritual elements (like processions) are included, clearer marks can be imprinted in time and place to publically display the new families and to minimize trauma caused by sudden changes in status. The sufficiently elaborated amount of time and space provided by processions allows married couples and their families to mark their new status more gradually and more conspicuously.

The primary interpretation of wedding processions as we know them in this century (enacted inside churches, synagogues or reception halls) stems from the physical departure of the bride from the parental to the nuptial home (which frequently was her husband's home). As early as the 9th to 11th centuries in a North African Jewish community in Kabès (present-day Tunisia), a description exists of a bridal procession which took two days and involved three houses: the bride's, the husband's and an intermediary house. Part of the original Hebrew text is provided below in English with translator's comments appearing in brackets.[95] The original text was part of an article, "*La Ketouba Chez Les Juifs Du Nord De L'Afrique*" written in 1905 by A. Büchler. The text describes a community's wedding customs in the context of a question posed to a "revered rabbinical scholar" about repeating the seven wedding blessings a second time to a bride who is *nida* (menstruating). The whole premise for this description might have

[95]I would like to thank Noga Emmanuel for the translated version of this text.

been to point out the necessity of having a second house as the *mikveh* where the bride was to spend a night before going to her husband's house.

> "The custom in our community was as follows: On the eve of the nuptials day, the bridegroom, accompanied by his best men, comes to the bride's house. From there, in a festive procession of friends and kin, the bride is led to another place of abode, belonging either to the bride's or the groom's relatives, or to some other distant kinsman. At this place of abode the bride remains until the morrow. Before the bride leaves this place to go to her husband's house, the wedding blesser [wedding officiator] blesses her with the seven blessings. The bride then is led to her husband's house in a jubilant entourage. Upon arrival at the groom's house, the blesser [wedding officiator] blesses her again with the seven blessings, after which she steps, together with her husband, under the bridal canopy. We do not know why the seven wedding blessings are bestowed twice in the above-mentioned places, and we are apprehensive that maybe it is a case of bestowing a superfluous blessing. We ask the revered rabbinical scholar to inform us whether we ought to persevere with this custom or not. Another clarification that we ask of our rabbinical scholar is in the following case: when the bride is *nida* (menstruating), it is our custom to bestow the seven blessings upon her and let her drink from the glass [of wine?]. When she is clean, we bestow another seven blessings. We need the instruction of the revered rabbinical scholar as to whether this is the correct practice" (Büchler 1905: 170).

Abraham Chill recalls the long history of wedding "escorts" in Judaism who hold candles and escort the groom to the wedding canopy. He refers to the Midrash concept of *shoshvinim* which dates back to Adam and Eve when the angels Michael and Gabriel escorted Adam to his marriage with Eve.

In *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*[96] there is a description of the wedding of the first couple: "The ministering angels act as best men who guard the bridal canopies, as it is said: He appointed his angels to watch over your ways, and your ways must always be the ways of grooms, like a cantor [*hazzan*]. What is the way of the cantor [*hazzan*]? A cantor [*hazzan*] blesses the bride who stands under her bridal canopy, the same way that God blessed Adam and his mate. God blessed them and said: Do not delay me. Like a cantor [*hazzan*] who blesses the bride under canopy, they stood up and blessed Rebecca, as it is said: "And they blessed Rebecca" (Büchler 1905: 172)[97].

And furthermore, as described in Büchler's text, the bride also had her escorts, carrying candles as she approached the canopy where the groom was already waiting for her. Elements in present-day Jewish and Christian weddings can be found in this text. The groom usually arrives first and waits for the bride (either at the altar or under the *chuppah*); and second, there are escorts or ushers or bridesmaids to accompany both the groom and bride.[98] However, as the photos revealed, the groom was escorted by his parents and the bride by hers. Traditionally this never appears in Christian weddings. The groom walks down the aisle alone, and the bride is escorted only by her father. In many of

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[96] *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezar* (*Chapters of Rabbi Eliezar*) are aggadic midrashim dating from the medieval period. Aggadic midrashim are derived from homilies given by the amoraim (rabbinical teachers from the third through fifth centuries) in synagogues and academies. "These aggadic midrashim sought to convey general moral and religious truths, to offer inspiration, and to give consolation in times of trouble" (Seltzer 1980: 269).

[97] Translated from the Hebrew by Noga Emmanuel.

[98] Chill also said: "Customs such as flower girls, bridesmaids, ring bearers, best man and ushers and many other similar practices are recent borrowings from the non-Jewish environment and are alien and even contrary to the Jewish concept of marriage as it developed throughout the centuries" (Chill 1979: 278).

today's weddings, some variations are occurring, where the minister or priest asks for both mother and father of the bride to "give their daughter away" in marriage to the groom. But frequently, it is still the father who answers the question, "Who gives this bride in marriage to....?".

The perception exists, however, of processions being more Christian than Jewish. A young Sephardic bride who was married in a Montreal ceremony officiated by three rabbis, one Ashkenazi and two Sephardic, said the following:

> "I walked down the aisle, that's non-Jewish. I know in Israel this is definitely not done. The dancing was not Jewish either because we danced together, mixed. But we did start with the Jewish hora. But, even though the food and dancing resembled Italian weddings, my wedding had kosher food. And I went to the mikveh." (Interview).[99]

However, I also heard the following from the mother of a young Orthodox bride:

> "We had the wedding at that hotel because there was no aisle in the synagogue. You know, that synagogue has that side entrance on an angle which would mean my daughter would have no grand entrance. She was so beautiful and she wanted to make an entrance. Everyone could see her this way" (Interview)[100].

An ultra Orthodox bride's mother told me:

"I insisted that the procession be done right. I would not allow my daughter to include her friends walking down the aisle. The only people to walk down that aisle

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[99] Interview, August 6, 2001.

[100] Interview, August 5, 2001.

would be family and in the right order. The wedding was in the States, no one would know who our family is if not for that walk down the aisle. I gave her an ultimatum, 'Either you do it the correct Jewish way or no wedding'. She agreed" (Interview).[101]

Through processions, communities enact two important legal principles through non-verbal ritual actions. They witness the marriage—thereby providing the necessary publicity required and their actions are concretely irreversible.[102] In forming a procession, a group all go from one place to another, all re-enacting the same simple action that a newly paired couple perform when they enter their new abode. Appearing rather ordinary, the couple's walk to their new abode actually symbolizes two main features of marriage: co-habitation and the formation of a new household or family.[103] "*Réduit à son schéma fondamental, le geste [du cortège] est celui même qu'il faudrait accomplir pour qu'un couple puisse commencer à vivre ensemble*" (Belmont 1978: 654).

In all the photos, processions were clearly in evidence along with reception lines, best men, bridesmaids, flower girls and page boys (or ring bearers). The long reception lines also showed a public display of the community's legal testimony to the marriage, as well as conveying the idea of royalty—the couple became king and queen receiving homage from their subjects (Plate 51, Plate 52, Plate 53, Plate 54, Plate 55). In addition,

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[101]Interview, May 9, 2001.

[102]Another interpretation for the legal necessity of wedding processions goes back to antiquity and to the middle ages when "*tapage des noces*" (noise makers) publically announced the marriage (Belmont 1978:654).

[103]The word "family" of course signifies different ideas in different periods. As marriage rituals indicate, a gradual development can be observed in the order and manner in which wedding processions have occurred over time—whereby the father exclusively, or an uncle, brother, religious leader (or later) parents "give" the bride away.

the reception line recognized the gift-giving role of the community and the couple's thankful gratitude to their gift-givers. It may also be the first time when friends or family meet either the new wife or husband. It is the first time that the couple appear in public as wife and husband.

As for interpreting processions in terms of gender ordering, the groom always processed first after the rabbis. The bride was always the last one to walk down the aisle, which did not necessarily place her last in importance, but rather positioned her as the reigning princess or queen.

In Plate 56, an 18th century example of a Jewish wedding procession is portrayed. The veiled bride is walking under the portable canopy held by four small children, while musicians lead the procession. As was mentioned above in *Pirke de R. Eliezer*, "the bride who stands under *her* bridal canopy" might suggest, as shown in Plate 51, that the wedding canopy was used to escort the bride from her home to the synagogue or designated ritual place. The term " bridal canopy" appropriately fits the context of this historical usage.

Food, *Challah*, Wedding Cake

In all the photos, food was abundantly displayed with frequently elaborate floral arrangements (Plate 2, Plate 57). Even when the reception was on a much smaller scale, a formal table with special foods could be seen (fancy carved cantaloupes) (Plate 58). *Challahs*, traditional braided egg bread, were always present—usually very large in size. Whenever the *challah* was seen, a man (often the rabbi) was cutting it (Plate 59). A microphone was close by, indicating that this person would say something during the

ceremonial cutting. In one unique photo, the groom did the ceremonial cutting (Plate 60). According to Kaplan, who cited many authorities, including Rashi, this custom was supposed to belong to the groom, as the loaf of bread is called "the bridegroom's *challah*". But Kaplan also cites other authorities who claimed that the honor of cutting the bread should go to the rabbi or another prominent person (Kaplan 1983: 211). However, never did a woman cut the *challah* in the photos that were viewed.

The drinking of wine was evident by the wine glasses on the table, and a few photos showed the newlyweds drinking from each other's wine or champagne glass. Alongside wine glasses were often ashtrays and cigarettes at the head table, something that would never be seen today. There was also without exception the presence of a large wedding cake and a ceremonial "cutting of the cake" (Plate 61). Despite Kaplan's words that "the practice of a cake cutting ceremony has no place in Jewish tradition" (Kaplan 1983: 211), it was evident in all the photos and as Plate 61 indicated several cakes had specific Jewish symbols marked on them. Hebrew letters or a Star of David could be seen on top of the cakes. Again, all the cakes were multi-tiered, with only two exceptions. At one Sephardic wedding, the "cake" was a giant *croquemebouche* (Plate 62). A *croquemebouche* is a cone structure, wide at the base, built up of small round *choux*s (puffed pastries) which are filled with confectioner's cream and dipped in hot toffee. As the toffee cools it caramelizes. The other exception was an Orthodox wedding where the cake was one-layered, but there were two other cakes on the sweet table (Plate 63).

The history of wedding cakes, moreover, presents an interesting study in the way a temporal wedding symbol (before freezers could archive them) incorporates the past (by incorporating past cake recipes and cake-building techniques) and yet changes dramatically through time (by being eaten). Wedding cakes also have changed in their appearance, structure and usage through time as have weddings. Categorized as confectionery, and not part of a nutritional food group, wedding cakes truly epitomize the cultural meaning of food; that is, food that is primarily not a means for biological survival. As sweets, cakes represent desert and luxury, but not so much as to be outside the reach of most households. Even single layered or homemade wedding cakes (Plate 64) appeared where elaborate caterers' creations were absent.

Some extreme examples of royal confectionery opulence, like elaborate wedding gowns, came from royalty. Royal wedding cakes of the 19th century approaching 300 lbs in weight and six feet in height were boastful symbols of the separation between rich and poor (Charsley 1992: 84). Topped with royal crowns, these royal cakes were objects of class and economic identity, even though they were made of ordinary foodstuffs like flour, eggs, milk, butter and sugar. Traditionally two kinds of wedding cakes developed—the dark cake and the white bridal cake. The dark cake, called "the traditional wedding fruit cake", filled with currents, raisins, dried fruit and nuts was for a long time the only cake prepared for weddings. Easier to preserve before the days of freezers, pieces of this fruit cake would often be kept for the celebration (christening in Christian families) of the first child. Linked with fruit and abundance, the dark wedding cake was also a "fertility" cake.

The practice of cake-cutting revealed a consistent pattern in all the photos. Both bride and groom joined hands holding a large knife, as if they were together cutting the cake (Plate 63, Plate 65, Plate 67). Relying solely on the photographic evidence, one might conclude that "cake cutting" was always a joint bride and groom custom. However, the history of cake-cutting and knives reveals other practices.

In the past, prior to the 1930s, cake-cutting was exclusively a bride's custom, and the giving of knives a "curious bridal gift". In England in the 16th and 17th centuries, knives were a curious symbol of a bride's married status: "Here by my side do hang my wedding knives" (Cunnington 1972:72). Knives used as a traditional wedding gift go further back in time even before knives were used in cake-cutting. In Germany in the first century CE, a bride and groom would receive something sharp and made out of iron, either a weapon like a sword or a farm implement. As to why sharp knives related to cooking and butchering have been used in the ceremonial cake-cutting at weddings, the reason may be found in the development of extremely hard icing (and card boards) used to support the multi-tiered iced wedding cake. When the cakes got too hard to cut, often saws were brought in (Charsley 1992: 112). But was the difficulty of cutting through harder and harder icing the sole reason why both groom and bride now cut the cake?

"It is the bride's duty to cut the cake. Of course an incision should previously be made. A knife is handed to her, which she puts in the cleft, and succeeds in getting a slice on to a plate. This is cut into small pieces, and handed round, and everybody is expected to partake" (quoted from *Etiquette of Good Society* 1880:103, in Charsley 1992:115).

Whether the change from bride alone to both groom and bride cutting the cake coincided with larger, more tiered and difficult cakes to cut still does not completely explain the newer custom. For the actual cutting of the cake often took place after the ceremonial photo was taken with the couple's hands jointly clasping the knife. Frequently, the only cut that was actually accomplished was the first one into a pre-cut slit previously made by the caterer in the bottom layer of the cake. The actual cutting of all the cake is usually done by the caterers in the kitchen. I would suggest, that like the change from one to two wedding rings, the joint emphasis on both groom and bride cutting the cake revealed a more shared wedding ritual between the sexes. The shift, likewise, from the 19th to the 20th century, of cakes shaped like a pyramid also reflected the growing trend of brides wearing similarly shaped extravagant wedding dresses. By the mid 20th century, the cakes got bigger and more ornate and so did bridal attire. The added feature of the universal color white for wedding cakes in this century re-enforced the growing trend of brides wearing white. By the 1980s, some changes in cake coloring and "architecture" began to occur. More colors were used, and instead of pure white, off-white or cream was preferred. Rather than constructing pillars and tiers, the cakes were multi-layered, but placed directly on top of each other. This eliminated the need to have "fake" cakes or cakes with icing that made them too hard to cut through.[104] A change

[104] In a simple Montreal wedding in 1942, where the bride wore a pale-blue suit and hat, the wedding cake was nevertheless white and 3-tiered. "Pegroid's" of Montreal made the cake. When the bride and groom were about to cut the cake, the knife did not go through the iced top. As the couple tried several times, the bride's aunt exclaimed, "Oh, no it will bring so much bad luck if they can't cut it". The couple gave up and upon examining the cake more closely, they found a piece of cardboard under the iced top. They removed the cardboard and cut the cake (Interview August 31, 2001).

towards softer and white floured cakes developed rather than keeping with the traditional dark fruit cake.

Garters

The garter throwing custom evident in the photos goes back to European 17th century traditions. "When bed-time is come, the bride-men pull off the bride's garters, which she had before unty'd that they might hang down and so prevent a curious hand from coming too near her knee. This done, and the garters being fasten'd to the Hats of the gallants, the bridesmaids carry the Bride into the bridechamber, where they undress her and lay her in the bed" (Cunnington 1972:64). There was one photo in the Collection where the groom appeared to be about to remove the garter with his teeth (Plate 68). Regardless of religious denomination, whether Orthodox or Conservative, Jewish brides as do Christian ones revealed the garter above or below their knee (Plate 69).

The gender ambiguity in the garter custom points to two contradictory messages. Body language in the photo (Plate 68), where the groom lowers himself beneath a towering bride with her leg up on a chair, showed the groom in a subordinate posture. However, the showing of the bride's leg, which had been ceremoniously covered by a long bridal dress up until this moment, signified a female body once more viewed as a sexual object. This reinforced unequal sex roles, where the male's body, as always, remains hidden in public spaces and where the female's body can be publically displayed.

The custom of the groom throwing the bride's garter to unmarried men corresponds to the custom of the bride throwing her bouquet to unmarried women. Catching the garter and bouquet, being associated with "who will be the next one to get

married", is linked to the bride and possibly to fertility issues. The objects which touch the bride are more highly charged (or more fertility charged) than those which touch the groom, which are virtually non-existent in terms of wedding favors. Both bridal garter and bouquet communicate possible fertility chances for unmarried persons.

Kissing and Dancing

In the biblical text, we read that "Jacob kissed Rachel" (Genesis 29:2) and "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (Song of Songs 1:1). In Jewish mysticism, "kabbalism under the influence of the Song [of Songs] has considered the kiss to be a superior form or expression of the love union" (Perella 1969: 80). For the Sages of the medieval period, the kiss had been a poetical metaphor applied to the deaths of Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Maimonides said that Moses and Aaron died by the mouth of the Lord and that Miriam also died by a kiss. According to Maimonides, the purpose of mentioning a "kiss" here was to indicate that the three died in the pleasure of a divine apprehension due to the intensity of passionate love. "Explaining further this image, the Jewish sages were saying that the kiss was a metaphor for expressing the attainment of a superior degree of perception or apprehension of the Deity by way of an intense love" (Perella 1969:76).

All this being said, kissing was a consistent ritual element in all the photos that were viewed. Most of the kissing gestures were seen at the reception. Sometimes the couple kissed while cutting the cake or soon afterwards (Plate 70), sometimes at the table, sometimes in the car after they left the reception. According to Kaplan, "it is very bad

taste for the bride and groom to kiss under the *chuppah*. It may be a gentile custom, but it has no place in a Jewish wedding. Such a sign of intimacy is reserved for when the couple is alone together" (Kaplan 1983:205). Because most of the photos that were viewed did not include *chuppah* shots, I could not determine if any kissing took place under the *chuppah*. In an earlier photo taken in 1950, right after the glass was broken, the couple are seen kissing (Plate 71). In one photo under the *chuppah*, taken at a 1996 Conservative wedding, a kiss was given. The couple in this photo embraced each other as if they were about to dance. The white napkins on the floor showed that the breaking of the glass had been completed (Plate 72). It should be noted, however, that there were two glasses, one for the bride and one for the groom.

Kissing comes close to dancing in terms of the sequence of events at weddings, but also in another manner. When the couple kisses and dances, they have already been officially pronounced "husband and wife" by the officiant during the ceremony. The kissing and dancing represent the symbolic union of the couple in the presence of the community. While in usual day-to-day public behaviour kissing is usually taboo, in the wedding ceremony, kissing is given public approval. Once again, the legal aspects of marriage as a union of two individuals are represented and enacted in symbolic non-verbal means of communication.

"The Talmud describes dancing as the principal function of the angels and commands dancing at weddings for brides, grooms, and their guests. Procreation is God's will; weddings, a step toward its fulfillment; and dancing, a thanksgiving symbolizing fruitfulness. Even in exile Jews could dance, because out of the wedding

might be born the messiah who would restore the people to the land and rebuild the temple. The Jewish people danced to praise their God in sublime adoration and to express joy for his beneficence. In a sort of corporeal merging with the infinite God, the God-given mind and body is returned to God through dance" (Hanna 1988: 48). The photos showed many variations of dance and musicians. Men danced with each other, and so did women. Elderly people danced, everybody danced.

Moreover, the dancing photos demonstrated a dramatic change in body movements from those enacted in the religious or sacred space under the *chuppah*. But this dramatic change was much more evident when the *chuppah* and religious ceremony took place indoors. When the wedding took place outdoors, there was less of a dramatic change in body movement. In most of the photos viewed, both sexes freely intermingled and danced together, while in other photos the sexes were segregated (Plate 73). In one wedding, a belly dancer entertained the guests and especially the groom (Plate 74). Jewish brides (and grooms) are hoisted on chairs, elevated, taking no particular precaution at keeping their hair or dress in perfect order (Plate 75). Again applying Burguière's ideas that popular customs often reveal legal principles, the custom of elevating the bride and groom onto chairs or the shoulders of the wedding guests may symbolically reflect the Hebrew concept of *nissuin* or "elevation". For the rabbis, *nissuin* or the consummation of the marriage has already been legally effected by the act of *chuppah*. For the community, *nissuin* may be demonstrated by the more highly charged emotional event of elevating the couple into the air.

Jewelry

One predominant piece of jewelry worn by all the brides in the photos was a pearl necklace and sometimes pearl earrings. No other kind of necklace was observed on the brides other than pearls. Pearls have had a long history and have been called the "Queen gem", or the gemstone of Venus, goddess of the moon. Associated with fertility and women, there have been many myths surrounding this gem. "The pearl-fishers of Borneo are said to preserve carefully every ninth pearl they find, and place them in a bottle with two grains of rice for each pearl, believing, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that these particular pearls have the power to engender and breed others" (Kunz 1913:41). Also, used today as a frequent choice of gift for the bridesmaids, pearls remain high on the list of being a "wedding gem". According to Ingraham's study of today's wedding industry, "typical choices [of affordable gifts] are sterling cufflinks or money clips for the ushers and pearl earrings or silver or crystal necklaces and pendants for the bridesmaids. The total average expenditure per wedding on jewelry in the United States is nearly $5000" (Ingraham 1999: 53).

There were also tiaras and crowns worn by some of the brides (Plate 19, Plate 20) Reminiscent of royalty, tiaras recall ideas of princesses, crowns and jewels. They are in this century gender specific in relation to Jewish or Catholic weddings. In Eastern Christian Orthodox weddings in Montreal, crowns are placed on both groom and bride. But the crown, even in this context, has only a ceremonial and religious symbolic usage. Grooms in this city, no matter what their religious affiliation, do not wear tiaras as do brides. Only females wore and still wear such headgear. Although a majority of males

wore *kippahs*, no jeweled ones were seen. The trend today (post 1960s) of linking royalty with wedding symbols can still be seen in advertisements selling bridal tiaras. While realizing the limited use of tiaras for today's post-modern woman, after her wedding day is over, these ads suggest that even a seemingly useless wedding object can be quickly transformed into everyday use (Plate 76).

Indeed, the most conspicuous piece of jewelry that was worn on the fingers of both brides and grooms was a ring. Without exception, all 140 weddings in the Drummond Collection showed the bride wearing either a wedding band or a jeweled ring, one on each hand. In two weddings, the bride wore the wedding band on her right index finger, at the middle joint. In all others, the bride wore a wedding ring on her left fourth finger (Plate 77).

Knowing that in the Jewish wedding ceremony, the bride receives the ring on the right index finger, the ring position on her left hand stood out. The gesture of placing the bride's ring on the right hand is practiced by all denominations in Montreal, except in Reform where the bride can receive her ring under the *chuppah* on her left hand, fourth finger[105]. Since most of the weddings in the Drummond Collection were from Orthodox and Conservative denominations, the bride must have received the ring on the right hand and then changed its position. All the brides in the photos were wearing their wedding band on the left hand, fourth finger. Since the custom in Quebec during the 1960s and today remains the same—that is, brides wear their wedding bands on their left hand—the

[105]Interview February 28, 1996.

photos might erroneously give the impression that Jewish brides received their rings in the same manner as Christian brides do.

There have been questions raised as to which hand the wedding ring belonged in the past. In 14th century Catholic France, in many dioceses, the wedding ring was placed on the right hand, third finger. In 16th century Limoges the ring was placed on the fourth finger of the right hand and not the third. In Meaux in 1546, the rite reads as follows: *"L'épouse pourra cependant changer la place de l'anneau, s'il lui plaît"*. However, in the revised version of 1592, the Roman rite has the ring now placed on the left hand, fourth finger (Mutembe & Molin 1974). Influenced by Isidore of Seville who claimed that this finger was connected to the "vena cordialis", the vein that went straight to the heart, the ring was switched from the right to the left hand (Kunz 1917). In 17th century Great Britain, wedding rings were worn by women on their thumbs, on the left hands. In some countries in Europe today (Holland), the wedding ring is worn on the right hand, fourth finger. And as early as the 13th century, we find in Christian weddings the ring being placed on the bride's right hand, third finger. The focus on the right hand was also evident by the practice of joining the right hands together during the ceremony.

In a French medieval manuscript of the period, a bride and groom's right hands are joined together with a curious image being substituted for the wedding ring—an image of an oversized heart. The significance of this image showed that other issues, besides dowries, were of concern to the marrying couple. This portrayal conveyed the idea that the wedding ring represented the groom's pledge, a sign of his fidelity. Or, perhaps the heart on the bride's finger represented the need for her to be reminded of his

pledge and thus the need for her to remain loyal and faithful to him. The 11th and 12th centuries in France saw dramatic times in the life of aristocratic families where marital repudiations and divorce tested the powers of church and state. These times reflected troubadours, knights and other unattached males seeking the hearts of prestigious ladies of households hoping that these ladies would abandon their husbands for them (Duby 1978). What remains different, however, in the 13th century depiction mentioned above, from our present-day perspective, was the absence of the groom receiving a ring from his bride. Yet, according to the research of Mutembe and Molin, men and women exchanged wedding rings as early as the 9th century in Seville, Spain and in two areas of southwestern France, Bordeaux and Bayonne (Mutember & Molin 1974). Chenon's research would add that in 13th century France, Jewish couples were exchanging rings (Chenon 1912).

In the province of Quebec, as mentioned earlier in Girard's study, the groom's ring seemed to make its appearance gradually before WWII, but only among the *bourgeoisie*. As part of the official rubric of Catholic marriage rites, it only became included after Vatican II, 1969-1971.[106] However, the question of Jewish men wearing wedding rings has a particular interest. According to Jewish law, only the groom can legally give the bride a ring in order to transact a marriage. Therefore, the appearance of the second ring in Montreal's Jewish weddings in the 1950s and 1960s's was critical. In light especially of what the rabbis said in their interviews (that the second ring began to

[106]Interviews with Père Allard, p.ss., of the Grand Séminaire in Montreal, September 28, 1997 and May 10, 2001.

be worn around 1975 and was probably due to the greater Catholic influence), further investigation was needed.

In 84 of the 140 weddings from the Drummond Collection, the grooms were wearing rings. Although there was no evidence that these rings were given under the *chuppah*, they did show them off and had their pictures taken with them on. All the grooms wore their wedding band on the left hand, fourth finger. Sometimes the grooms wore signet rings or jeweled rings on the little finger, of either hand. In the photos, men as well as women were admiring the groom's ring (Plate 78, Plate 79). Smiles and intent gazing were present in these ring shots. Despite the fact that these rings appeared very plain and had no gemstones, they drew attention.

When the bride alone wears a wedding ring, like the garter, veil and white dress, the symbol acquires a feminine designation.. When the groom shares the same symbol, wearing a similar gold band on his finger, the unique gendered feminine quality of the bride's ring disappears, and remains no longer different. With both bride and groom wearing identical plain wedding bands, as was the case in 60% of the photos viewed, feminine or masculine qualities or distinct sex-roles were diminished. The rings conveyed the idea that women or men could easily wear them (just size would make a difference) with no distinguishing marks to tell them apart. Hence, ideas of sameness and equality were connected to the rings by virtue of their appearance (identical material, shape and form), and of the fact that both were worn by each partner on the exact same finger (fourth) of the left hand.

The fact that only 60% of the grooms wore a ring raised the question as to why this custom was not a universal male custom (within or outside Judaism), as it had been for women for centuries (within and outside Judaism). Certainly the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and early 1970s contributed to the fact that more men were wearing wedding rings by the 1970s. Fertility issues in the 1960s changed with the introduction of the birth control pill and women began to have more control of their bodies. Having children was no longer the main concern for getting married. Hence the wedding ring, previously an exclusive female fertility amulet, now belonged to both men and women. In addition, during the post WWII period, with more women in the workforce, marking husbands as married with a wedding ring became a frequent demand made by wives. Second, the question as to when a Jewish bride gave her groom his ring pointed to a gender issue which concerned legal and denominational distinctions reflected in the way both sexes enacted their ritual roles under the *chuppah*. Naming the wedding rings "gender-laden objects" was an appropriate designation given the checkered history of the second ring.

Concluding Remarks

The overwhelming evidence of the photos led to the following conclusions. Despite denominational differences, the wedding attire of the brides remained remarkably similar in color and length. In fact, at times a Reform [107] bride dressed more

[107]In the case of the Reform wedding, the groom's parents were orthodox. This may have influenced the bride's choice of wedding dress.

conservatively than an Ultra-Orthodox bride (compare two weddings from 1950 and 1953, Plate 63 and Plate 71). Likewise, despite denominational differences, the wedding attire of the groom (from 1947 to 1960) remained remarkably the same. The one exception from an ultra-orthodox wedding showed a white *kittel*. The dress attire of wedding guests was formal but much less elaborate than that of the brides and grooms. The brides stood out much more than the grooms, as did the female guests in comparison with the male guests. Images of royalty emerged especially with bridal gowns, tiaras, reception lines and processionals. The hoisting of newlyweds in the air also brought to mind ideas of celebrations and victory demonstrations.

The weddings appeared as primarily public events, in which family and invited guests watched (witnessed), participated and enjoyed.[108] The presence of a religious leader was not always obvious by their clothing. Most rabbis wore a plain suit and a *kippah*. When the rabbi wore an elaborate hat, other than a plain *kippah*, his presence and status were made clearer. The rabbis from the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue were more obvious with their high hats. Hasidic men could be recognized by their long beards.[109]

Considering that royal imagery was depicted, and the idea that these weddings were opulent, bridal jewelry was rather modest and simple. There were no elaborate

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[108]The idea of a wedding as a public event will be further discussed in Chapter 9 using Handelman's typology of rituals as events-that-model, events-that-present, and events-that-re-present (Handelman 1990).

[109]It is interesting to note that in photos of the ultra-orthodox wedding from 1953, the Hasidic men wore regular Stetson hats. The large "black hats" which are presently associated with Montreal's Hasidic communities were only introduced in the 1970s (Interview May 15, 2001).

necklaces, earrings, bracelets or rings with ornate gemstones seen on the brides. Pearls, however, were displayed consistently on brides and on other women.

Particular dance movements indicated different cultural or religious traditions. Food and flowers were excessive and often placed in close proximity to each other. Outdoor weddings conveyed the ideas of freedom, in the movement of the participants and the props (like the *chuppah*). This movement conveyed the idea of excitement. This same idea of excitement was also observed in the wedding photos where dancing was shown.

Gender differences and similarities found expression in clothing, adornment (jewelry) and prescribed gestural patterns, like sitting, standing, dancing or moving. The gender differences often included a religious context: that is, they were performed in the presence of a religious leader or religious community. Examples were veiling the bride, *sudar kinyan* and cutting the *challah*. However, perhaps resisting religious customs, in wearing his black overcoat over a white *kittel* (when everyone else was wearing summer clothing) the groom showed his ambivalence toward the white *kittel* and favored the more popular look of an "Al Capone" style of Ultra-orthodoxy.

Overall, gender differences in wedding clothing represented the same style and conventions found in the general Montreal culture—especially in the way brides and grooms wore contrasting clothing. Compared to earlier weddings, before 1947 and going further back to the 18th and 19th centuries, less of a contrast was evident in terms of white (bride) versus black (groom).

Gender similarities found expression in the following activities: cake-cutting, cake-eating, kissing, dancing, ring-wearing, signing the marriage documents, eating and drinking wine. These activities were performed in the presence of both the religious leaders and community. These gestures were all endorsed and publically approved within the context of a religious community. Finally, in terms of present day wedding customs, fewer differences in adornment practices exist between Jews and non-Jews than between females and males.

As for general differences and similarities between religious denominations within Judaism and between Jewish and non-Jewish weddings in Montreal, some conclusions could also be drawn along the following lines.

It appeared that for a large majority of Jews in this city during the early 1960s weddings looked the same. This large net of Jewish communities for this time period included Orthodox, Reform and Conservative denominations. Reconstruction was just making its presence known, establishing itself in Montreal in 1960. It also appeared that for Jews and non-Jews in this city, weddings looked similar but were on a different scale, economically. Moreover, salient features existed in the Jewish weddings that were conspicuously absent in Catholic ones. These differences included: pre-ceremony rites like *bedekung* and *sudar kinyan*, the bride and groom arriving together at the synagogue, both parents processing down the aisle next to the groom and bride, the bride's face remaining covered, *chuppah* (wedding canopy), the grooms wearing wedding rings, *challah*-cutting, segregated dancing, dancing the *hora*, and the bride and groom being hoisted in the air. If all the Jewish wedding symbols were revealed in the photos, the list

would further include: the bride (and sometimes the groom) going to the *mikveh*, the groom called to read from the Torah a week before, the bride circling the groom under the *chuppah*, the reciting of the seven blessings, the bride's *ketoubah*, the bride remaining silent under the *chuppah* or the bride saying different words than the groom, Hebrew words spoken under the *chuppah*, breaking the glass under the *chuppah* and *yichud* (seclusion, bridal chamber).

To conclude, Jewish wedding symbols shared with and differed from non-Jewish symbols, but the differences were more significant. These differences could be visibly and non-verbally perceived from the photographic evidence. Fully embodied in their wedding gestures, these weddings could be called "rites of identity"—whereby a Jewish identity was clearly communicated. Rarely nuanced by denominational markers, this Jewish religious identity was also colored by gender, in the way that feminine brides and masculine grooms dressed and performed separate ritually determined actions. Moreover, egalitarian markers were clearly evident in 60% of the 140 weddings that were examined, by the fact that the grooms were wearing rings. It could be claimed, therefore, that many Montreal Jewish grooms from Orthodox and Conservative congregations (most of the photos were from these two denominations) were wearing wedding rings before 1975. But egalitarian gendered identities were also revealed in the following gestures: when they both cut the wedding cake, kissed, danced, signed the register in the rabbi's study and ate together. The photographs also showed that celebration was an important way in which these identities were reinforced, conveyed and enjoyed. In discovering that grooms did in fact wear rings before 1975, two questions surfaced: "Why had this ritual

been forgotten in the collective communal memories of the rabbis?" and, "What kind of mechanisms are involved in the transmission of ritual symbols?".

The next chapter will attempt to answer these questions and explore reasons why some symbols acquire more authority and historical status over others. Moreover, resistance and struggle found in ritual symbols, such as the second ring, are also reflected in the real lived-in-world and in objects which reflect that world. If the history of women giving men rings has been "concealed" or forgotten, then the objects will reflect that reality. As Chapter 7 will show, the rings themselves reveal this concealment. Miniature wedding rings found hidden inside large Jewish Betrothal rings point to several possible theories about the second ring which involve gender and denominational politics. These theories will be developed in the remaining chapters.

Chapter 5

Continuity of Symbols, Rituals and Identities

The strength of the Jewish community is measured by the success in linking 'me dor le dor', 'from generation to generation'.

Grace Cohen Grossman

Il semblait exister une sorte de patrimonie cérémoniel familial transmis, non pas de génération à génération, mais circulant plutôt au sein d'une parentèle à une époque et pour une génération donnée.

Laurence Hérault

Using examples from the repertoire of Jewish wedding symbols discussed in Chapter 4, this chapter will consider how symbols create a sense of continuity within a religious tradition in order to perpetuate certain values and identities. A "sense of continuity" means a perceived or actual linkage to some time and place in the past which communicates a believable chronology to a religious community. Sometimes symbols appear as if they have had little or no history, when in fact they have spanned decades or centuries. These so-called "new" symbols, as with the case of the second wedding ring, often meet with resistance at some levels within a religious community because they lack this sense of continuity. On the one hand, the ring occupies an ambiguous ritual place, through a combination of having no legitimate history within the tradition, being associated with Christian usage and challenging gender boundaries[110]. On the other hand, (and as was demonstrated in the previous chapter) "old" symbols, such as the *chuppah* or

[110]Chapter 7 will discuss in detail the history of the second ring within the Jewish context.

wedding veil, convey an aura of tradition or history that meets with little resistance from all levels of the community, despite the lack of evidence that could substantiate their exclusive ancient biblical roots.

Based on the idea that tradition requires continuity, repetition becomes integral in the way that symbols are handled in order to communicate a real or fictive chronology—in other words, a sense of continuity.[111] This sense of continuity can be linked to three factors, "the history factor", "the analogy factor" and "the popular culture factor" (as will be further explained below). These factors demonstrate why some symbols more than others generate a sense of continuity and stability. The history factor is the most important because it determines the primary status and meaning of a symbol which can appear in analogous contexts within the tradition, outside the tradition in the world of popular culture or in another religious tradition. When successfully manipulated, the actual or invented repetition of symbols generates a sense of continuity.

The flexibility of ritual symbolism becomes evident after considering the overlap of Jewish and Christian wedding symbols discussed and illustrated in the previous chapter (Chapter 4). As Kaplan admits, although a wedding symbol like the white wedding dress cannot be traced to exclusive Jewish biblical origins, it has a place in Jewish weddings because an appropriate "traditional" Jewish meaning has been attached

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[111]Goffman's ideas on how performances or rituals, despite their once-in-a-lifetime qualitites, fit into ready-made accepted social fabrics may be relevant here. My idea of repetition can be found in Goffman's notion of the "socializing" character of performance. He says that "a performance of a routine presents through its front some rather abstract claims upon the audience, claims that are likely to be presented to them during the performance of other routines. This constitutes one way in which a performance is 'socialized', molded, and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented" (Goffman 1959: 34-35). In addition, see Ruth Finnegan's summary of the multi-layered meanings of the word "tradition" (Finnegan 1992: 7-8).

to it (Kaplan 1983: 60). However, with the highest holy symbols like Torah scrolls, limits are in place to ensure that these symbols are not repeated, either in popular culture or in other religious traditions. Their high sacred status remains intact under the vigilant protection from outsiders through the distancing of these scrolls from contact with outsiders. This is achieved through the use of a highly coded exclusive sacred language, hermeneutics, select leadership and sacred communal rituals. However, the question arises as to whether this exclusivity is also governed by gender rules. To what extent have women been delegated as keepers of the most holy symbols in any major religious tradition within the last two thousand years? Gender is interwoven into the discussion of ritual continuity, then, as masculine and feminine values frame and determine the sanction or repression of religious ritual symbols (Geller 2001; Plaskow 1990; Roper 1989; de Beauvoir 1989)[112].

Inevitably this leads to a discussion of the sacred and the profane, and of degrees of "inside" and "outside" status which ultimately define religious symbols and rituals and who should access them. One of the problems with such dichotomies and generalized theoretical ritual paradigms is that they reduce and prevent the realities of the sacred from entering lives where one would least expect them to. Relying on narrow definitions of the sacred or sacred space, for example, might lead one to think that the sacred dwells

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[112]For example, Geller voices feminist concerns about the connection between women's subservient jobs in the general labor force and women's role as wife and mother. "But marriage imagery continues to glamorize women's subsidiary role, naturalizing the kind of service jobs to which American women still gravitate, positions in which subservient employees develop and express themselves through the achievements of their superiors, much as conventional wives are urged to actuate themselves through their husbands and children" (Geller 2001: 112).

inside temples, synagogues or churches and not in lakes or streams. Grimes' title of his most recent book, *Deeply Into the Bone*, brings this idea home, and reflects one of his own critical personal and communal ritual experiences (Grimes 2000:124). Stressing the power of liminality *à la* Turner, Grimes opts for the transformative powers of ritual based on some conscious participation/observation model, and not on some ready-made application of a tri-partitioned Gennepian theoretical model. Baptisms and circumcisions may be necessary to provide glue for religious communities, but they mean something quite different to the main ritual "participants". For infants, no conscious memory of such rites of initiation exists. In recalling Durkheim and Turner's theories on rituals, Grimes reminds us that "for Durkheim ritual had been an agent of bonding, a kind of social glue. But for Turner the new image of ritual was that of a generator or matrix. In Turner's theory—perhaps more accurately, in his vision—ritual is subversive, the opposite of ceremony, the staunch conservator of culture and guardian of the status quo. Ceremony may be the glue of society, but ritual is its mother" (Grimes 2000: 122). Durkheims's idea of ritual being an agent of bonding seems to be more applicable to contemporary weddings than is Turner's image of ritual as a matrix or generator.

Mapping out a Jewish wedding in accordance with Van Gennep's tripartite system places the *chuppah* space and its enclosed ritual gestures in the liminal category. This critical space where the "marrying" or *kiddushin* action occurs has been described as the "transformative" ritual moment where and when the couple move from one state to

another. However, when applying Grimes' ideas of transformative ritual "moments"[113] to Jewish weddings, the experience of the bride going to the *mikveh* resembles more the heightened period of liminality than does the *chuppah* "liminal" experience.[114] But Grimes has not dismissed Van Gennep; rather, he is urging for a rethinking of ritual theories and categories where "the task of reinventing [rituals] requires not only the construction of ritual, it also requires the reconstruction of community" (Grimes 2000: 124).

Still, Van Gennep's work on rituals remains foundational. In his *Manuel de folklore français contemporain* published in 1946 he recasts *Rites de passage* which he wrote in 1908. In his later work, he concentrated on local practices rather than generalized theoretical paradigms. He documented rites of passage as practiced in over 120 regions in France from the late 1800s to the 1940s, which demonstrated the lack of homogeneity in how rites of passage were practiced.[115] In this monumental study, his own classic tripartite division of separation, transition, and incorporation faded into the

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[113]The idea of ritual time or delayed time becomes critical in ritual's ability to transform. One pertinent example from Grimes' *Deeply Into the Bone* illustrates this clearly. A student who re-created an abortion/burial ritual months after the fact in a classroom setting was in fact still processing her original ritual moment. The recreation became subsequently an important delayed segment of what turned out to be a successful and transformative experience. Without her later reenactment, the rite of passage was incomplete and not really transformative.

[114]For some brides the *mikveh* was a defining key element which defined their wedding as "Jewish".

[115]As Van Gennep himself claimed in his 1908 classic, *Rites de passage*, his categories were never meant to dominate the contents of these categories. He also mentioned that his tripartite division did not always apply to all rites of passage and that marriage, as an example, was more a rite of re-integration than a rite of transition (or transformation). It was Turner's emphasis on liminality that led to the idea that all rites of passage must include pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages. This was not in line with Van Gennep's original thinking.

background, as the contents of the categories he created overshadowed his previous theoretical maxims.

Without this later work, Van Gennep cannot be fully appreciated. Nevertheless, his early ideas on negotiating categories like the sacred and the profane are still relevant. His definition of "the shifting of the sacred" supports the argument proposed in this thesis that wedding symbols have varied over time and place in their degree of sacrality. Depending on the context of their repetitive use and the factors which have manipulated them, wedding symbols fluctuate from sacred to profane spaces and status. Van Gennep incorporated two supporting ideas into his main thesis that everything is based on a division of the sacred and the profane: first, a shifting or pivoting of the sacred exists, and second, such pivoting or shifting does not occur without some disturbance to the individual or community.[116] By a "shifting" or "pivoting" of the sacred, Van Gennep means that the sacred is never absolute or permanent. "The presence of the sacred is variable. Sacredness as an attribute is not absolute; it is brought into play by the nature of particular situations" (Van Gennep 1960: 12). In the case of two wedding rings, despite their similar movement[117] from the same sacred *chuppah* space to the same profane everyday space, their sacredness varies considerably according to the legal and "historical" status attributed to each ring by the tradition's leadership. The rings'

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[116]In his conclusion to *Rites de passage*, Gennep adds another primary division which he claims is characteristic of all societies: "irrespective of time and place: the sexual separation between men and women [also exists]" (Van Gennep 1960: 189).

[117]This movement will be discussed further in detail in Chapter 6, where it will be shown how different denominations deal with the physical presence and status of the second ring under the *chuppah*.

sacredness also varies when considering the couples' vantage points. For many couples, both rings have the same value. Moreover, when the rings themselves are positioned in another religious tradition, their meaning may or may not change. Because weddings from different traditions have so many symbols in common, one might inaccurately conclude that the meanings derived from these symbols are the same.

As Chapter 4 demonstrated, Montreal Jewish wedding symbols could also be found in Montreal Catholic weddings and in the wider North American wedding culture as a whole. The bride's white wedding dress, her veil, the processional, the removal of her garter, the festive meal, the wedding cake, and the bride's wedding ring were examples of these shared wedding symbols. However, symbols like the *chuppah*, veiling the bride (*bedeckung*), signing the *Ketoubah*, the presence of a rabbi, and the breaking of a glass were examples of wedding symbols that were not found in the majority Montreal Catholic culture during the early 1960s. Taking into account all the symbols together, those shared and those not, a Jewish wedding remains primarily Jewish, just as a Catholic wedding remains primarily Catholic. These last two conclusions cannot be totally determined by analyzing words or pictures, but are determined through experiencing the difference in the ritual sounds, sights and smells that define and set apart rituals of one particular religious tradition from another.

In the case of Catholicism, the standing, sitting and kneeling of the bride and groom at the altar, together with the receiving of the Eucharist (by both couple and congregants), convey a solemnity similar to that experienced during a Mass. The sacrament of marriage within the context of the Mass produces an entirely different ritual

and ritual atmosphere than does a Jewish *kiddushin* (marriage consecration) regardless of the fact that white wedding dresses, veils and cups of wine are found in both. The Catholic wedding ritual is generally more solemn and quiet—which varies according to the space[118], music and officiant's style—whereas the Jewish wedding ritual is generally more vibrant. There are no shouts of "*Mazol Tov*" made in a Catholic enclave. After a Jewish couple leave the *chuppah* space, they often dance or skip out of the synagogue or hall with family and friends following in a joyful exuberant manner toward the banquet feast. At the end of a Catholic wedding Mass, however, the couple slowly march down a long aisle following the priest as the wedding guests remain in their pews waiting for their turn to file out. People exit, pew by pew, usually not dancing or skipping out of the church. The excitement of rice-throwing which became paper confetti in the last fifty years has now all but disappeared. Since the couples usually have a photo shoot in between the church and reception, the brides and photographers do not like the confetti or rice throwing. It will upset the bride's hair, make-up and veil. In Montreal, at large Italian weddings, where the receptions take place in huge banquet facilities, the confetti-throwing which did take place as soon as the newly married couple made their grand entrance into the main hall has now been banned. Out of fear of lawsuits caused by guests slipping on a confetti-covered dance floor, the custom of rice and confetti has now been replaced by the silent blowing of bubbles. The total focus of a Jewish wedding ritual remains the couple; whereas, at a Catholic wedding Mass, there is often the conscious reminder that the Eucharistic presence dominates the scene.

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[118]A very old basilica or a university chapel will project completely different rituals.

An important point to consider, however, in doing comparative wedding ritual analysis, is to refrain from applying one set of mechanisms to explain other forms of ritual practices. To infer that the continuity of symbols in Thanksgiving, Passover, Christmas or Birthday festivities relies on the same ritual mechanisms that can be applied to weddings does not follow, simply because there may be different elements at work in those rituals that generate continuity which do not pertain to weddings. Passover *seders* and Christmas meals may rely more on the fact that "we do it this way because our parents did it", in contrast to weddings. We may prepare and eat the same foods as our parents did on these festive holidays, but do we marry, or rather wed, in the same way as our parents did? Keeping in mind Grimes' idea that a "wedding" does not make a "marriage" (Grimes 2000), this still is a difficult question to answer.

The evidence from my field work would suggest that the Jewish couples I interviewed in the late 1990s did not marry in the same way as did their parents, given the two following facts: 1) most of them were living together before they got married, unlike their parents; and 2) when asked if their parents exchanged wedding rings, most of the couples did not know the details of their parents' weddings. However, both these points refer to two completely different aspects. The first refers to personal lifestyle and relationship, while the second refers to a communal ritual tradition. And, although the second ring detail seems like a minor element, it signaled the general difficulty of not being able to recall or have access to past wedding memories. Wedding memories could usually be recalled only through photo albums or videotapes. The couples' own wedding memories were rarely complete.

For example, one couple described their wedding day six months earlier in the following fashion: "My wedding day was beautiful, the sun was shining, no clouds. I wore a short-sleeved dress, capped sleeves, with a low scooped neckline. I was not covered up completely" (Bride's version, Interview)[119]. Yet, the groom's version went like this: "It rained, it was cloudy, no sun at all. My wife's gown was very conservative, she wore long sleeves, with lace, I think. Her neckline was very high up, no decolté at all" (Groom's version, Interview)[120].

Another bride said five years after her wedding: "It's all a blur. I don't remember too much. I remember the veiling, drinking from a cup and Mitchell said something in Hebrew. I knew it was Hebrew because he stumbled a lot with the words. I don't remember getting or receiving a *Ketoubah*. (When I watched her wedding video, she did receive a *Ketoubah*). I remember breaking of a glass. Mitchell did that" (Interview)[121].

The evidence from my fieldwork demonstrated that the actual remembered retention of ritual activities is often blurred and scarce. Knowing consciously what we do while performing rituals may enhance memory, but it is often detrimental to the ritual process. As Durkheim said, "Is it necessary to repeat that worshippers are generally ignorant of the real reasons for their practices?" (Durkheim 1915: 336). Limiting the above question, then, to "Do we *wed* in the same way as did our parents?", rather than asking "Do we *marry* in the same way as did our parents?", helps to clarify responses to a

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[119]Interview, June 25, 1997.

[120]Interview, June 25, 1997.

[121]Interview, July 1, 2001.

comparison of two-generational wedding rites and not marriages. However, considering that people barely remember their own wedding ritual experiences, how can they compare their weddings to those of their parents?

In another study on contemporary wedding trends, generational differences were a significant feature of the researcher's findings. Rabbi Naamah Kelman's study of Israeli weddings within the past 10 years revealed the following: 1) all weddings were intensely Jewish, yet wrapped into a mix of Israeli, European and Western lifestyles, while at the same time couples carefully put their own personalized stamp on their own wedding; and 2) the second and third generation of Israelis, who gave much attention to personalize every wedding detail (invitations, table design, music, location), did not mirror their parents who gave little thought to their respective weddings (Kelman 2001: 8).

From my perspective, within the Montreal context, most of the couples that I interviewed did experience the same ritual elements that were present in their parents' generation based on my 1960-1964 archival photo study but not necessarily in the same way.[122] It may also be true that what happens under the *chuppah* remains the most unlikely zone for parental influence in the area of generational ritual transmission to occur. As for trying to mimic either their parents' generation or their religious tradition's practices, most of the couples that I interviewed who already lived together re-created the night before the wedding and their wedding night in such a way that they acted as if they were not living together. Usually on the night before the wedding, the bride went home to

[122]The couples' interviews will be discussed in Chapter 8. However, I did not conduct any quantitative study comparing wedding ritual elements from two generations.

her parents. In the case of one bride's dilemma with the traditional *mikveh*, her mother helped her solve a problem which enabled her to have sex on her wedding night as if it were for the first time. The bride said the following:

"I went to the *mikveh* with my mother. And I was very careful about my menstruation. I'll tell you what happened. Because my menstruation happened a few days before the wedding day, in order for me to go to the *mikveh* and have sex on our wedding night, my mother got special pills from New York to stop my period for a few hours, just enough time for me to go to the *mikveh* and, you know, so that I could, you know on our wedding night. If my mother had not got those pills, I would have had to go to the *mikveh* after the wedding and that would have spoiled our wedding night." (Interview)[123].

The re-creation of this bride's world view in the days surrounding her wedding did reveal a desire to "wed as her parents did" or "wed as her religious tradition required". It also reveals the power which ritual has over lives. Nevertheless, this desire could be better understood if rephrased as "going to the *mikveh* as her mother did". When I asked her to recall her *chuppah* experience, she hardly remembered anything. The words spoken, the order of ritual gestures, or on which hand the ring was placed were a blur. However, her *mikveh* experience was solidly entrenched in her memory. "To wed as our parents did", therefore, covers too large an area. Ritual transmission in weddings seems to involve some personal one-to-one teaching accompanied by the reenactment of a ritual gesture in order for that ritual gesture to become a part of our conscious memories.

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[123]Interview, August 6, 2001.

Whether generational ritual transmission in weddings can be applied to other festive rituals is problematic and raises broader theoretical questions about life cycle rituals. Based on the idea that weddings are life cycle rituals, a "once-in-a-lifetime" characteristic differentiates weddings from festive cyclical rituals. Therefore, the idea that *contemporary* weddings can truly be called rites of passage must be reconsidered in view of the following facts. Most couples have experienced sexual intercourse before marriage, have lived together, and many have bought a house together.[124] More significantly, some have become parents before their wedding day.

Recalling Van Gennep's ideas that weddings, as rites of passage, only become complete after the birth of the first child, contemporary weddings hardly fit into this category. For many couples, then, weddings have ceased to be rites of passage.

In the case of Montreal Jewish weddings, however, an important difference must be pointed out (as was previously mentioned in Chapter 1, "Introduction"). Most Jewish couples in this city, although they live together before their wedding, do not become parents until married. In this way, Jewish weddings can be called "rites (or rights) to parenthood", but not "rites of passage". These weddings do not represent the transformative movement from their parental home into their own household. Moreover, as the evidence from the interviews will demonstrate (in Chapters 6 and 8), the couples hardly expressed ideas or feelings of one partner "transforming" the other. Rather, their exchange of rings represented equal sharing and living arrangements and a mutual pledge of wanting to become parents. As "rites of identity", contemporary Jewish weddings do

[124]This information was gleaned from the interviews with the rabbis and couples in my study.

stand apart from their parents' or grandparents' weddings which were more accurately called "rites of passage". Moreover, the importance of re-creating the illusion of a "rite of passage", as demonstrated by the bride above with the *mikveh* dilemma, signified that residues of "rites of passage" were still attached to marrying practices.

Even when ritual actions were repeated over two generations, as was the case of the bride above with the *mikveh* dilemma, the perception of repeating the same wedding over and over again resonated quite differently than did preparing the same Passover *seder* or Thanksgiving dinner as our mothers did. Weddings project a unique "once-in-a-lifetime" ritual characteristic that does not apply to other cyclical festival rituals. Paradoxically, while all weddings remain unique, they all overlap with each other and with the past. Saying this, however, still leaves the above mentioned bride's entire wedding experience and that of her mother's far apart. What was shared by these two generations was a similar first experience of an emotionally charged *mikveh*. What possibly was not replicated by the younger bride was the newness and nervousness of a first sexual encounter on a couple's wedding night which her mother may have experienced.

An aura of tradition surrounds most weddings in such a way that a sense of continuity overpowers both the old and new symbols, reassuring the participants that they are replicating the most ancient wedding rites. Weddings, however, present special dilemmas to religious communities that cannot compare to the challenges of creating viable festive holidays, such as Passover or Christmas. There are two family traditions to be dealt with at weddings, which does not occur at festive holiday rituals where only one

family directs and stages the ritual activities. In addition, family holidays take place in the private domain of the home, whereas weddings occupy a much wider public space. Ritual innovation at weddings is no easy task. Weddings must incorporate, compromise and innovate traditions that not only touch upon religious identities of particular religious leaders but also the bride's, the groom's and their respective families' multi-faceted identities[125] as well.

If the new symbol or gesture which is being introduced lacks any sense of historical continuity or "tradition", it may fall flat. Even if the ritual innovation is being presented by the religious authorities, the risk of failure still exists if the community members disapprove.

One priest's sermon at a Catholic wedding included the following remarks: "Jesus is present with you today, He is the main witness. Remember Him next to you when the photographer takes your picture this afternoon—although He usually doesn't come out very well in pictures—invite Him when you go for a walk together, invite Him to the movies, invite Him tonight into your room before you go to bed when you say your prayers together, invite Him for coffee tomorrow morning, invite Him into your new life together".[126] The priest's words, trying to convey spirituality and some humour, meant more to the young couple than to many of the older members of the family and congregation. The older family members thought that speaking about Jesus as a friend or constant companion, especially in the bedroom, was "strange", "not appropriate" or "out

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[125]These identities include economic, ethnic, religious, gender and psychological aspects.

[126]Excerpt from Roman Catholic Wedding Mass performed in Montreal, June 16, 2001.

of place". Many felt the sermon was more about Jesus than marriage. (For the couple who had just gone on several weekend spiritual retreats with this priest, their interpretation must have been different.) When the priest then asked the entire church audience at the end of the ceremony to raise their hands high over their heads to give the nuptial blessing to the couple, rather than he alone give the nuptial blessing, a few older congregants said "What is he doing? Are we in a Billy Graham hall or a Catholic Church—waving our hands in the air like this?"

Rabbis, too, can speak casually or fail at attempts at humour at Jewish weddings. At a Jewish wedding I attended, just before the couple broke the glass, the rabbi interpreted this ritual symbol as representing not only the destruction of the Temple but also (since light bulbs were used) the creation of the world along the lines of thc Big Bang theory. When he said those words, quite loudly, some members of the congregation rolled their eyes, while the rabbi then added to the groom, "No pressure on you, Sam"[127]. Innovative ritual gestures, like speaking colloquially about Jesus, waving hands à la Billy Graham or making sexual innuendos, can often fall flat in a highly emotionally charged "traditional" ritual setting. Lacking a sense of continuity with the past, these new ritual gestures stood apart from what the congregation perceived as *their* traditional wedding practices.

Whether symbols are new, old, or shared with other religious traditions, each religious community appropriates and defines symbols primarily within the contexts of its ritual settings. The religious setting (either church or synagogue) still remains, in

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[127]Excerpt from Conservative Jewish wedding in Montreal, June, 1996.

Montreal, the most frequented and preferred wedding ritual space. It is within these confines that wedding symbols lose or gain status according to the values set by the religious leadership and community.

The question of ritual transmission across generations, in the context of weddings, was recently studied by Laurence Hérault.[128] Her work traced wedding patterns in three families over two generations. Hérault cautions researchers to be wary of the role which "historical transmission" plays in the study of rituals. In her two-generational study of weddings, she found that similarities between two generations in the way they married were not based on the children's conscious awareness of reproducing their parents' weddings. She claimed that the same-generational experiences of attending weddings of siblings or friends had more influence on a couple's wedding than that of their parents'. Not completely denying the role of tradition or history in her study, she argued that "*c'est bien localement, à travers une multiplicité d'histoires singulières de cette sorte, que le rituel se transforme et que son histoire se construit*" (Hérault 1997: 175). Her study emphasized a couple's active decision-making role in the planning of their wedding, rather than the powerful passive transference of ritual elements transported over generations and lorded over the couple. In trying to avoid simple reductionism and a too facile explanation of the transmission of ritual practices, she stated: "*Il y a, sans doute, quelque avantage à cet écrasement de l'histoire d'un rite, mais on a peut-être tort de s'y cantonner trop fréquement. Si nous voulons véritablement comprendre cette dernière,*

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[128] See Hérault's 1995 study of three families from Haut-Bocage, near Poitou, France, "*Transmettre ou construire un rite? Ou comment rendre compte de l'évolution des pratiques rituelles*" in *Une Langue, deux cultures. Rites et symboles en France et Québec* (Sainte-Foy: PUL, 1997, pp. 167-176).

nous devons revenir sur la manière dont le processus de construction s'est très concrètement deroulé" (Hérault 1997: 175). In order to understand an evolution of rituals, she focused on the necessity to study the execution of local ritual practices. Although her ideas contributed to the notion of ritual complexity, her study lacked any mention of religion and its impact upon so-called preeminent free-willed decisions of marrying couples. Considering the research done by Villeneuve-Golkap on free unions (co-habitation outside legal matrimony) in France during the period 1977-1986, Hérault's neglect of religious factors stands out even more. Villeneuve-Golkap found that the influences of religion are so strong that we might wonder whether the resistance of certain social groups to family change does not stem solely from their greater religiosity. Unmarried cohabitation took hold earlier in those segments of society where there were fewer followers (Villeneuve-Golkap 1990). Thus, Hérault's omission was significant. Were religion brought into the study, one might have investigated the influence that it had on the stability and transmission of rites over two generations.

It certainly may be true that each ritual action retains a quality of individualism and that each ritual actor feels unique in creating actions that are being performed (at least for that individual) for the first time. But wedding plans often revolve around feelings of tension and constraint which generate anything but feelings of individualism or freedom for the soon-to-be married couple. Despite individual decision-making and input, I would argue that wedding rituals rely much more heavily on a reservoir of "traditions" based on a sense of continuity. Or, viewed another way, no matter how much individual choices

enter into the wedding scenario, having a wedding is in a sense to continue a tradition.[129]

Thus, Hérault was not totally convincing in her conclusions that "*chaque élément rituel finalement mis en place n'est pas le résultat d'un transfert mais celui d'une confrontation entre des intérêts parfois divergents....car fondamentalement les individus ne répètent pas un modèle, ils créent toujours, avant tout, des exécutions rituelles singulières*" (Hérault 1997: 175). On the contrary, relying on the ideas of continuity and repetition, a couple may even forget their own creative individual ritual actions (which go against that sense of continuity) and replace them with fictive memories of "traditional" models.

The following pages will argue that this sense of continuity can be linked to certain factors—namely, history, analogy and popular culture—which facilitate a tradition's ultimate concerns and purposes, and which drive ritual performers to adopt denominational (sectarian) and gendered identities defined through the filtering of these factors.

The three factors, history, analogy and popular culture, will point to reasons why the phenomena of forgetting, remembering, borrowing and reinventing ritual symbols occur. The first two factors, history and analogy, focus on strategies that reflect symbols repeated within the tradition. For the very reason that these symbols are within the tradition, their "inside" status comfortably connects them to words like "tradition", "authentic" and "legitimate". On the other hand, the third factor, popular culture, retains an "outside" status, being alienated from such words as "legitimate" and "tradition".

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[129]I would like to thank Dr. Norma Joseph for this clear insight.

However, although the word "trad" has been redeemed in some academic circles by the words "folk culture" or "folklore", this connotation does not always apply to "popular culture".

The History Factor

As Lyndal Roper claimed in his study of household life in medieval Augsburg,[130] rituals can generate the feeling that they are ancient when in reality they are not. "Weddings provide a complex echo of some of the shifts in belief and the effects of the moral reformist movement in Augsburg; complex, because the power of ritual to the actors engaged in it derives partly from what they feel to be its ancient, traditional qualities, the continuity it is *felt* to create with past generations. Yet this lineage is also illusory, for ritual is sensitive to change and can be explicitly remade to express new beliefs and aspirations" (Roper 1989: 132).

Understanding the meaning of history and how it influences the continuity of symbols within a particular religious tradition involves several layers of ideas. When speaking of history within a religious tradition, we primarily mean written textual evidence as well as a highly coded language (as with rabbinic discourse) used to describe and interpret these sources. Material artifacts (including art historical sources and historical photographs) should also be included, but rarely are. In addition, oral tradition and non-verbal gestures, alongside official canons authored by a religious leadership constitute the legal and ritual aspects of such histories. Finally, but not least, the impetus,

[130]See Roper's *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (1989).

desires and voices of community members form and transform these religious histories.

When a symbol generates a "sense of continuity", it generates an aura of history, a sense that it has been around for a long time—that it is "traditional". This historical sense usually comes from official canonical written texts rather than from material artifacts or the voices of the community members. A symbol's historical status may loosely connect to a concrete past. Although repeated usage of a symbol over long periods of time can contribute to its "traditional" character, linking history to a ritual symbol often means something else. It usually means that the religious leadership act as archaeological theologians, digging up part of a symbol's past or re-creating its origins so that it becomes firmly rooted within its own foundational written texts. When trying to connect a present-day Jewish wedding symbol to these past foundational texts, this notion of "past" means deriving its origins from either Torah law or rabbinic authorities. A Jewish symbol demonstrates its continuity with the past, therefore, when it can be located in these texts and authorities.

Bridging the gap between the past and present is no easy task. It may very well be that after two generations our individual and communal memories fade much faster than we would like to think (Halbwachs 1992). If we weren't there, how do we know what really happened? Who do we trust to tell us what happened in the past? And even if we were there, how has our memory played tricks on us? One informant said to me five years after his wedding, "I was the only one who broke the glass at our wedding. That's the way it's done, it's tradition, only the man breaks the glass"[131]. But as the wedding

[131]Interview, Monday, October 1, 2001.

photo showed (Plate 72), there were two white napkins on the floor next to both the bride's and groom's shoes, indicating another reality. When I asked that man's wife whether she broke a glass, she said "Yes"[132]. The husband, five years after his wedding day, remembered a more "traditional" Jewish ritual where only men broke glasses. His resistance to gender role changes, the lack of any experience of a wedding where two glasses were broken, or an unconscious desire to keep alive his Orthodox Jewish roots helped to create a fictional account of what really happened. He could have said, "I don't remember" or "I'm not sure". Instead, his memory insisted that two glasses being broken was impossible in a Jewish tradition and implausible in *his* tradition. So, why did he forget that his wife broke the glass? Why would such a unique moment, one which had to stand out as being extraordinarily different from all the other Jewish weddings he knew, be erased? Halbwachs would suggest that we often recreate the past, that we fill in the gaps with our present realities (Halbwachs 1992). This once-in-a-lifetime wedding symbol, two glasses being broken, did not fit with his Orthodox Jewish identity of what Jewish weddings were or "should be". Despite the fact that he was married in a Conservative synagogue by a Conservative rabbi with egalitarian symbols (two glasses were broken, two rings were exchanged and both he and his bride circled each other), this man's "memory" of Jewish symbols lies not within a fragmentary real past of his own wedding experience but within a larger mythic past of Orthodox Judaism. The above example revealed how individual memory of an actual experience can become submerged beneath a fictive and dominating layer of "reality".

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[132]I was also present at this wedding, and saw both bride and groom each break a separate glass.

Upon further examination of this custom, scarce evidence harkens back to the time of Moses or the destruction of the Second Temple in 70CE. The custom can be definitely located in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries, when a bottle of wine was thrown against an outside wall of the synagogue or a vase was broken indoors. Used by Catholics in France in the 19th century as well, this custom has roots in several religious traditions. Confused with the custom of breaking a plate at the betrothal (still practiced today by some Ashkenazi when the two witnesses sign the Ketoubah before the couple goes to the *chuppah*), the broken glass has several possible origins. According to Kaplan, the roots of the custom can be found in the Talmud (*Berakhoth* 31a), but he cites the medieval 14th century *Maharil* as a more recent example of "a cup thrown against a wall" (Kaplan 1983: 202). Indeed, the breaking action was a noisemaker which announced publically to everyone within hearing distance that the couple was now officially married. It could also have signaled the expulsion of evil spirits that might contaminate the vulnerable bride, or the loss of the bride's virginity. Broken glass has also signified the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. "It is to remind people that there is still much sadness and heartbreak in the world. Since the Temple was destroyed, joy is no longer complete. In some circles, when the glass was broken, it was the custom to say, 'If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget' (Psalms 137:5). One reason that glass, in particular, is broken is that after the destruction of the Temple glass became very rare" (Kaplan 1983: 202). Going back even further in time to the days of Moses for the possible origins of this custom, Kaplan suggested that "at the great wedding between God and Israel, the first Tablets were broken. The breaking of the glass recalls this first

tragedy" (Kaplan 1983: 202). Perhaps more relevant to the married couple, rabbis often allude to Psalms 2:11, "Serve God in awe, rejoice with trembling", which points to the idea that all joy must be tempered. Meanings abound with this most frequently remembered Jewish wedding gesture, conjuring up all sorts of possible connections to the past (Interviews 1996-2001; Syme 1991; Schneider 1984; Van Gennep 1946; Stauben 1860).

A symbol's flexible and resilient ritual history, like the case of breaking a glass, can be adapted readily in a way that appeals to both rabbis and community members. For rabbis, sufficiently foundational biblical texts which support a symbol's usage endow it with an authentic sacred "history". For couples, hidden or biblical meanings seem less relevant to them compared to a ritual gesture capable of evoking spontaneous, yet predictable, contagious pleasurable shouts of "*Mazol Tov*". A sense of being Jewish coalesces with a sense of continuity secured through the predictable sound of breaking glass, the effervescence of the wedding guests and the official canons of a "history" with many origins.

A clear example which demonstrates the influential role of the "historical factor" in creating a sense of continuity can be found in a Southern American Reform community which revived the *chuppah* symbol in their wedding ceremonies. The *chuppah* can be traced to the 16th century for Ashkenazi and to the 19th for Sephardic Jews (Kaplan 1983: 143). Yet, when Reform Southern Jews from the United States adopted the *chuppah* as their universal symbol in the late 1980s, they surely did not cite the 16th or 19th centuries as historical landmarks in the resurrection of what they called a "traditional" symbol. As

one Jewish Southerner said, "I didn't know what a *chuppah* was. My wedding was about as Christian as it could be, I suppose. [But today] most Jewish weddings [in the South] have a *chuppah*" (Lipson-Walker 1991: 182).

According to Carolyn Lipson-Walker, "Jewish life in the South has changed dramatically. Jews in the South are becoming more ethnically Jewish, more knowledgeable about their heritage, and more secure about being outwardly Jewish" (Lipson-Walker 1991: 182). When Lipson-Walker said that Southern American Jews "are becoming more knowledgeable about their heritage", what was she really saying? She was saying that the "heritage" of Jews lies more with Orthodox ritual symbols, like *chuppahs*, not previously endorsed by the less "religious" Reformers. If late 19th century Reformers succeeded at distancing themselves from Orthodoxy, they now in the late 20th century wanted to embrace similar "traditional" roots. In saying that Southern Jews, through the process of appropriating more traditional rituals, were "becoming more knowledgeable", Lipson-Walker assumed the following: knowledge can be stored and secured in ritual symbols; Orthodoxy has more access to past "Jewish" knowledge; Reform was more Christian than Jewish; performing the same rituals as Orthodox Jews changes Reformers into knowledgeable Jews; and, ritual is good. Unfortunately, the question, "What defines a Jew?", was never brought up by Lipson-Walker, which would have helped to explain the inference that a Reform heritage has less value than an Orthodox one. Furthermore, one can conclude from her remarks that the use of the *chuppah* represented a more united "Jewish" way (cross-denominational) of performing

weddings which in turn reflected a more knowledgeable and therefore more "authentic", "purer" or "traditional" Judaism.

For rabbis, the archival search for this symbol extends beyond the 16th or 19th centuries, to a much more ancient time—the biblical era. When rabbis officiate at weddings, they usually don't cite 16th or 19th century European roots for the origins of the wedding canopy. They cite Isaiah 4:6, Joel 2:16, Psalms 19:6, Exodus 21:10, Numbers 30:11, Genesis 18:2 or Genesis 1:28. What do these verses suggest? They suggest a head covering, the skies above, the warmth of conjugal bed sheets, the roof of a house, a husband's house, the financial support of a loving husband, the whole Jewish community, or a sanctioned act of sexual intimacy. The verses suggest that the religious meanings of the word "*chuppah*" reflect a rich but often ambivalent repertoire of symbolic imagery.

Re-energized from post WWII events like the founding of an Israeli state, the 1967 Six-Day and 1973 Yom Kippur Wars, Reform Jews in the South endorsed the *chuppah* as a visible sign to proudly show their Judaism to the outside world. The ready-made repertoire of biblical foundational texts for *chuppah* provided fitting resources for such a resurrection. Other non-marital meanings steeped in a depository of biblical idioms could stretch the meaning of the word "*chuppah*" to adapt to changing times. The wedding canopy politicized these Southern American Jews without their participation in picket-lines, flag-waving or national rallies. The contemporary canvas of their wedding canopies became a sacred surrogate flag. Relevant verses that empowered political rather than marital meanings could be easily found. Words representing marital identity like "bridegroom" and "bride" became secondary for a community seeking to express another

kind of identity. Isaiah 4:6 states: "For, over all, the glory of Yahweh will be a canopy and a tent to give shade by day from the heat, refuge and shelter from the storm and the rain". Yahweh's glory is the central actor here and not the bride or bridegroom. Recalling the days of the Holocaust, the Six-Day and Yom Kippur Wars, the wedding canopy metaphorically transformed a religious idea into a political and national symbol of identity. The *chuppah's* historical connection to the past now amplified collective memories of Jewish persecution passed down from the time of slavery in Egypt to the Holocaust. A much larger national history was interwoven with and redefined a wedding story.

There was no need for a concrete ancestral cloth preserved in a Jewish archival site in New York, Montreal, London or Tel Aviv to generate this symbol's "historical" past. A sense of continuity was evoked through the *chuppah* by re-activating a symbol which for this community had been identified with a real political past. The historical sense emanated, as well, from the repeated location of the word "*chuppah*" in various biblical foundational texts. The links between wedding canopies and an ancient Jewish past solidified the contemporary ritual contexts, even if those contexts hardly resembled the worlds of Eve, Adam or Abraham. In the case of Southern Reform Jews, the wide spread appearance of wedding canopies over a relatively short period of time indeed evoked a sense of continuity. In addition, Jewish couples married in the 1960s without *chuppahs* described their weddings as "Christian", thus re-enforcing the resurrection of *chuppah* as a truly non-Christian symbol connected to pre-Christian times. Therefore, the

logic following this line of thought connected a non-Christian symbol to a veritable ancient pre-Christian Judaic past.

A remarkable feature of this case is the fact that *chuppahs* had little actual history in the lives or memories of the Southern Jews before the 1980s. This contemporary wedding canopy, whether it be in the Southern States or Montreal, evokes a sense of "tradition" and reveals a symbol draped in antiquity. "In coming under the *chuppah*, the couple begins their life in a 'house' resembling that of Abraham, the first Jew. They make a statement that their house will be open to guests and hospitality, just like Abraham's. The *chuppah* also recalls the revelation at Mount Sinai. The revelation at Sinai is seen as the marriage between God and Israel. It is taught that before giving the Torah to the Israelites God held the mountain over their heads. The mountain over their heads was like the *chuppah* under which the bridal couple stands" (Kaplan 1983:144). Furthermore, mystical language rooted in ancient religious experiences and texts can frequently be heard at weddings and under wedding canopies. "On a deeper level, the *chuppah* represents the divine light that surrounds all creation. Just as the *chuppah* covers the bridal couple, this light surrounds all of God's creation. This is the light of Wisdom which is the root of all existence" (Kaplan 1983: 145).

With reference to what has just been said, distinctions need to be made between a researcher's observation of a community's ritual practices and the motivations of the community members themselves in performing those rituals. For the Reform Jews of the Southern States, their prime motivation for (re-)activating the *chuppah* stemmed neither from a resurgence of biblical knowledge nor from mystical factors. Although the effects

of their universal adoption of the *chuppah* might translate into a charge of "mystical neurons"[133], their motivations for ritual change lay in a series of contemporary political events and a desire to solidify their Jewishness in a non-Jewish world. As rites of identity, weddings spurred them on to adopt a highly visible Jewish symbol. Moreover, the impetus for this transformation did not come from the powers above or from legal rabbinic sanctions, but from a joint effort of the entire community. By the late 1990s, the trend to design and commission one's own individualized *chuppah* had become a well established custom. Couples now wanted to bring their specially designed *chuppahs* back into their homes where they could serve as artistic wall-hangings or decorative bed canopies. Along with the growing trend of hand-painted *Ketoubahs*, these "traditional" Jewish wedding symbols appropriate both sacred and profane realms.

In contrast to the wedding canopy, the second wedding ring does not evoke this same sense of continuity—precisely because it lacks the "history factor". Hardly any biblical or early rabbinic references point to the single wedding ring, let alone to the second one. Without any rich repertoire in the foundational texts, rings evoke little historical resonance stored either in individual or communal memories. However, a mine of information has yet to be gathered from a study of rabbinical ritual manuals over the

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[133]"Mystical neurons" is a term derived from Eugene d'Aquili's neurotheology, described in *The Spectrum of Ritual: A Biogenetic Structural Analysis* (1979).

past few centuries. This kind of research in the area of Judaic rituals, along the lines of Friesen, Mutembe & Molin and Stevenson, would be beneficial.[134]

When gender issues enter this historical picture, we have a clearer idea as to why some symbols receive a higher "traditional", "religious" or "sacred" status than do others. The second wedding ring in Jewish weddings, which can be found over and over again in the contemporary secular non-Jewish world, presents an interesting example. Repeated in a myriad ways (outside the Jewish wedding ritual)—on the fingers of non-Jewish men, in jewelry stores, in print advertising, on TV and in movies—many people from within the Jewish tradition automatically assume that the second ring's origins must stem from outside their tradition.[135] Thus, attributing Jewish origins to this wedding symbol appears problematic. For the religious leadership, the second ring custom has been defined as a "Christian" tradition because it lacks any historical status within its own tradition. Without foundational texts that can link the second ring to some sacred origin in the past, a sense of continuity will be lacking. No real "historical" status within the tradition can be acquired if the leadership and foundational texts do not sanction the symbol. This in turn points to a larger debate over the lack of a feminist canon in religious traditions.[136]

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[134]Freisen's 1918, work *Das Eheschliessungsrecht in Spanien, Grossbritannien und Irland und Skandinavien*, documents original ritual manuals from the 1500s which include details from "The Book of Common Prayer" of 1549. Stevenson's 1983 work *Nuptial Blessings*, provides an excellent source for the history of marriage rituals in the Christian traditions with a section on Hebrew marriages from biblical and ancient times. Mutembe and Molin's 1974 work, *Le rituel du mariage en France du XIIe au XVIe siècle*, focuses not only on the actual ritual manual texts, but also provides sources and analyses of the second ring in France.

[135]Chapter 7 will outline in detail the history of the second ring.

[136] See the feminist writings of deBeauvoir (*The Second Sex*, 1989 ed.), Plaskow (*Standing Again at Sinai*, 1990) and Rosemary Radford Ruether (*Sexism and God-Talk: toward a feminist theology*, 1983).

At an individual level, one's historical understanding of a ritual symbol may be derived from the following sources: hearing about it from the religious leadership or from school teachers (or reading about it in religious texts); hearing it described in the memories of older people; or, remembering it being performed at a young age (cued by the voices of others who were there, triggered by visiting the ritual places, or visualized by viewing photos from that past). Therefore, three types of history can be linked to religious symbols: first, an ancient history (which goes back to the first union of Adam and Eve) usually told to us by religious leaders; second, a two or three generational history told to us by our parents or grandparents; and third, a more recent history recalled within our own minds, usually through some outside stimuli[137]. Many confusedly consider the first source—history as told by religious leaders—as always being factual, complete and true. People believe religious leaders when they say that *chuppahs* go back to the time of Abraham and Adam and Eve. Paradoxically, people may not believe in Adam and Eve or even God, but they believe that *chuppahs* go back to time immemorial. These ancient histories almost always include an overarching dominant male deity and are told in a language deeply governed by masculine values (Ruether 1983; Plaskow 1990; Ostriker 1993). Moreover, because people rely on religious leaders to tell them what to do in religious rituals, the continuity of ritual symbols often falls within the jurisdiction of these leaders who claim authority over them with or without a community's support. Such a narrative of resistance and struggle for ritual change was revealed in the 19th century saga of Jewish women demanding from their rabbis in Berlin

[137]Dreams can play a role here as interior triggers (Hillman 1979; Freud 1961; Jung 1964).

to be allowed to give a second ring to their husbands under the *chuppah*. The story of this ritual struggle will be discussed in Chapter 7.

To briefly sum up, then, the "history factor" refers to the ways in which a religious community and its leadership articulate and create a symbol's past, without necessarily mirroring that symbol's entire true life trajectory. Inevitably, the process of articulating and creating a symbol's past directly impacts upon that symbol's present and future.

The Analogy Factor

Using wedding symbols analogously within the same religious tradition means that part or all of the wedding symbol corresponds in some particulars to another context, unrelated to weddings: "when one thing is inferred to be similar to another thing in a certain respect on the basis of the known similarity in other respects".[138] A symbol, then, can be slightly altered so that part or all of it repeats itself in several contexts. This slightly altered repetition will suggest, either consciously or unconsciously, a sense of continuity. Several examples will be presented to show how wedding symbols have been used analogously in contexts that have little or nothing to do with weddings. Symbols representing fertility, bridal adornments, Torah and feasting can be found not only in Jewish weddings but also in other traditional Jewish contexts. These symbols may be words written in sacred texts, visual representations appearing in works of art, or material objects used in rituals or gestures enacted in ritual performances. As the examples come from different time periods, using an ahistorical approach cautions one from calling this

[138] See *The Random House College Dictionary*, 1988: 48.

"local ritual fieldwork". However, the analysis has been informed by my fieldwork. When brides described their weddings as royal events and their appearance as royal princesses, connections with royally adorned Torah scrolls emerged. Can these connections be a subversive mirroring of oblique reflections that objectify women and Torah, while at the same time sanctifying them?

Since symbols, especially oblique ones, do not always work consciously, one realizes the extent to which ritual forces are not always discernable. Oblique symbols, when used analogously, will therefore produce an oblique sense of repetition and hence a subtle idea that continuity prevails within that tradition. Some of the connections made here between wedding and non-wedding symbols may be obscure, or not at all obvious. But the reason for this lies in the methodology. The examples chosen came from art historical observations, handling objects like Torah pointers (in the context of a secular private collector's house, and not a sacred ritual), and interviews with family members who participated in Jewish rituals. The analogies and possible connections made between these examples and Jewish wedding symbols reflect more "the work of the ethnographer as author of [her] own work, not of the people [being] inscribed" (Handelman 1990: 102). The Plates used to illustrate the ideas in this section, "Analogy Factor", and the next section, "Popular Culture Factor", will be included at the end of the chapter.

Flowers, Greenery and Trees: Fertility Symbols

In the case of Jewish weddings and marriage, fertility remains at their core. The entire symbolic ritual arena that constitutes Jewish weddings of the past and present

centers on the generative powers of creation and sexuality. "Every match is like the creation of a new world" (Kaplan 1983: 2). By the late 1990s, despite the increased rate of artificial insemination, higher levels of education for both sexes, dual professional careers and later marriages (couples getting married at an older age)[139], Jewish weddings still exhibit core signs of fertility. Most Jewish couples in Montreal wait until marriage to have children, unlike a good portion of non-Jewish Quebecers. If for no other reason, Jewish couples in Montreal marry for the sake of having children more so than do non-Jewish couples.

The wedding symbol that captures these ideas of fertility, family and healthy children in relation to marriage is the flower, lushly displayed. Once more, this is a wedding symbol that has erroneously been associated with Christians rather than Jews, partly stemming from the early pagan Roman usage of floral wreaths and from the 19th century commercial European "Flower Culture". Wedding flowers reflect the deeply entrenched Jewish ideals of abundance, life, offspring and sexual well-being (Goody 1993; Biale 1992). An example of the perpetuation of the Christian association with flowers can be found in the 18th century when the Gaon of Vilna, Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon, abolished the custom of decorating Torah Scrolls and the synagogues on the holiday of *Shavuot*. His rationale was that he claimed it was a pagan and Christian custom to decorate with flowers (Chill 1979: 159). This idea was also echoed in my interviews with the rabbis.

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[139]The average age at first marriage in Canadian society in 1972 was 22.2 years for brides and 24.7 for grooms. By 1997 the average age was 27.4 for brides and 29.5 for grooms (Nelson & Robinson 2002: 340).

With respect to sexuality and sexual pleasure, Judaism's history never endorsed celibacy the way Christianity did (Abbott 1999). Excluding legitimate celibate options (no Christian monastic vows to contemplate), the history of Judaism has focused on images of the regenerative powers of nature and the positive value of the reproduction of life. "For I will pour out water on the thirsty soil, streams on the dry ground. I will pour my spirit on your descendants, my blessings on your children. They shall grow like grass where there is plenty of water, like poplars by running streams" (Isaiah 44: 1-4). The non-verbal signs of greenery, wine, decorated *chuppahs* and floral bouquets all point to the valorization of these regenerative powers found in biblical verses. When describing a bride or the new Israel, the imagery of scented gardens is imaged: "She is a garden enclosed, my promised bride; your shoots form an orchard of pomegranate trees, the rarest essences are yours: nard[140] and saffron, calamus[141] and cinnamon, with all the incense-bearing trees; myrrh and aloes, with the subtlest odors. Fountain that makes the gardens fertile, well of the living water" (Song of Songs 4: 12-15). Repeated examples from different periods of time reinforce these fertility-related symbols in communicating the joys of reproducing and the vitality of the gardens of nature. When specific imagery of a wedding canopy appears in close contact with greenery or flowers, reproduction and marriage become intrinsically linked. Greenery or flowers may not always be used, however, within the context of Jewish marriage. Rather, images of trees and greenery

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[140]Nard is an aromatic Himalayan plant believed to be the spikenard (an East Indian aromatic plant).

[141]Calamus is the aromatic root of any palm.

may represent another kind of desired relationship that mirrors marriage or the idea that some powerful vital energy underlies the symbolic representation. In all cases, flowers, greenery and trees convey ideas of abundance, health, fertility, love, harmony and goodness. Imagining the opposite of these qualities—i.e. loss, sickness, death and sterility—will lead to representations of decaying vegetation or barren trees. There are no flowers at a Jewish funeral, unlike the Christian custom. Such a vibrant symbol of health, life and fertility would have no place in the context of death and loss.

Example: *18th Century Penitential Prayers' (Selihot) Manuscript*

In an 18th century title page from a manuscript of Penitential Prayers (*Selihot*) belonging to the Frankfurt burial society, a marriage scene associated with a lush green tree appears as a stark contrast to death (Plate 80). Scenes from cradle to death bed form a background to the main story represented (in the foreground) by two larger figures (a woman and man), each with a book in hand and reciting prayers in a cemetery. The wedding scene, suspended in a leafy tree in the upper left hand corner, clearly depicts a wedding canopy. In stark contrast to this lush scene, we see in the upper right corner empty branches of a barren tree with a suspended burial scene. The barren dead tree re-enforces its opposite, a fertile leafy tree holding a wedding canopy. By analogy with a burial society's prayer book, a lushly decorated *chuppah* becomes solidified as a *bona fide* Jewish symbol repeated in other non-marital Jewish contexts.

Example: *14th Century Illuminated Page from a Spanish Bible*

Moreover, trees and greenery used in other contexts can depict ideas of power. Fertility and life-cycle events do not directly come to mind when viewing this image. In an early 14th century Spanish Bible, an illuminated page depicts the vision of the prophet Zachariah with two green olive trees arched over three gold bowls and seven gold lamps (Plate 81). This magnificent image representing Zachariah's dream presents quite an interesting contrast to the image depicted in the Burial Society's prayer book (Plate 80). However, unlike the Burial Society's image, Zachariah's dream image cannot be easily deciphered. Even Zachariah himself could not understand the symbolism without special angelic hermeneutic guidance.

The text reads as follows: "The angel who was talking to me came back and roused me as a man is roused from his sleep. And he asked me, 'What can you see?' I answered, 'As I look, this is what I see: there is a lamp-stand entirely of gold with a bowl at the top of it; seven lamps are on the lamp stand, and seven lips for the lamps on it. By it are two olive trees, one to the right of it and one to the left.' Speaking again, I said to the angel who was talking to me, 'What do those things mean, my lord?' The angel who was talking to me replied, 'Do you not know what these things mean?' I said, 'No, my lord'. He then gave me this answer, 'These seven are the eyes of Yahweh; they cover the whole world.' In reply to this I asked him, 'What is the meaning of these two olive trees, to the right and to the left of the lamp stand?' Speaking again, I asked him, 'What is the meaning of the two olive branches pouring oil through the two golden pipes?' He replied,

'Do you not know what these things mean?' I said, 'No, my lord'. He said, 'These are the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord of the whole world'" (Zachariah 4: 1-14).

The trees form part of a resplendent scene, connected to gold, light (lamps) and olives. The full green animated branches suggest a lively dancing quality, conveying ideas of energy, vigor and abundance. The two trees reach out to each other, while each provides an equal amount of olive oil to nourish the golden lamps. They are almost identical. Do they bring to mind images of a husband and wife? Could husbands and wives be depicted like these trees, in such a look-alike fashion and with equal stature as fruitful providers? Do these trees foreshadow a time when men and women will be equal, a time when "the wife will also be able to protect [and provide for] her husband", described by some religious thinkers as the Messianic era (Kaplan 1983: 159)? The two trees express perfect symmetrical harmony, but can this harmony be associated with sexuality or conjugality? The traditional interpretation of this image relates much more to political rather than marital themes. The menorah symbolizes the restored Jewish state receiving oil from two olive trees which represent the renewed lineage of King David and the High Priest. The trees represent the harmony needed from both temporal and spiritual powers for the restoration of a Jewish people and a promised land.[142]

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[142] Considering the historical contexts of the 6th century BCE when Zachariah had his dream, and the 1300s CE when the Cervera Bible was illuminated, peaceful co-existence between the temporal and spiritual powers augured some hope for particular Jewish communities. The year 520 BCE represented a time of restored hope for Jews returning from exile to Judea, under the governor Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua. In Spain until 1391 (massacres in Aragon and Castille) and 1492 (Jews expelled from Spain), Jews were spared from the massacres already suffered by northern Ashkenazi Jews. Zerubbabel and Joshua, the probable candidates behind the symbolism of the two trees, represented the two anointed ones, while the gold seven-branched *menorah* points to the seven eyes of Yahweh. It is interesting to note that seven gold lamps represent the seven eyes of God, a deity symbolized not by greenery or trees but by gold material. Also, the symbolic number seven, expressed in the nuptial Seven Benedictions and the bride's

Greenery with flowers, trees with leaves, trees gushing forth olive oil—all resonate to some degree with ideas of abundance and prosperity. When more emphasis is placed on flowers, as in the case of wedding bouquets or decorated *chuppahs*, abundance becomes linked to ideas of fertility and sexual reproduction.

Example: *Torah as a Tree of Life*

Finally, trees and, more specifically, the earth in which their roots thrive, have been used as symbols for the most sacred of all Jewish realities, Torah (Proverbs 3:18). "When a Torah scroll is *pasul*, worn out or damaged beyond repair, it is either properly buried in a cemetery or placed in a genizah" (Grossman 1995:81). Again through the use of analogy, the Torah's burial place resembles that of a human in the sense that both return to the ground after withering away. The association made here between trees, the earth, life, Torah and a decorated *chuppah*, although oblique, reinforces the idea that sacredness belongs to both Torah and weddings, both symbols of life.

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seven circles around the groom, finds a unique interpretation in Zachariah's vision. "Seven" relates intimately here to a personified God who has eyes, but hardly a normal human configuration. Yet, even this analogy effectively leads us to consider how a bride's seven circles might be akin to a God with seven eyes watching over and covering her enclosed subject.

Although some similarity can be seen between fertile olive trees and the lush greenery used to decorate wedding canopies, clear differences nevertheless prevail when comparing Zachariah's dream image to a wedding scene. In Zachariah's imagery, ideas of priesthood, royalty and anointing linked to olive trees strongly suggest male sex-roles. Masculinity, strongly suggested in Zachariah's dream, represents visions of male power and rulership in the persons of the ruling governor, Zerubbabel and the high priest, Joshua. Or, has an angel's authoritative interpretative voice led us too quickly to adopt such a meaning? Observe the trees carefully in the Cervera Bible manuscript, with their softly shaped curves moving gracefully, and evoking feminine qualities (Hanna 1979: 94). Despite the predominance of male leadership in the domains of religion and politics, perhaps the artist is trying to convey the idea that "feminine" nurturing qualities symbolized by curvacious trees will be necessary to generate peace and harmony between temporal and religious leaders.

Example: *Decorated Decalogue Painted on Parchment, 1961*

A final example connecting greenery and Torah can be found in a modern representation of the Decalogue surrounded by stylized flowers (Plate 82). The symbols of greenery and flowers found in Jewish weddings are echoed once more. Through repetition, flowers that decorate the bride and the wedding space also decorate this image of the Decalogue, linking both wedding and Torah with sacred law.

A concrete ritual example further demonstrating the link between flowers and Torah is the custom of decorating the synagogue with flowers at *Shavuot*. This festive holiday commemorates the anniversary of the giving of the Torah to the Children of Israel and has many names. It has been called "The Feast of the Harvest" (Exodus 23:16), "The Festival of Weeks" (Exodus 34:22) and "The Festival of the First Fruits". Jewish homes as well are decorated with shrubbery, foliage or flowers. A sense of continuity is found in all the above examples, where analogous repetitions of flowers, trees and foliage (unrelated to weddings) stabilize and valorize those symbols when they are used within the wedding context.

Other examples demonstrating the repetition of wedding symbols in completely different contexts other than weddings can be found in ritual objects and ritual gestures.

Torah Mantles and Pointers: Subversive Bridal Symbols

The aesthetics of both brides and Torah mantles invokes beauty along with holiness. Like the attention bestowed upon the bride, "Because of the special status of *kedushah* (sacredness) of the Torah scroll, much loving attention has been paid to the

Torah *klei kodesh* (appurtenances), implements of holiness" (Grossman 1995:82). However, this analogy may only be relevant when thinking of brides who were adorned like royalty. This includes the majority of brides within the last 50 years, but only a minority of Jewish brides from the medieval through the 19th centuries, who dressed in the regular costume of their community or village. The high priest's costume described in Exodus 28, with breastplate (pectoral of judgement), robe and diadem, might be a more appropriate image that would come to the minds of community members viewing a decorated Torah scroll before the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, it may be more cogent to compare the bride's unique gesture of pointing her right index finger when she receives the wedding ring under the *chuppah* to a Torah pointer. Since the right index finger denotes a legal act, both pointer and bride's finger mirror each other.

The contemporary awkwardness of a bride wearing her wedding ring on the right index finger was not always the case in the past, when rings were more commonly worn on many fingers and joints. Considering the bride's unequal legal status under the *chuppah*, and increasing debates in feminist circles about women's subordinate roles in religious leadership, comparisons linking the bride with Torah implements possess a subversive quality. On one level, women are distanced from the most sacred Torah objects, and on another, their ritual appearance and gestures mimic these objects. Reversals can be imagined with a full-size bridal gown and tiara and a scaled down version of a Torah scroll mantle and crown. The same imagined reversal can be made with a full-size bridal hand and index finger and with a scaled down version of a Torah pointer.

Example: *Italian Dressed Torah Mantle (20th century)*

Resembling a mantle and crown that dress the Torah scroll (Plate 83), the bride's adornments and Torah ritual objects link beauty and holiness with weddings and the core of Jewish identity, the Torah. *Kiddushin* at a Jewish wedding reflects the idea of consecration and holiness through the physical manifestation of the uniting of both groom and bride. Yet, considering the bride's wedding gown and appearance, it is her presence which invites more attention and focus than do most other wedding elements. In particular, her quiet non-verbal circling gesture around the groom powerfully demonstrates this idea of *kiddushin* or holiness. By separating him from the rest, she makes her groom and the sacred ritual *chuppah* space holy but without any status or sanction of law. Despite this non-legal status which her gesture characterizes, her regal appearance and circling gesture draw "much loving attention", as do the *klei kodesh*, the implements of holiness. The visual impact of an adorned bride circling and marking her territory brings to mind the ideas of royal splendour associated with adorned Torah scrolls.

Example: *Torah Pointer*

The comparison of a bride's wedding ring finger and a Torah Pointer (Plate 84) subversively links brides and Torah. Many of these pointers, fashioned and carved out of silver, gold, coral or ivory evoke a bizarre kind of aesthetic where a stylized amputated hand takes on the character of a shaman's talisman. Serving primarily as intermediary ritual objects between sacred Hebrew characters on sacred Torah scrolls and eligible

Torah readers, the pointers separate the world of the sacred from the world of the profane. In so doing they protect the scrolls from the wear and tear of human touch. The majority of pointers display a right hand with its index finger clearly extended. Although the contexts could not be more dissimilar, Torah pointers and a bride's right hand look remarkably alike. When a Jewish bride accepts the groom's wedding ring under the *chuppah*, she extends her right index finger. Since the groom's gesture of accepting the second ring has less legal importance (or rather, the bride's gesture of giving the groom a ring imputes his hand), he extends the fourth finger of his left hand when he accepts the bride's ring.

Jewish brides, however, do not usually keep their wedding rings on their index fingers for very long. Like their spousal counterparts, they too wear their wedding rings on their left hands. After the ceremony, they switch the wedding ring from the index finger to the fourth finger of their left hand. Today's customary position of the wedding ring, generally, still remains the fourth finger of the left hand. A bride's extended right index finger, reserved for the sacred ritual wedding space under the *chuppah*, points to ideas of law and the sacred.

Both the Torah pointer and the bride's right index finger remain highly stylized ritual objects, and are both under the auspices of Jewish law. To some extent, then, a woman's hand (and body) acquires an objectified status like the Torah pointer. Both objects (i.e. the bride's right index finger and the Torah pointer), in turn, come into contact with symbols of still higher status, the Torah scroll and the sole official wedding ring. The exclusivity of this female ritual gesture under the *chuppah*—that is, she alone

extends her index finger—highlights even more the exclusivity of the legal status of the single wedding ring.

Upon closer observation, however, most Torah pointers resemble more a male sculpted hand. Is the bride's gesture of extending her right index finger under the *chuppah*, which resembles that of the male sculpted Torah pointers, truly a female ritual gesture? Could one say, more accurately, that her symbolic gesture resembles a male hand reflecting particular male-dominated powers which govern ritual objects like Torah pointers and wedding fingers? Perhaps the following tentative answer might suffice. On her wedding day, the symbol of the extended right index finger awkwardly belongs to her.

Bar Mitzvahs: Feasting Symbols

A final example, showing analogous symbols within a tradition, is the opulent feasting that has taken place at *Bar Mitzvahs* in Montreal within the last 40 years. In a way, a *Bar Mitzvah* feast can be understood as a preview or dress rehearsal for the wedding banquet. A *Bar Mitzvah* banquet parallels a wedding banquet and demonstrates that, within the same tradition, the repeated symbol of feasting acquires recognition and endorsement. Legally, the wedding feast has more value, as it is considered a *mitzvah* to participate in this meal. As the Talmud says, "The *Kiddushin* must be accompanied by a meal" (Kaplan 1983: 209). [143]

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[143] *Bar Mitzvah* meals under certain circumstances can also be considered *mitzvot* (Bloch 1980: 21).

Example: *Montreal Bar Mitzvah at Ruby Foo's (1964)*

Differences and similarities exist between weddings and *Bar Mitzvahs*, two festive events. Whereas the center of attention at a *Bar Mitzvah* points to a young adolescent boy, at a wedding the bride takes pride of place. Young boys and grooms both receive the honor of publically reading from the Torah in synagogue which is a sign of the legal religious status bestowed upon them. On both occasions the honor of reading from the Torah serves as an official marker of their legal entry into their community's religious tradition, first becoming an adult and second becoming a husband. For a young Jewish girl, and depending on her family's denominational affiliation, a *Bat Mitzvah* may or may not include a public Torah reading in synagogue. But, regardless of denominational affiliation and *halachic* boundaries, most *Bar Mitzvahs* and weddings enjoy one important common element, the extravagant food banquet that follows the ceremony.

The banquet of a *Bar Mitzvah*, at least in Montreal, assumes a grandeur and size with which only a wedding could compare (Plate 85, Plate 86). In the case of one *Bar Mitzvah* that took place at Ruby Foo's in Montreal in 1964, a mother described the event as follows: "It wasn't really a big event, we were about 220 people. We didn't have the reception at the synagogue, that would have tripled the cost. So, I would say, if my memory serves me right, it cost only about $5000. We were lucky. Some *Bar Mitzvahs* cost in the 10 or 20 thousands. With our daughter, there was no reception. She and three other girls had their *Bat Mitzvah* together, and then they had a luncheon and tea at the synagogue for the girls and their families." For Montreal Jewish families, the wedding day will not only resemble a *Bar Mitzvah*, but will surpass it. For the majority of

Catholics in this city, no Confirmation event can compare with this Jewish counterpart, although First Communions and Baptisms among Italian communities include extravagant family festivities.

Both *Bar Mitzvahs* and Jewish weddings express the values of prosperity, abundance and identity. Within the last 20 years, these traditional life cycle events have become more rites of identity, proud occasions on which a community assembles together as a strong cohesive group. Moreover, the trend towards extravagant weddings in North America has gradually become the norm for many non-Jewish couples as well. The existence of professional "Event Organizers", "Wedding Consultants" and an official "North American Association of Bridal Consultants" demonstrates this growing trend towards extravagance (Geller 2001: 259). However, when modern wedding critics like Geller and Ingraham come down hard on this increasing trend of excessive material displays at weddings, they may be wishing to throw out the baby with the bath water. To recommend that wedding rites be totally relinquished, as a way of challenging excessive materialism in our western cultures, seems misdirected. For Geller, in particular, the wedding ceremony epitomizes women's subordination through the institution of marriage. She says: "In order to shape a meaningful history different from the history of those who came before us, women must relinquish the sentimental excess of the current wedding ceremony and let go of marriage, the institution that has sheltered our female ancestors, sometimes granting them safeties and protections but always furthering their subordination. An epoch of equality will only come to fruition when this ceremony, which enforces gender differences, is abandoned. By denying ourselves the short term

rewards of the nuptial rite, resisting its temptations and relinquishing the opportunities it provides for narcissistic self-presentation, we can begin to construct a vision of female selfhood untouched by the marital agenda" (Geller 2001: 293). Geller mistakenly assumes that if marriage were eliminated, individuals and communities would abandon other forms of rituals to celebrate unions, love and family.[144]

In addressing the problems of excessive material display, historical work done by Roper, Allan Hunt, Diane Hughes and Georges Duby show that limits on clothing, food and drink were not uncommon concerns in the past, such as during the Middle Ages and Renaissance—and at all levels of society. Even for those on the bottom of the economic ladder, local taverns served an abundance of food and drink on the occasion of a villager's wedding. Certainly, the works of both Geller and Ingraham serve as important contributions to the fields of gender and material culture studies, especially in their analyses of the role of media on the contemporary wedding scene.[145] As Geller points

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[144] Geller's sometimes sweeping historical generalizations about nuptial rites are problematic. Claims like "There is minimal extant information on the Anglo-Saxon wedding ritual."(Geller 2001: 256) and "such ceremonies [western marriages before the 16th century] involved no real paperwork" (Geller 2001: 255) demonstrate a lack of historical research in the field of nupital rites. Kenneth Stevenson's *Nupital Blessings*, Mutembe and Molin's *Le Rituel du Mariage en France du XIIIe au XVIe siècle*, *Gortyn's Law Code* (Cretan marriage laws from 700 BCE), Friesen's *Das Eheschliessungsrecht in Spanien, Grossbritannien und Irland...*, Büchler's *Le Ketoubah Chez les Juifs du Nord de l'Afrique à l'Epoque des Geonim* show extant material on Anglo-Saxon wedding rites and on the use of written "paperwork" in various religious cultures such as ancient Crete, 9th century North Africa and medieval France. Catholic "nuptial *cartes* or charts" and Jewish "Ketoubahs" were known in various communities. Furthermore, her statement that "modern marriage is profoundly materialistic" (Geller 2001: 255) might be compared to Tertullian's comments about the excessive materialism which he scorned in 2nd century North Africa under the influences of Roman and middle eastern fashions of the day.

Moreover, getting rid of marriage will hardly assure women a greater share of society's benefits. More realistic and short-term goals would be: to work for better legal rights for women and children in common-law unions and to increase women's roles in religious leadership.

[145] For a comprehensive list of films and TV programs that include weddings, see Ingraham's *White Weddings* (1999).

out, rituals do present idealized views, and critiquing those views remains an integral part of a society's quest for change. But Geller and Ingraham's critiques of weddings, despite their significant gender analyses, are also critiques of a general growing material lifestyle, within which weddings and all other facets of our highly consumer-oriented lifestyle take place. As Erving Goffman succinctly said: "To the degree that a performance highlights the common official values of the society in which it occurs, we may look upon it, in the manner of Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, as a ceremony, as an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community. Furthermore, in so far as the expressive bias of performances comes to be accepted as reality, then that which is accepted at the moment as reality will have some of the characteristics of a celebration. To stay in one's room away from the place where the party is given is to stay away from where reality is being performed. The world, in truth, is a wedding" (Goffman 1959: 35-36).

If *Bar Mitzvahs* express opulence, then surely weddings, the highest ritual moment of a Jewish family's life, will express no less. The repetition of families and friends gathered together, dressed in their best attire and bearing gifts, can be found at both weddings and *Bar Mitzvahs*. At both events, the rabbi plays a teaching and anointing role. At both events, one finds a ceremonial head table at the reception and a ceremonial large cake. Formal dress attire, music, and a professional photographer/videographer mark both occasions. Community feasting experienced at *Bar Mitzvahs* reinforces the symbolic community feasting repeated at weddings. A sense of continuity links elaborate weddings to *Bar Mitzvahs,* making once-in-a-lifetime wedding

feasts appear familiar in a chain of life-cycle events, while reinforcing the presence of synagogue life (rabbinic presence) in both these ritual events.

The Popular Culture Factor

Symbols that appear within the context of religious rituals may also be found outside that context, in the world at large or in popular culture.[146] Outside environments may be defined as spaces occupied by other religious traditions or the general secular world. Symbols occupying these different spaces might be called "bi-spatial" or "bi-traditional". When a symbol occupies both inside and outside spaces, it does so without necessarily losing presence or value within the religious tradition's rituals. By being part of outside environments, a symbol may actually be positively endorsed within a tradition—if not by the religious leadership, then by members of the community.

The meanings ascribed to a particular symbol from within the tradition may differ from meanings given to it by another religious tradition or the secular world. For example, the circular unending shape of the wedding ring may be defined by the rabbis as being similar to the eternal Torah, thus giving it a sacred character. For secular retailers on the outside of the tradition, however, a wedding ring's circular shape may be secondary to the material used to fashion the ring. So, if the ring is made of platinum, the

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[146]Ruth Finnegan suggests different meanings for "popular culture" which have been used in the fields of history, folklore and ethnography. "Popular" can refer to the contemporary world, local or amateur verbal expressions or non-élite forms of culture. "The term 'popular culture' and its associated terms is now more and more entering into academic analysis and discussion. It is frequently used to direct attention to 'ordinary' as opposed to professional practitioners or activities, and to take account of 'mixed' or 'creolised' forms, as well as providing a way to explore the sectional, changing or political elements in these practices" (Finnegan 1992: 15).

ring is described as lasting forever because of its durable chemical essence, giving it a more worldly character.[147] In this way, symbols used repeatedly outside a religious tradition can generate a sense of continuity, even if that continuity moves along a line that transects two very different spaces.

The following examples demonstrate various ways in which Jewish wedding symbols are found in popular culture and how this popular usage might affect the religious ritual use of those symbols. More specifically, "popular culture" as used in the context of this analysis means "cultural influences found outside (but not necessarily excluded from) the Jewish wedding ritual sphere".

Example: *Jewish Words Under the Chuppah and on Greeting Cards*

In the case of greeting cards, two specific cases demonstrate how Jewish wedding symbols are repeated and reinforced in the popular world of retail. These examples demonstrate the popularization of key Jewish wedding phrases like "*Mazol Tov*" and "*Ani ledodi vedodi li*" (" I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine") (Plate 87, Plate 88). Whereas the familiarity of words like "*Mazol Tov*" has flowed over into the non-Jewish world, "*Ani ledodi vedodi li*" remains less known. Although most grooms cannot remember the official Hebrew words spoken when they legally acquired a wife under the *chuppah*, everyone knows and remembers "*Mazol Tov*". Most brides, however, do remember the unofficial (not the legal *Kiddushin* formula) Hebrew words "*Ani ledodi*

[147]This more "worldly" character translates as more profane than sacred in our present-day North American society because of the rise of science and scientific language. In previous times, silver, platinum or gold would be magically interpreted.

vedodi li" or " I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" when they give their grooms their wedding rings .[148]

Other differences become evident between these two wedding cards. The card with Hebrew characters and a well-drawn Star of David can clearly be identified as Jewish, whereas the other card may well attract non-Jewish buyers. The biblical reference "Song of Songs 6:3", clearly indicated on the card in Plate 88, does not necessarily connect this card to Judaism. With the absence of Herbrew characters, this English-only card with sketchy drawings of two hearts and a loose six-pointed star could be sold to a non-Jewish clientele. For many Jewish brides, however, this card would echo the words that they alone spoke under the wedding canopy. Moreover, since Jewish brides do not speak the same words as their counterpart grooms, the card serves to reinforce a certain gender inequality. These biblical wedding words repeated on a commercial greeting card reinforce their usage under the sacred context of the *chuppah.* Seeing these words repeated on a commercial greeting card assumes that this might be the "official" Jewish wedding "vow", at least for Jewish brides.

The phrase "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" or *"Ani ledodi vedodi li"* reserved exclusively for brides represents and endorses distinct gender roles in the uttering of different words under the sacred wedding canopy. When seen on commercial greeting cards over and over again, in pharmacies and department stores, brides need not doubt the "correctness" of their wedding utterances. The appearance of cards like this reassures rabbis that the commercial greeting card business supports distinct gender roles

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[148]Based on the interviews from the field work.

in Jewish weddings and creates at the same time a sense of "tradition" linking the words with a foundational biblical text. Popular culture in this way acts in tandem with religious authorities in supporting similar beliefs and ideals. Brides continue to be reminded that they should say "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine", since they hear it repeatedly in two worlds, the worlds of the synagogue and the shopping mall.

Example: *One Wedding Ring, One Diamond Engagement Ring*

Religious leaders may reluctantly disapprove of popular symbols used in the world at large, in the effort to communicate and embrace more sacred symbols within their own tradition. Popular symbols may provoke tensions or threats to a tradition, thus risking undesirable changes within a religious community. Ironically, though, popular symbols which appear to be detrimental to a sacred tradition may actually help reinforce certain values endorsed by the religious leadership of a tradition. Despite the uniqueness of one's particular religious tradition, a sharing of symbols between traditions often exists (Freedberg 1989; Jung 1964; Van Gennep 1946; Kunz 1913). The effects of seeing a shared symbol used repeatedly by those of another tradition often reinforces values represented by that symbol.

With the case of engagement rings, the marketing of the diamond ring represents just such a symbol. Not unlike the betrothal ring of the past, today's diamond ring expresses a one-sided gesture where the male gives a diamond while proposing marriage (Geller 2001: 73-101; Tremblay 2001: 85; Girard 2000: 66-74). The unequal gender dynamics involved with the engagement ring simply parallel the patriarchal religious

belief that males are pro-active and females are passive. "The proposal scene's central object—glittering diamond mounted on a platinum band and presented by a kneeling lover—is always offered by a man to a woman, never vice versa. The gift combines romantic finesse, sexual prowess, and economic savvy in a streamlined package of middle-class masculinity, casting its female recipient in the role of a genteel coquette, an aristocratic lady in waiting" (Geller 2001: 76). Although the diamond ring plays no part under the *chuppah*, its role parallels that of the single official wedding ring.

Worn exclusively by the bride, the legalized wedding band and the diamond engagement ring solidify the separate gendered spheres propagated by religious leaders and popular culture. The widespread secular endorsement of the diamond ring—in Canada in the year 2000, 85% of women who become engaged received one—re-affirms separate gender roles in religious and secular institutions (George 2001: 16). In addition, the diamond engagement ring, despite a changing world in which men now do more house chores, still aligns domestic or private areas of life with a woman's world (Yalom 2001: 381-385). The advertisement shown in Plate 89 depicts the close tie between the engagement ring and the exclusively female domestic sphere. Noteworthy in this advertisement is the liaison created between particular household goods, women and intimacy. White rolled up bath towels, ice cubes in a blender, and the words "Bed, Bath and Beyond" all point to domestic spaces that have been stereotyped as "women's domains" bathrooms, kitchens and bedrooms. The marketing strategists have clearly avoided stereotypical male spaces such as basements, living rooms and backyards.

Examples of household goods linked to these male spaces would be home tools, television, stereo equipment, home computers, lawnmowers or barbeques.

An interesting counter-example to the above gender stereotype appears in an advertisement designed to sell vacuum cleaners (Plate 90). This advertisement challenges gender stereotyping and patriarchal ideals by showing the change in men's domestication process (Yalom 2001: 380-390). Compared to an early 20th century advertisement from a Hudson's Bay Shopping Catalogue (Plage 91), women and men's domestic roles appear to have come a long way. But have they? According to Yalom, slow progress is in evidence in the domestication of the North American male (Yalom 2001: 385). Another image from the same era reveals that gender role reversals were, no doubt, a contentious issue a hundred years ago (Plate 92). This image of a hardened tyrannical woman appears much more threatening than that of a bride on top of a cake gazing at her groom holding a vacuum cleaner. But the inferences of both images carry the same meaning—the domestication of men through marriage. Although softer in its impact, the vacuum cleaning groom on top of a wedding cake challenges religious and popular ideals relegating men to the public sphere and women to the private (or domestic) one. For brides and grooms who embrace feminist ideals, this kind of symbolism works at reinforcing a sense of unity with other women and men who share similar beliefs that gender role reversals can be beneficial. For religious leaders and community members who worry about men becoming women and vice-versa, role reversal symbols can become serious challenges to "traditional" practices and beliefs. Without any doubt, advertisements like the early 1900 one showing a man wearing a dress and a woman

wearing pants underlie the significance of gendered boundaries established through clothing and the fluctuating social constructs of gender.

For example, the full meaning of "wearing the pants" has a relatively short history. This history reveals how gender roles fluctuate through time and place, and cannot be firmly connected to some immutable far-distant ancient roots. In the west by the 1850s, a growing Victorian patriarchal authority was reflected in men "wearing pants [which carried] a strong masculine identity, but now devoid of overtly personal sexual attraction" (Davidoff & Hall 1987: 412). Related as well to the new social status of a growing working middle-class in the mid 19th century, this new fashion represented a common masculinity that soon overrode occupational differences. The history of clothing demonstrates how social dominance and subordination find expression in the way a particular society interprets gender, class and religion.

Contemporary images of men wearing wedding tuxedos and women wearing wedding gowns appear to be well entrenched in western popular culture. As long as this gendered clothing fashion prevails, serious challenges to traditional gender roles within patriarchal religious traditions will pass by the wayside. The repeated imagery of men donning "masculine" clothing and women donning "feminine" clothing in popular culture will only enhance wedding symbols that endorse separate gender roles.

To sum up, the last two chapters have developed the following pivotal ideas: 1) a repertoire of Montreal Jewish weddings from the early 1960s revealed shared and unique wedding symbols from Jewish and Christian origins through the non-verbal medium of photography; 2) the second wedding ring appeared in 60% of the 140 weddings studied,

and despite its disputed legal status established itself as being a Jewish symbol; 3) despite sharing symbols with Catholicism, Jewish weddings remain primarily Jewish; 4) issues of memory predominate in ritual generational transmission; 5) Jewish couples, living together before their wedding, fictively re-create "rites of passage"; 6) parental influence in Jewish wedding ritual transmission plays a greater role in wedding preparations than under the *chuppah*; 7) three factors—history, analogy and popular culture—inform wedding symbols in the way they create a sense of continuity, 8) the most important and effective of these factors is history, either real or fictive, which ultimately determines a symbol's status; 9) a sense of continuity in the context of ritual generational transmission plays a key role in defining religious and gender identities; 10) weddings, being a principal vehicle for the transmission of these identities, become primarily rites of identity .

Moreover, the presence of the second ring in Jewish wedding rituals raises the question: Who defines a tradition's identity and rituals? As the next chapter will show, the rabbis have a special role to play in answering this question.

Chapter 6

The Rabbis' Perspectives on the Second Ring

The same does not mean equal, I suppose I am not a radical feminist.
I am not bound by Halacha, my concern is to have a Jewish wedding.
I want to hold on to tradition, that is why I have the Aramaic Ketoubah.
I am searching for integrity not Halachic minutiae.

Montreal Reconstructionist Rabbi

I do not know what you mean by 'double-ring ceremony'.

Montreal Orthodox Rabbi

From the perspectives of the rabbis who were interviewed, the second ring lacked any evidence of a long history and therefore any sense of legitimacy or value within the scheme of an ancient religious tradition. Moreover, theologically the idea of "two" versus "one" or "oneness" did not fit comfortably with religious ideas like monotheism, monogamy or mystical union. Most of the rabbis dated the appearance of the second ring circa 1975 and attributed its influence to Christian custom or to popular culture, including films and television.[149] The rabbis neither suspected nor thought that this gender-laden symbol may have germinated from within the folds of Judaism and not within the Catholic or Christian majority culture in which they presently lived. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the second ring conveyed little sense of continuity within the tradition because it lacked any historical status or any evidence of being repeated analogously in other Jewish contexts. The second wedding ring evoked no

[149]Only one rabbi, from the Reconstructionist denomination, categorically claimed that the second ring did not come from Gentile influences but emerged as a result of growing feminist concerns about 25 to 30 years ago.

memories, no relationship with *halacha*, and for some rabbis no real existence. It took me four years to realize that I had asked a few Orthodox rabbis the wrong question in relation to the second ring. When I asked "Do you perform double-ring ceremonies under the *chuppah*?", I received the frequent answer "No". Four years later, I rephrased the question, "Do you perform a wedding ceremony in which two rings are given under the *chuppah*?", and received the answer "Yes, but I do not perform double-ring wedding ceremonies. There is no such thing as a double-ring wedding ceremony in Judaism. The second ring is immaterial. Legally, it doesn't exist". A sharp dichotomy can be drawn, therefore, between the second wedding ring's high visibility in popular culture and its relative invisibility in a religious context where complex legal principles and structures abide. However, others, besides myself had misconceptions about double-ring ceremonies in contemporary Jewish practice.

Outside the arena of rabbinic jurisprudence, general scholarly works like Dictionaries of Religion assume that double-ring wedding ceremonies remain primarily out of Orthodoxy's reach and belong exclusively to the more egalitarian sects of Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism. The 1997 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion* states the following: "While the transaction [of betrothal] requires the brides' consent, in the traditional ceremony she is the passive recipient. In Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist ceremonies, there is mutual *qinyan*. The bride and groom each give and receive rings and recite the marriage formula: 'with this ring be thou consecrated to me as my wife (husband) according to the law of Moses and the faith of

Israel'".[150] In the case of Montreal, and as demonstrated by my study, the Reform rabbi performed more single ring ceremonies than several Orthodox and Conservative rabbis. Moreover, what constitutes "mutual *qinyan*" in Conservative or Reconstructionist ceremonies where the bride does not say the same legal verbal formula as does the male? Indeed, in the case of Montreal weddings, very few differences were seen among all four denominations with respect to the legal performance of *kinyan* (*qinyan*). As for the reference above to a bride being "the passive recipient", Orthodox interpretations would challenge this claiming that her silent non-verbal gesture of accepting the ring signals an active consensual move, and not a passive one.

Besides scholarly works in the field of religious studies, authors whose works include historical and cultural analyses of wedding rituals omit or scan quickly over the history of wedding rings (Geller 2001; Tremblay 2001; Grimes 2000; Ingraham 1999; Muir 1997; Roper 1989). While Geller specifically mentions Jewish rituals in her recent 2001study on American weddings, her claim, "in Jewish tradition, because a man acquires a woman in marriage, only he decorates her with a ring", does not accurately reflect current practices (Geller 2001: 282). Certainly in the case of Montreal Jewish communities, Jewish women from four denominations do "decorate" their grooms with rings. At one point Geller attempts to correct her overgeneralized statement by saying the following: "However, many modern Jews have egalitarianized the ceremony, rendering it a ritual of mutual acquisition, as if extending the right of possession to both parties eliminates the problematic nature of sexual ownership of another individual" (Geller

[150]See *Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion*, 1997, p. 120.

2001: 282). Geller, however, misses an important point. She does not consider that ring-giving is like gift-giving (using Mauss' theories on gifts), where mutual obligations and joy can characterize the ring, rather than possessiveness. While wedding rings and their exchange may symbolize sexual exclusivity, the idea of "mutual acquisition", as Geller suggests, also remains an impossibility within Jewish marital law.

The language of acquisition or *kinyan* presents a conundrum when any suggestion of exchange appears in close proximity to it. Any suggestion of exchange in a Jewish marriage ceremony may impute the action of a *kinyan*. A *kinyan*, therefore, remains essentially unilateral and not bilateral. Otherwise, it becomes an exchange "and falls into the category of *halipin* (a barter-like exchange) which consequently could not constitute a legal act of betrothal" (*Tomeikh KaHalakhah* 1995: 75).[151]

Leaving aside the complexities of Jewish law, Geller's comment that sexual ownership is symbolized by the exchange and wearing of wedding rings is much too simplistic. Wedding rings throughout the ages have reflected different values in different places. Besides representing newly formed economic and sexual obligations between husbands and wives and their mutual families, wedding rings also symbolized emotional and sentimental ties which transcended contractual legal bonds or religious directives.

In addition, what Geller overlooked was the particular ritual contexts within which rings determine the various degrees of egalitarianism that can be ascribed to them. A particular Reform wedding ritual may be no more or less egalitarian than an Orthodox

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[151] *Tomeikh KaHalakhah: Responsa of the Panel of Halakhic Inquiry*. The Union for Traditional Judaism, Vol. 2, 1994-95 (pp. 75-79).

one, depending upon who does what, what was said and the sequencing in time and space of these ritual actions. As mentioned earlier, there were more single ring ceremonies performed in the Reform congregation than in some Conservative and Orthodox congregations in this city. Within Reform, the couples may freely decide if they want a single or double-ring ceremony—often leaving the final decision to the groom. Frequently, the reason given for single ring ceremonies in Reform was to accommodate a groom who did not want to wear a wedding ring.[152] The Reform ritual, in this way, mirrored more closely what couples actually do in the outside world. But, from another perspective, what seems like a more egalitarian denomination (one that reflects full egalitarian rituals) may not always be the case. Never did Conservative or Orthodox couples accommodate or privilege the groom's wishes when they chose a single-ring ceremony. Their reasons for giving only one ring under the *chuppah* were based on the following: they claimed that they wanted to have a more religious ceremony or they wanted to please the rabbi. Unlike the Reform couples, these Conservative or Orthodox couples would wear their rings *after* the ceremony was completed. One cannot slight the Reform rabbi for respecting the wishes of the couples who chose single-ring ceremonies. However, one must not assume either that all Orthodox or Conservative weddings have less egalitarian practices.

In one particular case, where both Orthodox and Conservative rabbis presided over a Montreal wedding in 1996, the Conservative rabbi pushed for a single-ring

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[152]Interviews February 28, 1996; May 27, 1996; June 16, 17, 1997; March 24, 1998; August 16, 2001.

wedding ceremony in order to respect the senior Orthodox rabbi. Even though the wedding took place in a Conservative synagogue, the idea that Orthodoxy insisted on one ring was firmly embedded in the minds of the couple and of the Conservative rabbi. A less than perfect wedding ritual resulted from these misconceptions and misunderstandings. Because the Conservative rabbi still felt committed to respect the bride's wishes of wanting to give the second ring, he performed a second ring-giving ceremony at the reception, when the Orthodox rabbi had left. Unfortunately, amidst all the noise of glasses, plates, knives and forks, and bustling waiters, the ring-giving was awkward, self-conscious and without any feeling of "pride of place". It was quickly done and the bride became extremely nervous and could hardly speak. No one heard her heartfelt commitment pledge as guests gulped down their first course. It appeared as if the gesture was an after-thought, despite all the rabbi's good intentions. When I later spoke to the Orthodox rabbi who had left the wedding immediately after the *chuppah* ceremony, he said he would never have objected to the bride giving the ring under the *chuppah*. But, as he said, the couple never brought up the question of a second ring. Rather they adamantly claimed that they preferred a single-ring ceremony. If I had not interviewed the Orthodox rabbi, my impressions from watching the wedding video and speaking to the Conservative rabbi would have erroneously led me to conclude that Conservative wedding rituals (and rabbis) were more egalitarian than Orthodox ones. Likewise, with 99% of the Orthodox rabbis whom I interviewed, no objections were made about the second ring. The second ring was concretely present, but without legal status in the ceremony.

Interviews with Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist Rabbis[153]

The interviews revealed that the second ring acquired a denominational valence according to where it was placed in the ritual. With the exception of one rabbi, they all performed double-ring ceremonies. The question that mattered to these rabbis was *when* they allowed the second ring to be given. Depending first on the sequencing of events, then on the words that were spoken, degrees of orthodoxy were determined or at least perceived. When the Conservative rabbis heard (from answers to questions they asked during the interviews) that the Orthodox rabbis in the city were allowing a second ring to be given, they were often surprised. When the Orthodox rabbis heard that the Reform rabbi performed more single-ring ceremonies than some of their Orthodox *confrères,* they were curious. The perceived differences between the four denominations appeared much more acute in the minds of the rabbis than in the minds of the couples and community who were watching the ceremony. As for choosing a particular denomination or rabbi for their wedding destination, the couples often made that choice to coincide with their preferred caterer or hall. Frequently, parental congregation affiliations played a larger role than the couples' own choices as to who should marry them. The results of such

[153]In 1768, the first Montreal and Orthodox synagogue (and first Canadian synagogue) that was established was Shearith Israel called "The Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue". A second synagogue was established in 1846, the Shaar Hashomayim, which was affiliated with the Orthodox tradition. In 1902, Rabbi Herman Abramowitz, one of the first graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, came to the Shaar Hashomayim bringing to Montreal the first threads of the Conservative movement but still remaining within Orthodoxy. It would not be until the late 1920s and early 1930s when the Conservative movement in America would coalesce. In Montreal, the Shaare Zion Conservative synagogue would be one of the first synagogues to be affiliated with the American Assembly of Conservative Judaism in 1927. In 1960 the Reconstructionist movement arrived in Montreal with the founding of Dorshei Emet. The first Reform synagogue in the city wasTemple Emanu-El founded in 1882.

influences could bring together two or three rabbis from Conservative, Orthodox, Ashkenazi or Sephardic backgrounds to co-officiate at a Montreal Ashkenazi wedding.

The following excerpts were taken from interviews with rabbis from each of the four denominations. Although this study focused on Ashkenazi practices, two excerpts from interviews with rabbis from Sephardic congregations were included to show some of the differences and similarities with the Ashkenazi weddings.

Reform Rabbi #1

> "[In 1995-1996] I performed 40-50 marriages. The majority were between Jews. (The rabbi then asked his secretary to verify the number of inter-faith marriages; she told him 50%.) 95% of the marriages were double-ring ceremonies. 5% requested a single ring ceremony because the man did not want to wear a ring. I use the traditional formula "*Harei...mekuddeshet li*..according to the law of Moses and Israel" for the man. If the bride gives the man a ring, she says the exact traditional formula. If the man does not want to wear a ring, the bride still says the traditional words but leaves out the part, 'with this ring'. I do not care which finger or which hand he places the ring on, the important thing of the ceremony is the commitment the two people are making. Usually the ring finger on the left hand is used or the index finger. Even among the 95% of men who wear the ring, it is often only for the ceremony. But in these cases, the women insisted that at least during the ceremony, the man should accept to wear the ring. Women of course can be legal witnesses, they are part of the minyan. Please do not say 'Do I allow women to be...I do not *allow* or give permission to women for anything which they have an intrinsic right to. Women have the power to be part of and belong. I have never had any woman not wanting to speak. In fact I would say

that they would be upset if they did not speak. A man does not acquire a wife, she is not a car, or a piece of property. The marriage ceremony is about a binding mutually agreed commitment. My *Ketoubah* is egalitarian. *Halacha* is not the be-all of justice. To rely on past traditions to the point of keeping women out of the picture is like saying because slavery was in the past it was okay then too. Both the man and the woman are set aside from the rest according to the law of Moses and Israel. My colleagues know where I stand and would disagree with me. Reform Judaism is growing and is responding to an on-going revelation. We do not think that the pinnacle of Judaism was Sinai, and that everything after was downhill. Our view of time is quite different from other denominations. Rabbi Feinstein was a great Talmudist but he brought Orthodox Judaism to a place, well you read what he said. [Referring to the idea that Jews should not copy the Goyim, and copying being the greatest sin.] What do you think of someone who considers others 'worthless'? Is this what we are striving for? Judaism borrowed from the Cannanites, matzo, Rosh Hashannah partly from the Babylonians. Rabbi Tom spoke of justice and one wife thanks to the Christian influence. If we did not have all of these influences, where would we be? Our Jewish background is borrowed but yes there is a limit. What is a Jew? It is a people seeking its inspiration. Where is its inspiration? Torah. What is the purpose of Torah study? To do good, Torah inspires deeds, good deeds. Yes, lighting candles, rituals, practices are important. But why are you lighting the candles? Formalism is empty. There is a deep spiritual need among people for prayers [rites] that reflect their life" (Interview).[154]

[154]Interview February 28, 1996.

When I interviewed the same rabbi in 2001, I asked him to be more specific about the words which the bride said.

He said: "The brides say '*Haray atah mekudash li betaba'at zo kedat moshe veyisrael*' or 'With this ring be consecrated unto me as my husband according to the law of God and the faith of Israel or 'according to the law of God in everlasting love'". It was not clear if the English phrases were translated into Hebrew and used instead of the original Hebrew formula, thereby making the bride's formula slightly different from the groom's. In 2001 when I asked him "What does the second ring mean to you?", he replied, "the second ring means that I am helping the couple to form a partnership of marriage. The acceptance of the rings puts partnership agreement into effect" (Interviews)[155]

Orthodox Rabbi #2

> "In 1995-1996 I performed 15-20 weddings, mostly in the main sanctuary, some in this very office, some at home, some at hotels, as long as the food served was kosher. [No], I never verified if the food in the homes were kosher. Most of the weddings were double-ring ceremonies, about 75%. This has been the practice for the past 25 years. My parents and grandparents did not have such a ceremony. It probably began about 30 years ago, it is relatively new. If the bride gives a ring, she can remain silent, compose her own words or say the traditional words from the Song of Songs. I only allow her to give the ring after the *Ketoubah*, after the Seven Blessings, just before the breaking of the glass. 50% of the women choose Song of Songs, 48% choose to remain silent, and only 2% choose their own words. I would persuade a woman to change her mind if she insisted on saying the same formula as the man. If she did not agree, I would still not change the

[155]Interview, August 16, 2001.

traditional ritual. There was once a woman who spoke at length about ecology and the environment, well it was rather long. As long as there is no political agenda, I do not censor what it is said. Change is antithetical to religion. I would think for example that the Reform and Conservatives would be more lenient, and more ready to change, to be Orthodox means not to change with every incoming style or fashion. Religious operations are glacial, we are ideologically opposed to change. There is fear, especially within the Diaspora that if every individual Jewish group or congregation changes something, there will be many different kinds of Judaism, and eventually this will weaken the Diaspora and destroy it. I see a trend going toward the right (more orthodoxy) and to the extreme left (like the gays and lesbian communities in L.A.) and in between a huge chasm, or middle ground of nothing. In my congregation, 15% observe, that is observe the Sabbath, do not go to work and do not use their cars; 85% say they are Orthodox and are affiliated with the congregation, but do not observe. I never thought that a woman would want to say the words right after the man. I found it strange that my children [daughters] wanted to circle their grooms seven times. No, I do not perform that circling ritual, nor did I want it performed at my wedding. This circling of the groom by the bride is an example of a tradition going further right" (Interview).[156]

In an interview one year later with the same rabbi, he said:

"I only performed 10 weddings this year, a decline. 9 out of 10 were double-ring. I consider the second ring as an aspect of mutuality, it is not a legal gesture or entity. It is a modern custom, no I do not give *halacha* lessons under the *chuppah*, it is not a classroom, it is a ceremony. I do not see the second ring as a major clash with Jewish law or Orthodoxy. And I do not think that most couples have any inclination toward religious questions, at least that's my experience, the

[156]Interview, February 26, 1996.

Jewish experience. It is American materialistic secular culture that prevails. Couples are only interested in the ritual because their parents want it, it is a token gesture, nothing more, the only concern seems to be who is going down the aisle. I do object to the rampant use of videos especially during the ceremony. I once had a photographer ask me to redo the wine-drinking part because the picture was not right. Because I am likely to blow my top under the *chuppah*, I warn the couples to keep their photo guys out of the way. Reality has become the video in the 90s. The holy space is gone, the synagogue is no longer important. Just recently I received an invitation from a very rich man who was having his son's Bar Mitzvah in his backyard, not in the synagogue, can you imagine" (Interview).[157]

Orthodox Rabbi #3

This is the rabbi who first told me four years ago that he did not perform double-ring ceremonies. I had not realized that my question was inaccurate. He told me the following:

"I performed about 50-60 weddings in the past two years [1999-2001] in my congregation. They are increasing because the children are getting older. About 80% are performed in the synagogue. 99.9% of the couples arrive with two rings and 99.9% give the second ring under the *chuppah*. Most of the couples who come to see me do not know what Jewish law is and don't know what to do at their wedding, they just follow my lead. Most of the brides say *'Ani ledodi, vedodi li'*. Since the 1960s and 1980s major changes have taken place. In the 1980s, the couples still lied about their living together and gave me their parents' addresses, now they give me their real address. They both have careers, there are more professionals and so the age has increased. Now, they are closer to 30, whereas in the past they were in their early or mid 20s. Both women and men are more

[157]Interview, June 16, 1997.

independent now, both are more involved with their wedding plans and share the finances more. Today the couples I marry are more interested in ritual and spiritual matters, more go to the *Mikvah*, many couples ask for a special time to go in front of the ark to say their own prayers. This was never done in the 60s, 70s or 80s! If the ring is an heirloom, I always make sure that the groom has paid at least $1 for it, to make it legally his. Many more couples are circling (bride only) compared to five years ago. Knowledge of Hebrew is minimal for all the couples I marry, non-existent in most cases. No, I do not have the groom memorize anything, he just repeats after me. He would be too nervous and forget it anyway. I think they get enough education about life-cycle rituals in school, they just don't absorb any of it until it is their time to get married" (Interview).[158]

Orthodox Rabbi # 4

"In the last two years [1996-1997] I have performed about 50 to 60 weddings. Another 20 weddings are held in the synagogue but I do not officiate. These are Hasidic or Sephardic communities in Montreal who use our synagogue and reception banquet hall. I do an additional 5 or 6 weddings a year in a hotel or hall. About 27 out of 30 are double-ring. 3 or 4 out of 30 are single ring and upon request of the couple. The couples who want the single ring are aware of the options, they usually want a more religious ceremony. They are not from modern Orthodox or secular families. In the case of the single-ring ceremonies, some do give a second ring privately to the groom in the bridal chamber *(Yichud)*. My parents did not wear a ring, and I don't. I grew up in Israel, and it is not the custom in Israel at all, in the past or today. The double-ring is a diaspora thing. I do spend a lot of time with the couple before the ceremony speaking about Jewish law and the psychological aspects of marriage. For me the ring is the most

[158]Interview, June 15, 2001.

important part of the ceremony. It is not the written document, the *Ketoubah*, the *Ketoubah* can only become effective if the couple marry. It is a pre-amble to the marriage act, which is the male giving the bride a ring. And for the most important reason of clear consent from each partner. In Jewish law, papers are not evidence of a *kinyan*, a sale or transaction. It is only through an act, a gesture that the *kinyan* becomes legal. One does not own a house when one signs a document, one acquires a house when one gets the key and enters it. The second ring is wonderful and shows how both groom and bride are on equal footing, and that she has a right to return the gesture which he made. But the couple understands that there is only one moment in Jewish law, not two. The second ring points to a second moment and that cannot be. So when the bride gives the ring, it is always at the very end of the ceremony, still under the *chuppah*, after the Seven Blessings. It is very clear that they are married after the first ring is given. I always say before the bride gives the second ring, 'As wife, she wishes to give a gift to her husband'. She says '*Ani ledodi, vedodi li*' and then all the brides say the following pledge: 'With this ring, I pledge to you my undying love, devotion and sincerity'". [He said it would be interesting to read Responsa linked to the dates of *les grosses bagues* and medieval Jewish betrothal rings. He was very surprised to hear that there was an 1871 Reform Responsum on the subject]. (Interview).[159]

Orthodox Rabbi #5 (Sephardic)

"I have performed 15 marriages this year [1996], all were double-ring. For the past 25-30 years, most of all the weddings have been double-ring ceremonies. The woman does not say the mirror formula, because it would be negligible, it would be unnecessary since the wedding has already taken place. She is already married after she accepts the ring. The double-ring ceremony was frowned upon because

[159]Interview, March 30, 1998.

of its similarity to the Christian wedding ritual. To be ritually too similar to the Goyim was not desirable. The same went for flowers at a funeral, not a Jewish custom, but Christian. The ring could be gold or silver, with no stones, if there is a stone, I have been very clear to explain to the bride that she must accept this and not feel later that the ring was not of enough value for her. That is why stones are prohibited because the common person cannot determine the value of the a gem. Time elapsed during the medieval period between *Kiddushin* and *Ketoubah* partly to give the bride enough time to find out the true value of the stone" (Interview).[160]

Orthodox Rabbi #6 (Sephardic)

"I have performed two weddings in the past year. There are about 150 families in my congregation, they are mostly from Northern Africa, Morocco. No, I do not perform double-ring ceremonies—unless the woman insists. But this has not happened. And, I am sure that I could use my persuasive arguing powers to change her mind. I do not foresee in the future any Orthodox rabbi changing this ceremony or the formula. If the woman did insist, I would let her give him the ring but not under the *chuppah*, only after the ceremony. If anything is said by the woman, she says "My beloved is for me and I am for him". It is not necessary to have the woman speak, and it does not have to be a ring, it could be a coin. The rabbis says mostly everything along with the Cantor or a member of the family. The groom says actually very little. The last part the *Yichud* is not usually done in Sephardic weddings. This custom of going into the wedding chamber is an Ashkenazi one. We consider that evening, the wedding night, the *Yichud*. In my mother's time, she was married at home, so the couple retired to their room later.

[160]Interview, February 20, 1996.

Today, weddings can also be done at home. I think it is preferable. Weddings in synagogues have only been performed there in the last 100 years" (Interview).[161]

Orthodox Rabbi #7

"Traditional Orthodox males do not wear wedding rings. Of course, I do, as many moderns do today, wearing it is part of the larger cultural custom. Not like 150 years ago, when men and women need not be marked in the general society of being married. Only women needed to be marked then, today men and women need to be visibly marked. I have officiated at 10 to 12 weddings each year for the past five years [1996-2001]. 95% of these weddings are double-ring. Most of the couples that come to see me are not informed about Jewish law or Jewish wedding rituals. Generally the couples are not observant either, and they don't know any of the 'legal technicalities' of Jewish marriage. I have no problem with the second ring under the *chuppah*, as long as it is given at the very end, just before breaking the glass. And I always say the following: 'Now that the marriage ceremony is concluded, the bride will present the groom with a ring'. I am very aware of not letting the community see the second ring being given too close in time to the first one, so that any confusion as to an 'exchange' rather than an 'acquisition' be avoided. The brides say '*Ani ledodi...*' I think, though, that it would be much more logical for the bride to respond to the first ring with an accepting verbal gesture like 'yes' or 'yes, I do accept to be betrothed/married by John.' I ask the couples if they wish to say mutual vows at the *Ketoubah* part, but they all say 'No'. I just recently had one couple who did wish to say something to each other. Generally, the couples are rather surprised when I ask them if they have any ideas or suggestions about their ceremony. They look at me astonished, expecting the rabbi to be the [sole] authority of law and ritual, expecting me to tell

[161]Interview February 21, 1996.

them everything about what to do. They really do not care too much to innovate or introduce new ideas. But I do not impose ritual activities on the couples if they are not the ones to come forth with the ideas. In Montreal, couples speaking after the *Ketoubah* does not seem to be the case". (The rabbi comes from Brooklyn, New York. His comment suggested that in the States, couples are more innovative. However, I did not pursue this comparison during the interview.) "About the wedding ring, it could be a can of Coca Cola. It only is a sign of cultural value. But, yes, I do see the second ring as being a sign of a more egalitarian value, whereby in the past this was not the case. About the bride being silent, this is not *halachic*". [He then showed me the 1939 Goldin Rabbincal manual where the bride does in fact speak.] "I think it would be a good idea if the bride spoke when the ring is given to her, but it is not the norm for her to speak. .About the bride circling the groom, only 8-10 % of the couples ask for this gesture. I don't bring it up unless the couples do. My wife did circle me seven times. There are many interpretations, the circling of the city of Jericho seven times with seven priests carrying seven trumpets (Joshua 6:5); creation was done in seven days, completion is associated with seven while at the same time the idea of eternity comes to mind with circles; in Jeremiah 31:21, when the woman circles, she sets in motion a dance a movement around the male (husband) and parallels a new beginning of creation initiated first by Yahweh" (Interview).[162]

Conservadox Rabbi # 8

"I performed 30 weddings in [1996] and 20 weddings in [1997]. 75% of the weddings were double-ring, the single ones wanted to be more traditional. Although there is nothing illegal with the double-ring ceremony, these couples wanted the perception of the ceremony to be clearly *halachic*. A double-ring

[162]Interview, April 24, 2001.

ceremony does not convey the same perception as a single ring ceremony does. I only allow the second ring to be given until the very end, just before breaking the glass. It is a gesture of reciprocity, there is nothing to suggest a *kinyan*, I announce it as 'a gesture of the bride's love'. The couples are much more worried about the circling, sometimes the bride just does not want to trip on her veil and so chooses not to do it. I leave this ritual element as choice, since it has no legal content. However, I try to persuade the bride to do it as a symbol of her *kinyan*, although it is not legal per se. It is in a way, a much more legitimate and credible expression than any other gesture done in the wedding ritual. It is a poetic circling" (Interview).[163]

Orthodox Rabbi #9

"I have performed 50 weddings in the past two years [1999-2001]. 75% were double-rings. When I meet the couple, I take them through the *chuppah* and tell them that the single ring is the *halachic* way, and that if they want the second ring, that's fine but it will be given at the end. After I describe the situation, many decide to go with the single ring ceremony. When the second ring is given I say the following: 'Now that the wedding is complete and finished, there are a couple of loose ends that need to be tied up, one is the bride would like to give this ring, a gift, to the groom as a token of her love', and then *Mazol Tov* follows with the breaking of the glass which is a symbol of the commemoration of the destruction of the temple, the absence of a temple. I do encourage the brides to circle the grooms. It is done in about 60% of the marriages I perform, the circling represents the bride as protector, building a wall around the groom in the presence of sundry adversities. I am just using Kaplan's version in his book *Made In Heaven*. I would never allow the groom to circle the bride, if that was ever suggested. The

[163]Interview, June 16, 1997.

bride's mother or mother-in-law, that is the norm, and it is for practical reasons, they help the bride with her veil and gown so that she does not trip. The couples generally rely on the rabbi to determine the kind of ritual. I had one woman who gave me a hard time, insisting on saying the same words as the groom. Finally, I told her 'Look if you don't like the way it's done, then you will have to find another rabbi'. When I told her this, she was very apologetic. I knew her parents absolutely wanted the wedding at the *Shaar*. [About women speaking the *kiddushin* formula] This woman who was arguing with me could say anything she wanted but whatever she would say would be meaningless, have no value. So, why have her say something that has no meaning? I am not comfortable with the bride speaking the same words as the groom, it might be construed as otherwise by those watching or listening. 99.9% of the brides say the words '*Ani ledodi, vedodi li'* under the *chuppah*. Montreal is a more traditional place. I am surprised to find out about this 1939 Goldin Rabbinic Manual. [He left his office and went quickly to find the specific manual and read it and was curious to know what another Orthodox rabbi thought of it. He then spoke of the differences between other Conservative shuls and his own more Orthodox affiliation]. We are no longer affiliated with the Conservative Assembly. I would like you to include my interview in the Orthodox category of your fieldwork, not Conservative as it was with the previous rabbi. Rabbi -------- [a Conservative rabbi of another prominent congregation in the city] is quite different and becoming more and more egalitarian. He now has women take part in the *minyan* and in the readings. There is also now a woman rabbi at the Reform temple. There are differences ritually between the Conservatives and others. I see changes coming with women with respect to witnesses and reciting blessings. In the United States it is quite different, women are M.C's under the *chuppah*, reading the *Ketoubah*. I am doing a wedding this week, where the woman will read the *Ketoubah*. This is a very old and prestigious shul. People want to get married here because parents or

grandparents belonged here. There are many out-of-towners who come here for weddings, sometimes I think this place is like a huge hotel. (Interview).[164]

Conservative Rabbi # 10

"I performed 20 weddings last year [1996-97]. 17 were double-ring ceremonies. 2 were single ring, the couples' parents were European and knew that traditional Judaism did not allow two rings; the other one was single ring because the groom did not want to wear a ring. I allow the woman to give the second ring immediately after she accepts the ring from the groom. I say the following: 'It is the custom in this country for a woman to give a man a ring'. The bride usually says the words from Song of Songs, both in Hebrew and in the language spoken by the bride. One bride said 'I love you baby' at the giving of the second ring. The second ring is purely a sentimental object, no legal meaning, simply window dressing. Why two rings? Probably from the media, pop culture, television or films. Most couples are interested in the logistics of who stands where under the *chuppah*, who goes first, who does what, who cannot be under the *chuppah*" [He mentioned that in the United States, 60-70% of Conservative congregations are fully egalitarian and in 1986 the first Conservative female rabbi was ordained]. (Interview).[165]

Conservative Rabbi # 11

" I married 3 couples this past year [1997], all were double-ring ceremonies. My father had a ring and was married in the 1950s in New York. In 1996, I married 8 couples, all were double-ring ceremonies. I have moved the second ring after the *Ketoubah*, since the 1994-95 directive from the Conservative Assembly. I do not

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[164]Interview, June 28, 2001.

[165]Interview, June 9, 1997.

want to risk that legally something should go wrong or invalidate the marriage. I think the synagogue plays a secondary role here in Montreal compared to the Jewish infra-structures likeYMCA, Golden Age, Saidye Bronfman, Jewish Public Library, Jewish Day Schools. This is a Kosher-style Judaism in Montreal, yes *kashrut* is stronger than rabbis. Individual *Bat Mitzvahs* are the norm in the States, not here, just classes or groups not like the individual boys' *Bar Mitzvahs*. The home is the main sanctuary here in Montreal, there is more stability, less mobility than in the States. So people here do not have a need to go to the synagogue. I wish there would be more concern for Torah and God and not so much concern with accouterments, clothing and class. I receive calls from couples asking me what they should wear for their wedding, not what the words mean. Ethnically, sociologically, Judaism is very strong in Montreal, but religiously? There is not much reaching out to others in the community. Friday night in Montreal is at home, not in the synagogue" (Interviews).[166]

Conservative Rabbi # 12

"I have performed 8 weddings since I came to Montreal in September 1995. Of these, 7 requested a double-ring. There are about 20 weddings done a year in this shul. It is the odd couple who ask for a single-ring ceremony. After the groom gives the bride the ring, I say the following words: 'Deborah, give this ring to Brian as a sign of your love and affection. This is a gift from Deborah to Brian'. I make it clear that this is not an acquisition or an exchange. Otherwise the marriage would be annulled or nullified following the 'trading' law in Judaism. If you give me one looney and I give you four quarters, what has taken place? Nothing. Equal exchange means no acquisition. The second ring does not symbolize the union of the marriage, she could just as well give him a tie, a wallet

[166]Interviews, February 27, 1996; August 27, 1997.

or a watch. It falls in the same category. No, generally the couples are not aware of the *halachic* meanings. Just as you would trust a real estate agent and not read all the fine print in a contract, you cannot be versed in *Halacha*. Most couples do not even know what they are saying during the ceremony, and most people cannot hear what they are saying. The words 'according to the law of Moses and the people of Israel' means the scriptures and the law of the people which includes the consensus of the rabbis. About women becoming rabbis in Montreal, no way. Judaism is alive and well, growing like an amoeba, being tugged, pulled, nudged in many directions. Judaism is healthy. [The phone rang, it must have been his wife.] Yes, I'll pick Zev up, but I have to go to a *shiva* tonight and re coop my ear muffs which I lent to someone who is returning to California this week. Say hello to Norma for me, she knows I'm long-winded" (Interview).[167]

In another interview with the same rabbi two years later, this is what he said.

"It is very difficult for me to give you names of people that I married because most of them are not members of my congregation. Let me give you an idea of how Jewish weddings are planned, which rabbi is called upon, which synagogue, hall, by the way in the next 5 years we will probably be the most sought after synagogue for weddings because we have a newly renovated hall. Hall, it is the hall, the availability of the hall which is the key factor in Jewish weddings. The rabbi is like a mover, like a moving company, I provide a service wherever the hall is. Quite often, bookings are made 1 ½ years in advance. Here are examples of different wedding scenarios: not too infrequent, the bride's mother lives in Montreal, father lives in Ottawa, and the couple are in Toronto. The bride's mother asks me to perform the ceremony at our synagogue with reception at our

[167]Interview, February 12, 1996.

hall. I will never see this couple again. Or, the groom is Orthodox, he has his own rabbi, but the bride is from our synagogue. Our hall is not available, so they rent a hall in Laval (Chateau Royal) where I co-officiate with the Orthodox rabbi. The *Ketoubah* may be signed by both of us. The couple gets one free year membership. After which, when they receive the bill for the following year, they will become unaffiliated or if the bride's father pays for the membership, they may stay. Our synagogue cannot even accommodate all of our members during the high holidays, there is limited seating, people go to various places. But they all request the services of the rabbi for rites of passage, weddings are still on the whole performed under a *chuppah*, not at city hall. Sometimes brides choose our synagogue because it has a long aisle"(Interview). [168]

Conservative Rabbi # 13

" I have performed less than 10 weddings since I've been in this congregation, our congregation is a very young and small one. I will not perform a wedding unless it is a double-ring ceremony. When the bride gives the man the ring she says 'You are sanctified unto me'. No, the woman does not say 'according to the law of Moses and Israel', because it is not intellectually honest. Moses would stand up in his grave if they [women?] said these words. Children who play 'wedding' and give a ring to a girlfriend while saying the correct words in the presence of other children (witnesses who are not relatives) have in effect married. Intentionality does not have to be that conscious. For example, much of the ritual and prayers said have no intention behind them and yet are legally satisfied. The very fact that the correct set of words was uttered with the ring is the marriage. I left Orthodoxy [he was a Yeshiva graduate] to some extent and found honesty in Conservatism. I think I am much further right than other Conservative rabbis in Montreal, like

[168]Interview, March 26, 1998.

Rabbi ------, and yet I am also further left than others, like my insistence on the double-ring ceremony" [He asked me specifically what other rabbis were doing in Montreal.] (Interview).[169]

Reconstructionist Rabbi # 14

"In 1996, I performed 12 weddings, in 1997 I performed 15 weddings. Only one was a single-ring ceremony. I have my own *Ketoubah*, the center is Aramaic, on the left Hebrew and on the right English. The woman says the verse from the Song of Songs as she gives him the ring. She does this right after he gives her the ring. Women read the Torah in our synagogue but they are not changing any formulas. I don't see the issue why women need to say the mirror formula in the wedding ceremony. It is a mute point. Legalities are not that important to me. [I then asked him if they were not that important, then why not let the women say the same words?] Alright, if you pushed me to the wall, yes, a woman could say the same words and 'according to the law of Moses and Israel'. .Even though in Jewish law the man is obliged to provide the three requisites, it is also understood that a woman must also provide for her husbands' needs. It does not mean that only men provide. The ring is a symbol of the transferring of the man's property to the woman and according to the law to be obligated to the woman for the three requisites. In today's world, most men are not the sole providers. Women and men provide for the family and each other. The ring is a symbol of a change in status. It does not have to be a ring, it must be something of value owned by the groom. Yes, I do allow women to be witnesses, it is common practice here. Legal loopholes will be sought out by the more Orthodox, this is not my way, that's why I am Reconstructionist. I rather spend time writing a prayer book.[This rabbi has produced the first Jewish prayer book in Canada.] It is absurd to deal with

[169]Interview, February 19, 1996.

legalities. I know what I am saying, the fact is that I am abiding by these very *halachic* rules. Yes, I do spend time with the couple before they get married explaining the ceremony. Is the interview finished? How does Buddhism and Judaism compare? Have you read *The Jew in the Lotus*?[Yes] It's wonderful!" (Interview). [170]

In a second interview with the same rabbi, this is what he said.

"The second ring is an expansion of the tradition to include women. As a ritual expert, I respond to the needs of my congregation. With one wedding, this past year, the woman insisted on saying the same words as the groom. She did it, but I would not encourage women to say the same words as the men. The women all give the second ring immediately after the groom gives his ring to the bride. There is no separation, no *Ketoubah* between the two gestures. Why did the second ring occur? Because men are wearing rings, and women wanted to give them rings. It has nothing to do with Gentile influence, but a change in women's attitudes, the feminist movement influencing the changing role of women in society" (Interview).[171]

Analysis of the Rabbis' Interviews

Double-ring ceremonies have occurred among all four denominations in Montreal since 1996. The interviews demonstrated this fact. The interviews represented 1210 weddings during a five year period (1996-2001) and in 92% of these weddings a second ring was given under the *chuppah*. Compared with the first part of the research (described in Chapter 4) which showed a second ring worn by grooms in 60% of 140

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[170]Interview, February 22, 1996.

[171]Interview, June 18, 1997.

weddings, one could conclude that double-ring ceremonies in the year 2001were not in decline but may in fact be increasing. More specifically, the interviews highlighted certain denominational features about the "second ring phenomenon" in Montreal Jewish communities.

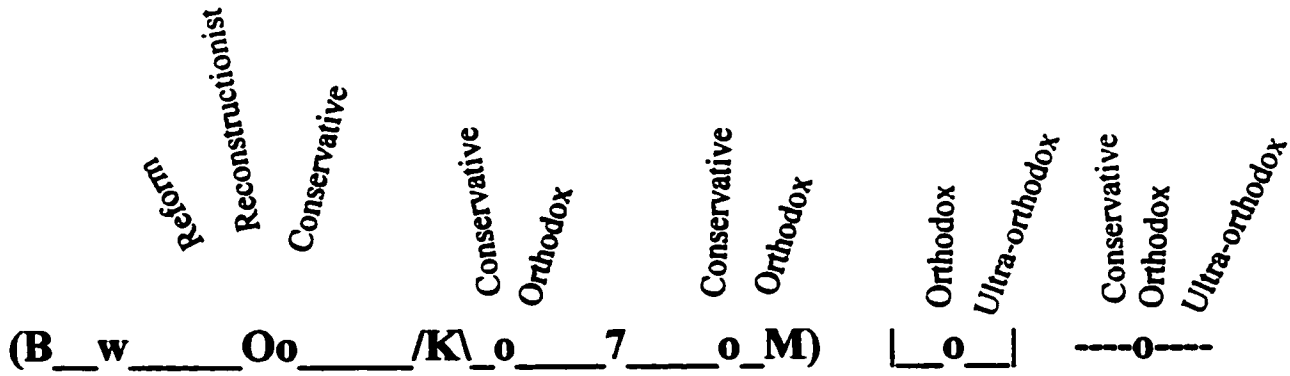
A question of timing, order and which words were spoken (or not) revealed key observable factors in differentiating the denominations. Even when the bride was permitted to give a second ring and speak words which had no *halachic* value, great caution was shown by the rabbis as to the timing of her ring-giving gesture. **Chart A** below will illustrate the various points (indicated with the sign o) as to when the rabbis in this study permitted the second ring to be given. This time-line represents the left/right political spectrum, whereon which the rabbis positioned the second ring gesture under the *chuppah* space. The further right the o sign is positioned on the line, the more Orthodox the rabbi perceived himself and the ritual to be. Closer in time to the first prenuptial blessing at the left of the line, the sign o reflected a more liberal rabbi and ritual. If the second ring o was situated outside the *chuppah* space—in the bridal chamber or at the banquet table—then the rabbi and ritual might be defined as Ultra-Orthodox.

The chart, moreover, demonstrates the power of non-verbal gestures over spoken words. Regardless of the safeguards taken with correct verbal formulae spoken by the bride under the *chuppah*, the positioning of the second ring remained critical. Ultimately, the further away in time and space from the groom's ring-giving action, the fewer problems with *halacha*. The first legal ritual actor under the *chuppah* was the groom who ideally would be the only one to give a ring and speak *halachic* utterances. However, the

first ritual actor under the *chuppah* remained the bride, as she circled the groom when she arrived to mark the beginning of the ritual sequence. The rabbis, nonetheless, gave reasons for distancing the second ring from the first one which belied fears or anxieties about nullified marriages or erroneous impressions imparted on the watching community who might perceive an equal exchange.

The distance in time and space between the two ring-giving gestures determined the denominational identity of the rabbi and ritual. Who was more or less Reform or Orthodox would be determined by the spatial and temporal positioning of the second ring, while for the couples (as will be demonstrated in Chapter 8), hardly any memory existed as to when the rings were given or what was said. Denominational identities remained a primary concern for the rabbis. Consequently, for the rabbis, contemporary Montreal Jewish weddings could be appropriately called "rites of denominational identity". For the rabbis, as well, these same rites of identity could be called "transformative" rites of passage where only the first ring acts as a legal device which "transforms" two individuals from being single to married. When the bride accepts the groom's ring, according to Jewish law, both bride and groom become wife and husband. Any subsequent ring-giving action cannot add another married status to the one already enacted. For the couples, however, their wedding commitment rite is incomplete until both accept and wear each other's ring. Given these two different points of view, those of the rabbis' and the couples', there remains a third point of view which strengthens the position of the couples'—the second ring itself. As **Chart A** illustrates, the second ring's mercurial presence cannot be denied under the *chuppah* space.

Chart A



(_____) *Chuppah* space

|_____| *Yichud* space (bridal chamber)

——— Reception space, banquet feast

B = Bride circling gesture around the groom

w =*Birkath Erusin*, blessing over a cup of wine (both bride and groom sip from the cup)

O =*Kiddushin*, groom gives bride first ring

o =bride gives groom second ring

/K = *Ketoubah* is read and given to bride

7 = *Sheva Berakoth*, the seven blessings are recited over a second cup of wine

M = *Mazol Tov*, glass is broken

Chart A illustrates where the rabbis in this study permitted the giving of the second ring. Along a left/right political spectrum, the Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis with one Conservative rabbi allowed the second ring to be given immediately after the first ring was given by the groom to the bride (indicated as **O o**). Most of the Orthodox rabbis and the other Conservative rabbis allowed the second ring to be given only after the *Ketoubah* (indicated as **/K\ o**). In the case of one Conservative rabbi, the second ring was given at the reception (indicated as **---o---**). While another Orthodox rabbi permitted the ring to be given only outside the *chuppah* space, in the bridal chamber. (**[__o__]**). The "Ultra-orthodox" notations refer to those weddings that were described by three informants (one was married in 1948, another in 1970 and the third in 2001) where the second ring was not given under the *chuppah.*

Fine ritual details, therefore, differentiated the "same" Jewish wedding into various *halachic* and non-*halachic* categories. From the rabbis' perspectives, ritual gestures were defined according to their *halachic* content.

Overwhelming in their intellectual curiosity and eagerness to debate ritual issues, each rabbi demonstrated his own particular style in the way he interpreted the weddings that he performed. Whereas two rabbis saw religion and spirituality waning, another two saw an increased devotional attitude among young newlyweds towards prayer and interior reflection. At times starkly different, one Ashkenazi rabbi saw the synagogue as the primary sacred space, while another Sephardic rabbi saw the home as the ideal wedding venue. Views about Montreal were frequently phrased within a comparative American discourse, which is not surprising given the fact that the United States is the home of

origin for Montreal rabbis. Vibrancy mixed at times with frustration colored a few rabbis' remarks as they described the level of their congregation's commitment as less than desirable. Most of the rabbis admitted that Montreal was a traditional Jewish place. As one rabbi said, "Friday night is spent at home, not at the synagogue".[172] The rabbis remained above all experts for the couples who sought them out to officiate at their wedding events. Quite often, the interviews generated the impression that greater freedom in ritual expression came from the two extremes of the denominational spectrum—the Orthodox rabbis at one end, and the Reform and Reconstructionist Rabbis on the other. In between these two poles, the Conservative Rabbis seemed the most anxious about *halachic* and ritual matters. As one Conservative rabbi made clear, the Conservative Assembly of American Rabbis since 1994 has asked that the second ring be pushed further away in time from the giving of the first ring.[173]

Their denominational banners, however, did not camouflage the common *halachic* ground which they shared when it came to weddings. The rabbis all seemed to know and understand that if they did their *halachic* best, their job was well done. All the rabbis, no matter how loudly they protested or what denominational card they carried, were all *halachically*-concerned if not *halachically*-driven ritual directors. But most of the rabbis had little difficulty in letting the second ring appear under the *chuppah*. Indeed, the second ring hardly created any sense of awkwardness, especially for the Reform and Orthodox rabbis. As a contrasting example, one innovative but failed gesture

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[172]Interview, August 27, 1997.

[173]Interview, February 27, 1996; August 27, 1997.

of a groom circling the bride demonstrated how new ritual gestures often falter. Based on the overwhelming *ritual* acceptance of the second ring by the majority of rabbis interviewed, then, the second ring could not be such a new innovative ritual element. The ring moved with too great a fluidity under the *chuppah* to merit novice status. As to what role the rabbis play in defining their religious tradition's identities through rituals remains to be a complex issue. On the one hand, their role as legal experts influenced the way legal wedding gestures should be enacted. While, on the other hand, their influence upon many other wedding symbols, which had little *halachic* value, was minimal. Ironically, since the second ring for them had no such *halachic* value, their control over it has also been to a great extent minimal—in a ritual sense. Given that the couples had no memory or awareness of these second-ring manoeuvers, the rabbis' concentrated efforts were left unnoticed.

The rabbis, no doubt, have a powerful and protective role with matters dealing with *halacha*. Yet, the couples still remained the principal wedding actors or participants, with respect to their persistent desire and success in giving rings. Despite efforts on the part of most of the rabbis to move the second ring under the *chuppah* in such a way as to not jeopardize Jewish law, they all handled that second ring quite naturally. The next chapter will make clearer the reason why the rabbis were able to handle the rings so "naturally" under the *chuppah*. Historical traces do indeed support the hypothesis that the second ring may have been part of Jewish wedding rituals in the western European world since the 13th century CE.

Chapter 7

The Second Ring: Whose Symbol Is It?

There were three communities in Venice which I had Shabbes lamps from. The Italki ones were the smallest. Severe. Brass. Emphasizing light, both in weight and brilliance. Not many curved surfaces. The Venetian Sephardic Jewish Shabbes lamps had another character altogether. Intermeshed sinuous curves. All Arabesques. Looked almost Moroccan. But the Ashkenazic lamps were really something. Huge, heavy, precarious, almost chandelier size, gargantuan in proportion to the tiny rooms of the Ashkenazic Jews in the Venice ghetto. Strange how each style interpreted the light of G-d's Sabbath. Could they still be worshiping the same G-d?

Benjamin Zucker

This chapter aims to uncover some of the lost history and memories surrounding the second wedding ring. The rings themselves will be the focus of this chapter. If the second wedding ring has not evoked a believable sense of continuity within Judaism, one of the main reasons has been its lack of historical status (best understood as the "history factor" explained in Chapter 5). If two wedding rings now prevail, where did this ritual "innovation" come from and what importance does knowing this history have?

It appears as if two intermittent threads run through the history of the second ring, one thread representing popular custom and the other religious practices. Traces of one and two wedding rings can be found from antiquity to the present, with overtones of fertility, superstitions, dowries, sexual nuances, religious ordinances, aesthetics, mystery, status and love. This historical study on the second ring will focus on identity issues touching upon gender roles and religious affiliations, leaving much work to be done in

recreating realistic scenarios as to how the individual women and men who wore these rings worshipped, loved and married (Kunz 1913; Mutembe & Molin 1974).

Claims that Christian Protestants and Roman Catholics in the western world "own" the longest tradition with regards to the second ring does not prove to be true. There is little evidence of a solid continuous past for the second ring within these religious traditions. However, an aura of Christian "historical" longevity surrounds the second ring which was voiced by most of the rabbis that I interviewed. Erroneous beliefs fixed upon the long-standing Christian status of the second ring stem from the following two factors. 1) When the second ring was given legitimate status by Vatican II in 1969-71,[174] it was given legitimate Christian historical status. Outsiders may have presumed that this liturgical legitimacy rubber stamped an already long-standing tradition. It is especially noteworthy that the "historical legitimacy" bestowed by religious authorities can spontaneously create historical longevity. 2) When the second ring was officially recorded in an 1871 Reform Responsum, it was given historical legitimacy within Reform Judaism. At that critical time, Orthodox Judaism may have distanced itself from the second ring debate as a reaction against the Reformers. In so doing, the second ring was repressed either consciously or unconsciously from Jewish historical memory. By the late 20th century, the history of the second ring was understood by the rabbis (Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist and to some extent Reform) as being "Christian", without their consciously knowing that this may have really meant Reform Judaism.

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[174]Interview with Père Allard, September 28, 1997.

In addition, two other factors have weakened the legitimate history of the second ring within Judaism. Similar egalitarian gestures reflected by females and males exchanging wedding rings have not been prominently evident in other repertoires of authoritative Jewish symbols, particularly public ritual events. Similar ring-giving actions, showing females equally performing gestures as do males, do not get reinforced within a collective memory when public ritual status privileges males over females.[175] And finally, the overwhelming popular cultural influences of the solitary engagement ring pose serious challenges to a mutual ring exchange in contemporary wedding rites. As a natural "love" symbol, the solitary diamond ring stands in contradiction to egalitarian religious wedding rites. The visceral diamond ring has become firmly embedded in popular western consciousness and ironically has reinforced rabbinical arguments for holding on to one legitimate wedding ring rather than two.

The Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Christian Perspectives

From the Catholic perspective, the second ring has been attributed to Hollywood fame or pop culture (Interview).[176] The earliest North American Catholic mention of the second ring appears in a footnote dated 1944 in a 1962 American "Priest's Ritual Manual" compiled from the Vatican Typical Edition of the *Rituale Romanum and the Collectio Rituum*. The text reads as follows: "Editor's note: The double-ring ceremony

[175]This refers primarily to the public rituals performed in synagogues and more precisely to the Montreal Jewish context. For example, female rabbis do not preside in Orthodox, Conservative or Reconstructionist rituals in this city.

[176]Interview October 3, 1997.

may be followed whenever it is requested. Wherever the custom prevails, after the bride's ring has been placed on her finger, the bride may place the groom's ring on his, each saying in turn the form: Take and wear this ring as a sign of our marriage vows. However, the ring for the groom is not usually blessed with that for the bride, by using the plural number in the prayer for the blessing of the ring, since this prayer implies that the ring is being blessed for the bride".[177]

If some Montreal English-speaking Roman Catholic priests were performing double-ring ceremonies in the late 1950s, they were rare.[178] One Roman Catholic priest who performed his first wedding in Montreal in 1938 said, "I never performed a double-ring ceremony, perhaps there were some priests who would bend the rules back then in the late 50s or 60s. Perhaps the couples who wanted a second ring wanted their wedding to be like the 'big screen'. Yes, I have performed many mixed (Protestant and Catholic) marriages, but not in the Church in front of the tabernacle, only in the rectory. And I never had the woman say the word 'obey'. I don't think any woman, even if she did say that word, would every obey her husband. After 1972, the rites changed. The prayers were no longer in Latin and the Church took the words 'till death do us part' out and replaced them with 'for the rest of my days'. Also, after Vatican II, mixed marriages were permitted to be celebrated in the Church in front of the tabernacle".[179]

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[177]See *Rituale Romanum and the Collectio Rituum*, published in New York by Benziger Brothers, 1962, p. 262.

[178]Interview with Father Mooney, October 3, 1997.

[179]Interview with Father Mooney, October 3, 1997.

With the majority of French Canadian clergy in Montreal, it appears to have been more rare to perform double-ring ceremonies (Girard 2000). In an interview with Père Allard from the Grand Séminaire in Montreal, who was part of the liturgical team at Rome during Vatican II, it was said that two rings were mentioned in the official rite only after 1970. It should be noted that his special contribution to Vatican II was the change in the Eucharistic prayer during the nuptials. In Canada and the world, Quebec is the only place which has added this special prayer. He thought that the occasion of marriage demanded some special alteration to the regular Eucharistic celebration. In terms of the international desire to change rituals within the Church in the late 1960s, he cited the French, Belgians, Germans and Canadians at the forefront. The general attitude in Europe was that of arrogance towards Canada and the United States in terms of North American suggestions for ritual change. Significantly, Père Allard said that the American priests were instrumental in bringing the idea of equality between the sexes to the Vatican liturgists. They introduced a gender perspective and tried to bring in a more gender inclusive language into rituals. But Père Allard was not unlike the rabbis I spoke to. He said the rings did not matter much, and even for that matter neither did the priest. The rings in Catholicism do not constitute an official visible sign of the sacrament, only the verbal words of consent do. Similar to a rabbi's role in Jewish weddings, a priest serves as a *witness* in the wedding ritual, not as a "marrying agent". For example, as Père Allard pointed out, in present-day Africa where priests are largely non-existent and may only

visit a community about once a year, people nevertheless do still get married. When a priest arrives, the couple asks him for a special blessing.[180]

Protestants throughout the ages have had a variety of responses to the use of wedding rings, but most were in favor of one ring. Shirley Bury mentions the 16th century custom of Lutherans exchanging rings but does not specify whether this custom was found during the wedding ceremony. She also cites the custom of exchanging gimmel rings in Germany and England, which entailed two pieces of the same ring being split apart and worn by two lovers or betrothed partners (Bury 1982:15).

In a study conducted by Diana Leonard in 1980 in England and Wales, it was discovered that the second ring was still not allowed in Protestant weddings. Some clergy allowed the ring but did not allow the bride to say anything. Some blessed the ring but only allowed the bride to give it in the vestry when the couple signed the registry. One vicar said, "I am very much against the exchange of rings in weddings—it's an eastern Orthodox custom. If they really want it, I will bless the groom's ring at the end of the service. The whole idea of a ring is that it is a link between the two people. I try to tell them that the ring is their ring, not hers; the outward and visible sign of their marriage" (Leonard 1980: 216). At Princess Diana's wedding in 1980, under the auspices of the Anglican Church, only one ring was given.

In an interview, Reverend Eric Dyck, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Montreal, said: " All the weddings I now perform are double-ring, but I am not sure when they began. I know that in the 1960s in Alberta and Manitoba where I grew up, there

[180]Interviews September 28, 1997; May 10, 2001.

were single rings. I remember this clearly because of a newspaper article announcing a 'progressive wedding ritual performed in the United Church of Canada whereby two rings were being used'. The Lutheran Germans in western Canada, who came from the mid-western or northern United States, were more conservative than the European Germans who settled in the east" (Interview).[181] He checked his ritual manuals and found that in the 1950s the rubrics allowed for one or two rings as the case may be, which would presume that one ring was still in use.

In Eastern Orthodox Christian rites, the use of two rings can be traced back to the middle ages. In an interview with Father Zivorad Subotic of Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church in Montreal, it was said that the rings still do not constitute an official visible sign of the sacrament, but only the crowns do. Again, like his counterpart confrères in Roman Catholicism, he conferred minimal status upon the rings.[182]

Brides Giving Rings and Brides Speaking Vows

The aura of history that surrounds the second ring in Christian nuptials may also be due to the fact that both Christian grooms and brides have been permitted to voice similar if not identical vows. However, even this belies another myth about Christian wedding practices from the past. Christian brides did not always speak, and when they did their words did not necessarily constitute egalitarianism (Mutembe & Molin 1974). Until the 1970s in Quebec, brides said that they would obey their husbands, while grooms

[181]Interview, May 29, 1998.

[182]Interview, February 24, 1998.

proclaimed they would honor, love and protect their wives. Generally, in all wedding rituals, no matter what religious tradition, the couple say very little compared to the officiant. Most of the ritual activity that involves the couple revolves around gestures, music, decorum, style and objects. In Judaism (as was previously mentioned in Chapter 6), an example existed in which both bride and groom spoke similar vows as did Christian brides and grooms. In a New York Orthodox Rabbinical manual from 1939, the text reads as follows:

"The Rabbi says to the Groom:

> 'N.N. (Naming the groom), do you of your own free will and consent, take (naming the bride) to be your wife; and do you promise to love, honor, and cherish her throughout life? If so, answer Yes.'

Then the Rabbi says to the Bride:

> 'N.N. (Naming the bride): do you of your own free will and consent, take (naming the groom) to be your husband, and do you promise to love, honor and cherish him throughout life? If so, answer Yes.'

The Rabbi then appoints two witnesses, who must not be related to either the groom or the bride, to witness the betrothal. The Rabbi says to the Groom:

> 'You will now betrothe the bride, in the presence of these two witnesses, by placing this ring upon the forefinger of her right hand, and say to her in Hebrew: *Hare at mekudeshet li betabba zu, kedat moshe veisrael*, Behold thou are betrothed to me with this ring, in accordance with the Law of Moses and Israel.'

After this the Ketoubah is read" (Goldin 1939: 17).

Note, there is no double-ring ceremony mentioned here. However, in a Conservative Rabbinical Manual from 1952, we read the following:

"If two rings are used, the Bride may say: 'This ring is a symbol that thou are my husband in accordance with the Law of Moses and of Israel'. Then the Ketoubah is read" (Signer 1952: 34).

In Conservative Judaism, at least in Montreal, the practice of the bride giving a ring to the groom before the Ketoubah was discouraged in 1994. One Conservative rabbi changed his practice[183] after the Conservative Assembly of America issued a document urging rabbis to move the second ring further away in time from the giving of the first ring.[184] As in Orthodox ceremonies, the Ketoubah would serve as a visible separator between the first and second ring.

Within Judaism, because the second ring lacks *halachic* value, its ritual anomaly raised important questions. When I discovered that almost all of the Jewish weddings from the 1996-2001 study (as was shown in Chapter 2 "Methodology") included a second ring under the *chuppah*, this ritual anomaly acquired prominence of place. Indeed, when I compared this data with that gathered from the1960-1964 photographic study in which 60% of 140 weddings included a second ring, the second ring now became a full fledged Jewish symbol. As the historical search progressed, I found evidence that two wedding rings existed within the Jewish context much earlier than 1960 and beyond Quebec

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[183]Interview February 27, 1996.

[184]See *Tomeikh KaHalakhah: Responsa of the Panel of Halakhic Inquiry*, #23, "Double Ring Ceremony", Vol. 2, 1994-95, pp. 75-79.

borders. From that search, it appeared that the second ring had an actual past, despite the fact that the rabbis whom I interviewed had no recollection or knowledge of it. If not for the rings themselves, this history would never have surfaced.

Consequently, the second wedding ring opened up the historical field in gender and ritual studies to a re-examination of the role of jewelry as an index of personal and communal practices where official ritual manuals may in fact not be telling the full story. The second wedding ring, at least in contemporary Jewish legal contexts, has met with some difficulties in being established as a stable ritual symbol.

Betrothal or Wedding Rings, from Antiquity to 1690 CE

"While among the Romans it was usual to wear the ring on the fourth finger, among the Jews the custom arose to put the ring on the index finger" (Cohen 1948-49: 101).[185] But after two thousand years of changing mores and laws, do Boaz Cohen's words refer to the wedding ring that symbolizes marriage or to the engagement ring as we know it? One might assume by the reference to "the index finger" that this refers to the wedding ceremony under the *chuppah*—thereby meaning "the wedding ring" and not an engagement ring. But, because the first part of the Jewish wedding ceremony (when the ring was given) was properly called *Kiddushin* or betrothal, we can easily mis-read early texts, not knowing if they referred to a future co-habitation (betrothal) or actual marriage.

[185]Cohen implies but does not specify when the Jewish practice of using a ring began. He cites a Responsa from R. Moses Münz, a German Rabbi of the 15th century—Blau (1917) and Zallinger (1931).

Cohen is actually speaking of betrothal practices during the first few centuries of the common era, specifically the Roman *sponsalia* and Hebrew *kiddushin.*

He points out several differences between Jewish betrothal practices from Biblical times and those of the first few centuries under Roman rule. "The chief features of betrothal in evidence during early Hebrew society are: 1) preliminary negotiations between the parents or guardians of the contracting parties; 2) the payment of the *Mohar* and gifts; 3) the consent of the father or the parties; 4) the Dowry; and 5) the ceremonial celebration and feast. Thus, the principal matters were attended to at the time of the betrothal, whereas the consummation of the marriage usually took place after the lapse of some time by mutual agreement of the parties accompanied by little or no formality" (Cohen 1948-49: 70). During post-biblical or *Tannaitic*[186] times, "the following features show new or marked deviations from the Biblical Law of betrothal: the writing of the *Ketoubah* at the time of betrothal, betrothal by Proxy, gifts during betrothal, negotiations before betrothal, and juridical effects of betrothal" (Cohen 1948-49: 74-75). Cohen stresses that the new form of betrothal in post-Biblical times was realized by the performance of an act of acquisition, and the making of a declaration to the bride in the presence of two witnesses. Except for the public display of the banquet feast which was known in earlier times, the focus now shifted to a performance of a symbolic act of acquisition which consisted either of "conveying something to the bride, even if it be merely of nominal value, or the presentation of a writ, or it might well be a single experience of cohabitation" (Cohen 1949: 75).

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[186] *Tannaim* were early third century CE rabbinical teachers (Seltzer 1980: 262).

If there was a ring used at this early time to symbolize this act of acquisition, it can be interpreted in several ways. It dramatically represented a change from the biblical *Mohar* where in earlier times the bride price was paid to the father. Now it would be directly given to the bride. It also acquired a religious connotation, being worn by the wife who became the exclusive "possession" of her husband in so far as religious/conjugal duties were concerned. The ring became a reminder that any violation of these sacred vows constituted a major religious offense.

Finally, it also represented a bond which secured monetary advantages for the husband, such as right to the dowry, and an inheritance for the wife if she predeceased her husband. "The *Tannaim,* in search for a term for betrothal that would embrace both [civil and religious] concepts, selected the word *Kiddushin* which literally means sanctification [in contradiction to *Erusin*]" (Cohen 1948-49: 77).

Cohen corrects some previously erroneous conceptions about the interplay between Roman and Hebrew jurisprudence. For example, "From the Jewish sources which may be traced to the second and third centuries, we obtain the definite impression that sexual relations with a *sponsa* were not considered adulterous in the Roman provincial law of Palestine of this period. However, [upon reading more closely the Roman legal texts like the *Digest*, and] according to the classical Roman law of this time, infidelity on the part of a *sponsa* did constitute adultery" (Cohen 1948-49: 130).

One of the main problems with the background history of Jewish wedding rings, then, lies in the confusion between betrothal and wedding practices. Once more, however, this confusion also exists with non-Jewish betrothal and wedding practices.

According to Chenon, early betrothal rings would become over time the official wedding rings, "*l'anneau des fiançailles [est]devenue au Moyen âge l'anneau nuptial*" (Chenon 1912: 2). Made of iron without any precious stones, this *annulus sponsalitius* or *pronubus* soon was made of gold, overturning ancient Roman regulations which had restricted the wearing of gold jewelry to only certain categories of Roman citizenry. We can see in these plain gold rings a strong similarity to our present-day wedding rings, quite different from our contemporary diamond (betrothal) engagement rings.

From the 2nd to the 7th century, popular inscriptions were engraved on the inside of many pagan or Christian betrothal rings, such as: *Bonam vitam* or *amo te.* We also find the Greek inscription *XAPA,* which means luck combined with the joining of two right hands "*iunctio dextrarum*". Both of these symbols appear on several marriage rings with an ear of corn and poppy head in a vase and a parrot above as a sign of prosperity and luxury. From the early 4th century, we also find Hebrew inscriptions and symbols on rings like the one found in Bordeaux, France[187]. Engraved on the outside of the hoop we find a Menorah and the letters "A, S, T, E, R" which are repeated on the bezel (Plate 93).[188] This Hebrew ring may have been a homage to the Semitic Goddess of fertility Astarte or

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[187]By the year 313 CE, when Constantine Christianized the Roman Empire, Jews searching for a better life under gradual restrictions imposed upon them, moved into Gaul as solidiers, tradesmen or merchants in 35 localities. But known already by the Gauls as Romans, Jews were already living there as free Roman citizens. In 212 CE, Caracalla granted Roman citizenship to all inhabitants of the Empire under the *constitutio Antoniniana.* These civic rights included freedom of worship, military service and access to public office. Jews practiced trades that did not distinguish them from other Roman citizens, such as agriculture and wine-growing. They dressed like the rest of the population, bore arms, and spoke the local language; even in the synagogue, Hebrew was not the only language used for rituals. Their ancestral names—biblical, Roman, and Gallo-Roman—did not differentiate them from other inhabitants (Benbassa 1999).

[188] The Plates are included at the end of this chapter.

a reference to the word "star", a symbol of good luck for the Jews (Lévy 1905: 46-48). Astarte was known as Astroarche, "Queen of the Stars", in ancient Sumeria, but she was also masculinized and transformed into a devil by Christian writers, who automatically assumed that any deity mentioned in the Bible other than Yahweh was one of the denizens of hell. "Aster" could also have been a reference to the cyclic deity who attended the sun into the underworld at sunset (Walker 1983: 70). In combination with the seven-branched lamp (Menorah) the word "Aster" may have suggested the ancient cult of the Pleidas or the Seven Sisters, also called Moon-Horae, Men-Horae or Moon-priestesses (Walker 1983: 804).

But another more plausible explanation may be given for this 4th century ring. Perhaps "Aster" was linked to Esther and the festive holiday of Purim. In Latin, the word "Aster" is more closely affiliated with Esther than with the word "star", which would be more accurately translated as "*stella*" in Latin. It would also not be unlikely for fourth century Jews from Bordeaux, who were considered to be Romans, to use Latin on ring inscriptions as they were using Latin in their written documents and in some of their rituals (Benbassa 1999: 4). Or, playing on the Hebrew word "*astir*" in Deuteronomy 31:18, "*ve-anokhi haster astir panai*" ("And I shall hide My face"), a further link with Esther can be made with the word "Aster". The rabbis' allusion to Esther in Deuteronomy 31: 18 is linked to the word "*astir*", meaning "I will hide", which refers to God not revealing Himself nor having His Name mentioned in the Book of Esther in the Bible (Chill 1979: 270). Given this possible "Esther" interpretation, the ring could have been a Purim ring.

We do not know, however, if a man or woman wore this ring. Making gendered connections with rings, and more specifically wedding rings, becomes important in understanding how fertility issues predominated among early marriage concerns. However, what becomes even more interesting and challenges ideas like Satlow's which were presented in Chapter 3, is the sense that the dominant influences stemming from popular cultures throughout various periods of time do not always submerge distinct religious identities. The rings, as will be shown in this chapter, provide evidence for this. Many rings were used as good luck charms and fertility amulets, including Jewish betrothal rings with "*Mazol Tov*" inscribed on them. However, conveying similar ideas such as fertility in quite different styles and forms must have altered the meaning and context of these fertility messages. Seeing a menorah, the letters "Aster" or "*Mazol Tov*" did not evoke the same context as other good luck or fertility symbols.

For example, fertility rings that were defined as "Roman" around the 1st century of the common era often depicted the human phallus. But even these phallus rings could evoke different gendered interpretations. Plate 94 shows a lapis lazuli phallus, whereas the more stylized phallus ring shown in plate 95 suggests a combination of vagina and phallus. Also, the very small diameter of the hoop on this ring suggests either that it must have been worn on either the little finger or perhaps a child wore it. Although it is difficult to know if both men and women wore these rings, the smaller gold ones with etched red vaginas seem to belong to a woman's hand, whereas the lapis lazuli ones to a man's. One can see, however, despite an overarching conquering Roman Empire, that

cultural and religious differences found different expressions in symbols relating to fertility and marriage.

Fertility concerns, as seen through the history of rings, did not diminish after the first few centuries of the common era (Plate 96, Plate 97). Plate 96 shows an elaborate two piece ring dedicated to Isis which when dismantled could be placed on a shelf in the home or worn as a pendant. Isis had been transplanted from the east throughout the Roman empire as the goddess and protector of women, so finding a 3rd century Roman provenance to this ring is not unusual. The Greek inscription "EYTOKI" meaning "Good luck at childbirth", along with an image of Isis, suggests that this ring was probably worn by a woman during her pregnancy and *accouchement*. Years later, in the middle ages, one finds a similar theme in a Hebrew ring shown in Plate 97. This ring, a copy of a 14th century proto-type from Colmar, acted as an amulet to ward off evil with the sounds of a small iron ball rattling inside the bezel. Perhaps it was used by women during childbirth, and also around the child after birth. As a "toy", its rattle would ward off malignant forces. In addition, the 14th century house-like structure on top of its bezel resembled a main feature that would be found in many Jewish betrothal rings over the next five centuries. But, as will be found in other Jewish rings, two hands clasp the sides of the hoops. In the case of the Colmar ring, two distinct human figures with extended arms and hands are visibly draping the two sides of the hoops. Could these be priestly figures connecting this fertility amulet to priestly blessings that went along with sacred fertility, *kiddushin* and Jewish marriage?

Later medieval rings with amuletic symbols and coded messages continued to dominate both Jewish and Christian cultural forms. Whether contemporary engagement rings (worn only by females) are throwbacks to these ancient fertility rings remains a possibility. With a majority of men wearing wedding rings today, the question of fertility issues associated with marriage no longer belongs exclusively to females. With the advent of the birth control pill in the 1960s, and decreasing birth rates, ancient fertility powers connected to rings would be less in demand. One might speculate that Judaism, trying to hold on to a single-ring wedding ceremony, continues to perpetuate the most central idea and driving force of its tradition—the valorization of fertility .[189]

Van Gennep's ethnographic field work from the beginning of the 20th century describes how close this association between women, birthing, fertility and rings really was. He claimed that the custom all over France, of never removing the wedding ring applied only to the woman's ring. "*Aussi est-il de règle partout en France que la femme ne doit l'ôter jamais de son doigt, sauf dans certaines circonstances définies*" (Van Gennep 1946: 458). He continued to say that one of these rare circumstances when a woman could remove her wedding ring occurred when a woman found out she was pregnant. At that moment she had to remove her wedding ring, "*afin de ne pas lier l'enfant*" (Van Gennep 1946: 458). After she went into labour, about to give birth, she had to put the ring back on to ensure a safe birth. Rings, despite their appearance of

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[189]But since men also wore wedding or betrothal rings in the past, meanings other than fertility must have influenced the wearing of these rings. Just as the 13th century French manuscript (mentioned in Chapter 4) depicted a groom literally giving "his heart" to his bride, sentimental and romantic meanings also surrounded wedding rings.

being passive objects, often took on powerful active characteristics responsible for keeping a spouse faithful, securing a safe birth or protecting an individual from harm.

From earliest times, the fiancé himself placed the ring on the finger of his fiancée. In the 3rd century, rings were more often delivered by another third party to the fiancée. Usually the ring was always placed on the fourth finger of the left hand. By the 4th century, according to Macrobe, this ring finger connected a vein that went directly to the heart (Kunz 1917: 194), and was thus called *digitus medicinalis*. Isidore of Seville in the 7th century supported this custom and interpretation. But there is evidence that in Brittainy, "*le port de l'anneau était le troisième doigt de la main droite*" (Chenon 1912: 5). As to similarities or differences between the giving of a betrothal ring and the giving of "*les arrhes*" (the financial donations made by both groom's and bride's families in the form of money, banquet feasts or gifts) Chenon spells them out clearly: 1) the *arrhes* could be given by both contracting parties, groom and bride, whereas the betrothal ring could be given only by the *fiancé*; and 2) the betrothal ring, unlike the *arrhes* in the form of bride's dowry or groom's "*donatio ante nuptias*" which may not have been completely given if the marriage did not take place, remained exclusively the property of the bride no matter what happened. In this way, the betrothal ring changed from being a pure monetary symbol to becoming a symbol of a future promise made by the groom to the bride, or a reminder of a future acceptance made by the bride to the groom.

From the 4th to 8th centuries, the term "*annulus fidei*" replaced "*annulus arrhae*", which signified "*la parole donnée et la foi promise*", or "*la fidélité conjugale*". Chenon maintains, however, that there was always a legal underpinning to the betrothal ring, even

with this changing sentimental interpretation, which served as a visible contractual reminder to couples who did not rely on written contracts. We also know that for Visigoth women (from southern France and northern Spain), the only ring worn was their betrothal ring. Can we include Jewish women in this description, who lived in the Jewish communities of Bordeaux and Bayonne?

We know that between the 8th and 16th centuries dramatic changes occurred in marriage customs throughout Europe. In the 11th century, a change in words suggests some of the difficulties in pinpointing when betrothal rites became marriage rites. The word "*sponsalia*" became replaced with "*epousailles*", which in turn changed the word "*sponsus*" to "*epoux*". By the 13th century, the question arose, "*[est-ce que] le port d'un anneau par une femme faisait présumer les fiançailles ou le mariage* [?]" (Chenon 1912: 13). Apparently, depending on the region (referring only to France here), many different forms of Christian betrothal and wedding customs prevailed. It would not be until the Council of Trent in 1563 that a universal marriage rite would be established. This would also reflect the demise of the betrothal ring and betrothal rites which would soon be relegated to family customs—as they remain to this day.

The question of blessing these betrothal rings varied from time to time and from place to place. In the province of Quebec before the 1970s, among Roman Catholics, the practice of blessing the engagement ring did exist publically where frequently the engagement ring was placed on a plate next to the single golden *alliance* (wedding ring) at the wedding ceremony and re-blessed a second time.

As for two engagement or betrothal rings, they appeared as early as the 8th century in Spain (Seville) and the 11th century in Greek Orthodox rites where two rings (betrothal or marriage) were exchanged (Chenon 1912: 50). When betrothal rites became merged or changed into nuptial rites, the exchange of two rings continued in some regions. With the evidence from marriage rites in Bordeaux and Bayonne, two rings were being used there until they were repressed by the Council of Trent's decree in 1563. However, what can be known about Jewish practices?

Büchler's research on North African Jews showed that one ring was definitely used by the 9th century. However, he expressed ambiguity about defining the difference between a betrothal and a wedding ring (Büchler 1905). In his article, "*La Ketouba Chez Les Juifs du Nord de l'Afrique a l'Epoque des Gueonim*", we read from a 9th century Tunisian text: "The custom in our community was as follows: A man wishing to wed a woman by means of a (wedding) ring, either sends the ring by emissary to give to his intended in front of witnesses, or gives the ring to her father if the bride-to-be is underage. Some men choose to delay this gesture (of presenting the ring) until two or three days before the wedding or even leave it to the very moment of entering under the bridal canopy" (Büchler 1905: 170). [190] Another section of the same text revealed the difficulty in determining dates or places of origins for Jewish wedding rings. "In *Schaare Cedek* we read that 'Babylonian Jews use a ring in wedding ceremonies. Palestinian Jews do not.' However, in *Ceda La-Derech* we read that the opposite applies; that 'Babylonian Jews do not use wedding rings; Palestinian Jews of Babylonian descent do not use

[190] I would like to thank Noga Emmanuel for this translation from the Hebrew.

wedding rings.' Aron ha-Levi in *Orhot Hayyim* says: 'Palestinian Jews use a wedding ring. Palestinian Jews say that with the ring, the wedding ceremony (kidushin) is complete.' The Caraite Joseph al-Bassir says: 'Babylonian Jews say that a ring does not imply completion of the wedding ceremony. Babylonian Jews do not use a ring in wedding ceremonies. Palestinian Jews do use a ring in wedding ceremonies'" (Büchler 1905: 174).

Going back to earlier times, Grossmark's work on jewelry making in the land of Israel[191] during the period of the Mishnah cited the use of jewelry but no specific mention of a ring. "During the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud, there were two parts to the Jewish weddings: 1) the *Kiddushin* or *erusin*, when the bridegroom put an object on the lap of the bride, some object of value and said something in front of two witnesses; 2) the second part was called *nisuin* or *chuppah*, the main part which was taking the bride into the bridegroom's house and spending some time together. Only after this part was concluded were the couple considered to be married. During this second stage was the banquet feast. The banquet took the opportunity to use jewelry, to show that the financial contract which was part of the Jewish marriage, the *Ketoubah*, could be displayed to the community. The bride at the feast was to be distinguished from her friends by her wedding jewelry. She was entitled to wear her jewelry for seven days" (Grossmark 1994: 309). Grossmark continued to say that, "According to the sage, Rabbi Meyer, 'she is not sanctified until she touches the money'"(Grossmark 1994:118). So, it was not enough that some money or jewelry be given or provided for the bride; she had to show her

[191] As was mentioned earlier in Chapter 4.

acceptance by touching it. Otherwise, she was not married. Given this rabbinic directive, the wearing of jewelry would accomplish two important goals: showing the transfer of financial obligations from one family to another, and showing the bride's active involvement in this transfer by her visible gesture of freely consenting to the marriage. Moreover, there was also some kind of sympathetic magic going on here, whereby legal sanction and sacredness got transferred to a person who came into close contact with a designated object. Whether the jewelry was a bracelet, necklace, ear-rings, nose-rings or finger rings did not seem to matter.

One of the most significant historical findings in this research was the locating of an early source that supported the idea that Jews were exchanging wedding rings in the western world. Chenon's research on French Jews showed that as early as the 13th century, "*cette permutatio annulorum* (exchange of rings) *fut adopté au XIIIe siècle par les Juifs, au moins en France*" (Chenon 1912: 50). Nothing more, unfortunately, was said by Chenon on this subject. There were also no early visual representations of this ring exchange. But we do have examples of single Jewish betrothal rings appearing in several visual sources. In a 14th century illustrated Ketoubah from Krems, Austria, a groom holds a large ring in his left hand, as his bride reaches out with her right hand opposite him (Plate 98). The oversized ring, the only exaggerated object in this illustration (all other details on the figures, including their head-gear, are realistically proportioned), is clearly not plain or smooth but has some pronounced form on top of its bezel. As a focal point of the image, the single ring appears less like a jeweled ring and more like a ring with a temple or house structure on top of it.

Compared to the portrait of Jacob Baruch Carvalho, about to get married in 1687 in the Venetian Jewish ghetto, we find an example of a betrothal ring (without a house structure on its bezel) resembling more present-day engagement rings (Plate 99). The portrait represents the son of a Marrano family who migrated to Italy at the beginning of the 17th century and was probably commissioned by his parents or parents-in-law as a gift. "Stylishly dressed, in the best fashion of his day, the young Carvalho projects an air of contentment and self-confidance, exuding little trace of an oppressive ghetto reality. During the days surrounding weddings, the strict internal regulations regarding dress were eased up and a person who wished to flaunt economic success and 'wear the clothes of the king' was permitted to do so, as did Carvalho in the portrait. Even the portrait itself may have been part of a social norm among Italian Jews in the days of the ghetto, serving as one of the betrothal routines: other such wedding rites included the exchange of extravagantly bound daily prayer books (often embellished with real or imagined family emblems), the commissioning of uniquely adorned *ketubbot*, and the giving of majolica plates decorated with nuptial themes. [But], the portrait was also an instrumental means of building an internal imaginary world not enslaved to the ghetto reality. Involved in the commercial sale of the arts, buying and selling paintings, Italian Jews were known to hang paintings of secular and religious content in their homes" (Cohen 1998: 31).

Similar to present day photo sessions, this 17th century portrait demonstrated how the sacred betrothal ring occupied secular as well as *chuppah* space. Precariously held, we get the impression that this ring was not destined for his hand. Perhaps already given or worn by his betrothed, this light-reflecting ring became a reified prop, an *objet d'art* to

be admired as much as one should admire the one who held it. Although we guess that he will probably not wear this ring, we get the feeling that this is truly "his" ring, his reminder to his bride and bride's parents of his gift and his true identity as an opulent gift-giver. Carvalho's portrait, a new expression of Jewish art, mixed the secular with the sacred custom of betrothal (*kiddushin*). A precursor to the first public exhibition of Judaica at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1878, Jewish experience was "transplanting the sacred into the profane" (Cohen 1998: 155). Indeed, this visible and permanent form of capturing Carvalho's ceremonial clothing and gestures parallels present-day desires to record wedding ceremonies in photographic and video form. Interestingly, contemporary engagement rituals remain relatively private and have not been videotaped or photographed as weddings have been. [192]

Focusing on a ring which glitters leads one to consider that the ring in the Carvalho portrait may have been a diamond. Following this line of thought, three ideas emerge: first, jeweled rings (possibly diamonds) were by the 17th century synonymous with betrothal and marriage; second, males were portrayed as the ones who gave these glittering rings; and third, displaying one's wealth by showing off a betrothal ring was important at betrothing time. In valorizing engagements, diamonds associated with betrothal and marriage were quite popular even before the 1940 De Beers phenomenon began (George 2001: 16; Chadour 1994).

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[192]There is, however, a trend to publicize engagements within the last number of years. Sky-writing proposals or digitized messages on huge advertising boards at baseball games have become popular.

Chadour claims that as early as 1761, Queen Charlotte's marriage to George III of England popularized the diamond ring (Plate 100). A diamond studded hoop called a "keeper" was worn as protection next to the precious marriage ring. Just as a diamond forecasts permanence and hope for an eternal union, the occasion of a betrothal or wedding portrait in Venetian ghetto circumstances provided fantasy and hope for future generations who would never see the harsh realities of their ancestors. The secular image depicted by Carvalho's figure holding a glittering ring belies any sense of the realities of his own religious tradition or the one relegating him to ghetto life. If traces of two threads (mentioned above) can be found running through the history of wedding rings, the religious one is hardly present here. Does the Carvalho Portrait not represent a forecast of present-day engagement customs? The ring, nevertheless, remains singularly associated with the betrothal act, or future marriage act joining fiancé with his fiancée. The emerging role of the couple (the bride is indirectly part of this portrait, while the male is more prominent as ring-giver and ring-holder) as a solo pair makes them primary actors in their marrying process. They choose, buy and wear the symbols which they want to display to themselves and to their families and friends. Betrothing and marrying represent imagery which portrays fantasy (not the harsh realities of ghetto life) and the display of the best fineries which a family has. Moreover, betrothing and marriage take on a preferred secular rather than overtly religious focus.

What can be drawn from the evidence so far presented? First, the change from betrothal to marriage rings represented a definite change in meaning from monetary exchanges between two families to a ring symbolizing a promise of these exchanges and,

then, to a ring pointing to a time after those promises were fulfilled. The marriage ring no longer symbolized a future transaction involving some dowry or bridal price, but a symbol reflecting a future time period when these earlier transactions would already have been completed. By the time the marriage took place, then, what could the marriage ring signify? During the 9th to 13th centuries, we read about the wedding ring representing "*l'union des coeurs*" (Chenon 1912: 38).[193] In an illustrated 13th century manuscript, this union of hearts is literally represented as the groom places a heart (symbolic ring) on his bride's middle finger.

However, what about those regions like Bordeaux and Bayonne that Chenon and Mutembe cited as places where two rings were exchanged? Considering that the double-ring ceremony was not the norm in the Christian west, why did these women give men rings in wedding rituals? Could it be that a cosmopolitan environment, like Bordeaux, described as "*le champ de foire de l'Occident*" in the 4th century CE, provided a certain mixture of mores and customs that was able to enhance free expression and tolerance of differences (Deloche 1929:8)? What were the Bordeaux weddings like during the 4th and 16th centuries? One thousand years of Roman, Christian, Visigothic, Frankish, Carolingian and Islamic influences infiltrated this southwestern port city during this long interim. We know that it would not be until the beginning of the 10th century that the Talmud would arrive in France, "and even then the Jews did not scrupulously observe its

[193]Interestingly, during this same period, when the Catholic Church perhaps wanted to take advantage of a more sentimental approach to marriage, it adopted signet and nuptial rings to signify a Bishop's status or a nun's vows. This new 12th century custom resembled to some extent the ancient Jewish practice of wearing one's wedding ring on the right index finger. To this day, episcopal and religious orders wear their rings on their right hands, while the Bishops still use the index finger.

teachings. On the other hand, pre-kabbalistic texts seem to have been relatively well known. Contacts between the Orient and the Carolingian Empire led a doctor of law named Mahir to leave Babylonia and settle in Narbonne, where he founded a talmudic school that helped establish Jewish studies in France. It was not until the eleventh century, however, that there existed a real Jewish cultural life. Influences reached France also from Italy and Muslim Spain, where important Jewish cultural centers developed. The Frankish period was therefore on the whole a peaceful one for the Jews, notwithstanding a certain amount of forced conversion and exile (Benbassa 1999). As for Mutembe's references to double-ring ceremonies in 15th and 16th century Bordeaux, we know that Jews were still living there when other regions of France had expelled them. Because of England's rule until 1453, Bordeaux remained a haven for refugees fleeing the Inquisition. Perhaps the Marranos who fled Spain and Portugal for Bordeaux during the 15th and 16th centuries and who maintained Catholic identities were the Catholics to which Mutembe referred.

Mutembe's research pointed out, however, that the presence of more than one ring in written texts from the 12th to 16th centuries, especially ritual texts, did not necessarily mean that full egalitarian ritual exchange had taken place[194]. "*Un or plusieurs anneaux? Il arrive quelles formules parlent de 'ces anneaux' (au pluriel). Mais cela ne signifie certainement pas qu'on ait prévu de bénir un anneau pour chacun des époux; il s'agit plutôt de plusieurs anneaux offerts par le mari à sa femme. Le rituel de Tours 1533, par exemple, renferme cette curieuse précision: 'Cet anneau qu'on bénit doit être blanc, tout*

[194] By "full" I mean a combination of words, gestures and objects used in an egalitarian fashion.

rond et d'argent; et il est de l'essence. Les autres anneaux ne sont pas bénit et ils ne sont pas de l'essence du sacrement'" (Mutembe 1974: 166). Just as a 1962 American Roman Catholic ritual cited the use of two rings, the fact that the second ring remained unblessed positioned these two rings in a different and unequal light.

Popular culture, if not religious rituals, endorsed two rings in some European regions before the 16th century. Whether these rings represented betrothals or marriages depended on religious and local customs. Clearly these rings represented beliefs and practices associated with Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Christian Orthodox and Jewish communities. If only by association, the evidence put forth by Chenon, Mutembe and Stevenson brought out an interesting fact concerning two regions where two rings were known before the 16th century. In both Bordeaux and Bayonne, evidence of two rings curiously connected with the existence of two prominent thriving Sephardic communities (Seltzer 1980; Deloche 1929: 8). Could it be that under the influence of Sephardic Jews in these southern French regions, the custom of two rings spread to the surrounding Christian communities to be found there? By the time Trent exercised its unifying rites, both Bordeaux and Bayonne's double-ring customs disappeared—at least in official written manuals. By the beginning of the 17th century, when Protestant reformers wanted to differentiate themselves from the Catholics, eliminating ritual and its artifices was a reflection of their non-sacramental mandate. So, although two rings may have been used by the Protestants, they did not appear in wedding rites until late in the 19th century (Freisen 1918; Chenon 1912; Keble 1845). Like Catholics, Lutherans and Anglicans in Montreal (and in parts of New York like Albany where the oldest Lutheran Dutch Reform

church of America exists) did not adopt the second wedding ring until the 1970s and 1980s. What further evidence, then, besides the early 13th century reference made by Chenon pointed to Jews exchanging two rings, and what could this exchange mean?

In 1967 at a New York auction, a ring called "The Wertheimer Ring" was sold. Its claim to fame lies in the fact that it belonged to Samson Wertheimer, the famous Vienna court Jew who in 1690 married the daughter of Samuel Oppenheimer. The ring commemorated this marriage with the name of the rabbi who married them and the year of their marriage was inscribed on the outside of the large house-like structure (Plate 101). But the inside of the ring revealed something very intriguing. Two rings sit inside a hidden compartment, not visible to the viewer unless opened. Given Chenon's evidence of Jews using two rings as early as the 13th century and the fact that Protestant Reformers, including Luther himself, did likewise, the ring may very well be authentic. Taking into account Gertrud Seidmann's view that the ring is probably a fake, then, the existence of a proto-Wertheimer ring merits serious consideration.[195] Fakes are usually copies of something else. When interpreted in light of Chenon's findings, the Wertheimer ring pointed in this direction.

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[195]In an email on February 3, 1998, Oxford jewelry historian Gertrud Seidmann claimed that the ring "is definitely a fake" based on her research of similar Ashkenazi betrothal rings which she attributes to the early 20th century. All other similar rings which are purported to belong to earlier periods she categorized as "romantic inventions". What she failed to point out, however, were the overlaps between Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities. And, she relied too heavily on the inscription "Mazol Tov" as evidence fro attributing this expression solely to Ashkenazi communities. She also did not fully explain the fact that fakes are usually copies of something else.

1690. The Gimmel Rings

Besides the perplexing Wertheimer Ring, gimmel rings appeared approximately at the same time in England and on the continent. There are many extant examples of these duplicate, triplicate and quadruplicate rings and literary references citing their popularity. One such ring, dated 1851 (Plate 102), comes from the Lady Londesborough Collection with the following description: "it had been used as a betrothing Ring, by an officer of the king's German legion, with some Irish lady, and that the notched Ring was retained by some confidential female friend, who was present as a witness at the betrothal ceremony, usually one of the most solemn and private character, and at which, over the Holy Bible, placed before the witnesses, both the man and the woman broke away the upper and lower rings from the centre one, which was held by the intermediate person. It would appear that the parties were subsequently married; when it was usual, as a proof that their pledge had been fulfilled, to return to the witness or witnesses, to their contract, the two Rings which the betrothed [woman] had respectively worn until married, and thus the three Rings, which had been separated, became re-united, as in the present instance" (Lady Londesborough 1853: 18).

It seemed that in this custom, both the man and woman wore one part of the gimmel ring until they were married, and then at that time the betrothed or woman would wear the entire ring. A reference found in one of Dryden's plays, "Don Sebastian", offers another insight into the splitting and joining of the gimmel ring.

"A curious artist wrought'em
With joynts so close as not to be perceiv'd;
Yet are they both each other's counterpart.
(Her part had Juan inscrib'd, and his had Zaydra.
You know those names were theirs:) and in the midst
A heart divided in two halves was plac'd.
Now if the rivets of those Rings inclos'd
Fit not each other, I have forg'd this lye:
But if they join, you must for ever part" (Lady Londesborough 1853: 17).

The notion conveyed here assumes that a man and woman who each wear a ring must be lovers, but apart. Once the separate pieces of the ring join back together, the couple have no need to share them or wear them, for they must "for ever part". Taking into consideration the description given just above from the Londesborough Catalogue and Dryden's verse, the gimmel rings were meant to be lovers' or true betrothal [engagement] rings, not wedding rings. There is no doubt that these intriguing betrothal rings reflect ideas of love, desire, belonging and fidelity—but not ideas of dowry or bridal price.

Likewise, in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night,* Act V we read:

"A contract of eternal bond of love....
Strengthen'd by enterchangement of your rings".

Does this verse reflect gimmel rings or true wedding rings? In an age when no universal religious wedding rites were in order, it is noteworthy that words like "contract", "eternal", "love" and "rings" are strung together, expressing the voice and practices of the Elizabethan populace. There are other examples of rings worn by men that were given by

their loved one or betrothed, that hardly resembled the gimmels (Plate 103). These stag tooth rings have all the appearances of some macho hunting cult, yet incorporate romantic elements like small garnet gemstones and silver key charms symbolizing "locked hearts". The idea of men wearing rings that symbolize partnerships before the days of birth control signals an important change in courtship and marriage practices. The gimmel and stag tooth rings symbolize ideals of loyalty and commitment as well as being souvenirs or daily reminders of someone's love. Similarly, the 13th century illustrated manuscript (mentioned earlier) which literally depicted an actual heart on the bride's finger clearly demonstrated the shift from dowries to romantic love.

All of these rings, however, strongly suggest courtship and not marriage, in contrast to the two miniature rings found inside the Wertheimer ring. It would not be before the 19th century that one would find substantial evidence pointing to the second wedding ring among Jewish communities.

19th Century Evidence

One ring, resembling very much the Wertheimer ring, needs to be mentioned. It appeared around 1930. Considered by Seidmann to be authentic, this ring hiding two rings inside and a complete Esther Scroll comes at the end of a period of Jewish *grosses bagues* (Plate 104). If anything else, the existence of this 1930 ring reinforced the idea that if the Wertheimer ring was indeed a fake, it was not forged after WWII. From the mid 1800s to this point in time, a plethora of oversized silver Jewish wedding rings was produced in Jerusalem (Seidmann 1989). These rings demonstrated that the idea of two

wedding rings was not anathema within the Jewish community, but possibly a reified and perpetually recurring symbol. If the late 19th and early 20th centuries produced a plethora of these rings, which seemed to be the case (Plate 105, Plate 106), how were these *grosses bagues*, as they were commonly called, used? Were they simply to be exhibited, passed down from generation to generation, never to be worn? How did they differ from other elaborate Jewish betrothal rings from the 14th to 17th centuries (Plate 107, Plate 108)?

As Plates 107 and 108 illustrate, these Venetian Bethrothal rings did not have miniature apertures hidden inside. The Venetian rings, however, had their own secretive mechanisms which could hide the Hebrew letters representing *Mazol Tov* from view. Previously unknown to jewelry historians, until Benjamin Zucker published his novel *Blue* in 2000, these *objets d'art* served as broaches as well as rings. When attached to the lapel with a pin and chain connected to small circlets on the outside hoop of the ring, the ring had an added front lid which hid the inside of the hoop. The flexibility of these wedding rings allowed them to be worn in a much more practical fashion, since their size and shape on the finger made it impossible for them to remain there for very long. At some point during the wedding day or week, these rings were seen on the fingers of the brides, either their index finger or thumb, perhaps. Their diameters are not as large as the *grosses bagues* which Daniel Stauben described in his *Scènes de La Vie Juive en Alsace* written in 1860. However, in the case of the *grosse bague* illustrated in Plates 105 and 106, it easily fit on my own index finger and could not fit on my thumb. When the question of these oversized rings was addressed to the rabbis in my fieldwork and to one

knowledgeable Jewish antiquarian who collected such rings, the unanimous response was that these rings could never have been used under the *chuppah*. Again, reconstructions of past symbols becomes a precarious enterprise.

Two written documents from the 19th century suggested that two Jewish wedding rings, either miniatures symbolically hidden within *les grosses bagues* or full sized, were given under the *chuppah*. Both these documents emanate from Ashkenazi sources, one from Alsace and the other from Berlin.

Daniel Stauben's *Scènes de La Vie Juive en Alsace* (1860) remains the only written source describing the use of one of these oversized Jewish betrothal rings. "*Au milieu de la synagogue était dressée la houpé (dais). Sous le dais, le vénérable rabbin attendait les fiancés. Après la prière d'usage, il bénit une coupe remplie de vin et la leur présenta. Tous deux en goûtèrent. Le fiancé ôtant ensuite de son doigt une grosse bague, la passa au doigt de la jeune épouse en prononçant ces paroles sacramentelles: 'Sois-moi consacrée par cette bague selon la loi de Moïse et d'Israël.' Puis le rabbin récita une autre prière et l'on sortit au milieu des félicitations des assistants*" (Stauben 1860: 63). Stauben's brief but informative text explained in part why these rings were so large. Their hoops were larger in diameter primarily to fit both a man's finger as well as a woman's and, secondly, their largeness in height enabled several miniature objects to be hidden or revealed. Why hide these objects? Reminiscent of the days when Jews were sought out and exiled from certain areas of cities or whole regions of countries, did these rings suggest the days of pogroms when Jewish symbols were anathema? Or did they suggest some mystical/superstitious quaint Judaism, like the one Stauben described where

the urbane Parisien Jew visited the village Alsacian Jew in order to bring him back to memory lane? Did these large rings comply with the legalities of *kinyan*, where only one ring could be given by the groom to the bride, and at the same time mirror what was actually happening in everyday practice—that is, two people sharing the same symbol?

In 1871, the Reform Rabbi Joseph Aub from Berlin delivered an address on the subject of two wedding rings to the Augsburg Synod. This document is central to analyzing the question of the second ring. It highlights the fact that the question may never have surfaced if not for the women who brought their requests to the attention of Rabbi Aub of Berlin. One might also assume that the practice of Jewish women giving rings to men, certainly outside the official sanctity of the *chuppah*, was probably going on for several years before this 1871 request made its appearance.

The following excerpt was taken from the 1871 Responsum which illustrates some of the key points made by Rabbi Aub of Berlin to the Synod on behalf of the women who requested double-ring ceremonies.

> "We should approve the wish frequently expressed by the bride, that during the marriage ceremony she too, should be permitted to present her betrothed with a ring and place it on his finger while saying the words: *Ani ledodi, vedodi li*, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine'. Gentlemen! The question might be raised: Why this modification? I shall answer simply: Was the presentation of *one* ring in itself not also a change which came about at a certain time? As far as I know, from my studies of the rabbinical writings, there is no mention of the wedding ring in the Talmud. Thus, it is evident that our elders did not object to the introduction of a procedure which was so well recommended, regardless of whether it had arisen within another religion or in our own midst. Incidentally,

my proposal is not directed at having the Synod pass a decision favoring the usage of two wedding bands, but rather at having the Synod declare that no religious law prevents a bride from presenting a ring to her betrothed if she so wishes. No new code shall be drawn up; no new precept shall be introduced; I only want the mind to range freely at all times. The actual question is therefore: Can we make allowances for the demands made upon us regarding the two wedding bands? Does the marriage law permit us to comply with the wishes of those betrothed couples who express the desire of having two rings at the performance of their marriage ceremony? These [young brides] stated that they did not wish to be completely passive at the marriage altar, as if they were objects and as though the marriage ceremony could be performed without their equal participation. Since in our present time we have achieved complete recognition of marital equality between man and woman, it is only fair that the bride should enjoy this privilege at the marriage ceremony. In Berlin it has come to the point where most betrothed couples desire to have two wedding rings. .Usually, when we step forward to perform a marriage ceremony in the name of the bridal pair or to say the benedictions, we find two rings lying before us. It is evident, therefore, that the usage of two rings is not as repugnant to female sentiment as some would like us to believe. I have always found the formula which I have chosen—'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine'—to make a profound impression on the feminine soul. As you can see, my proposal only endeavors to substantiate the fact (and my colleague and friend, Dr. Geiger, is in agreement with me) that there is no existing law in Judaism which forbids the usage of two rings. For the validity of the marriage ceremony it makes no difference whether one or two rings are chosen; however, permission should at least be given and no objection should be raised against the usage of two rings. In Mr. Landau's opinion it would follow that, if a new bride who had been married an hour ago came home and presented

her betrothed with a ring, their marriage would automatically become void; in other words, the act of marriage be annulled! For certainly nobody would dispute the fact that it could not make any difference, whether the bride places a ring on the finger of her betrothed an hour earlier or later, if thereby the very act of marriage could be annulled" (Plaut 1963).[196]

Some of the essential points made in the Responsum revealed historical ambiguities about the origins of the second ring. The Responsum may be more indicative of denominational politics critical at that point in time when Reform was clearly demarcating itself from Orthodoxy. Moreover, we do learn how women felt about the marriage ceremony, at least in Berlin, and how they wanted to change the passive ritual role that they had up till that point in time. We also learn that the women who made the request of wanting to give a second ring were "from the most cultured families". This brings up the question of how economic and social status relates to egalitarian gender practices in the world at large and in religious rituals. The only study in which social status has been related to the second wedding ring has been done by Denise Girard from Laval University. Her study of 36 weddings from 1920 to 1940 showed that in the upper classes more double-ring weddings occured: nine out of 12 in *la classe bourgeoise* [upper], three out of 12 in *la classe moyenne* [middle], and none out of 12 in *la classe ouvrière* [working]. The fact that couples with more money could more readily buy two rings does not seem that significant, considering the relatively low cost of plain wedding bands. Girard's findings lead one to connect the wearing of two wedding rings with

[196] I would like to thank Rabbi Leigh Lerner for bringing this Responsum to my attention.

couples who had higher education and economical status. Considering the fact that the majority of the Montreal population were from the working and middle classes, two rings must have been relatively unknown for the Catholics during the period which Girard studied, 1920-1940. The Catholics did not influence the Jewish population in this city to wear a second wedding ring. Rather, it could be said that around the 1960s both Jewish and Catholic brides were giving rings to their husbands. However, it could also be said, that Jewish brides before the 1960s were probably giving more rings to their husbands than Catholic brides.

The gender power imbalance found in an 1871 all-male rabbinical synod is still echoed in present-day religious leadership quarters—of all religious persuasions. The mid to late 19th century reflected a particularly charged time when both feminists and Jewish Reformers were political activists at home and in their synagogues. In addition, the Orthodox sectors of Judaism, in response or reaction to the Reformers' acceptance of the second ring, may have consciously repressed the second ring even deeper than ever. The misconceived notion expressed by the rabbis in this study that the second ring came from Christian influences may have simply been an unconscious reference to "Christianized" Reform influences within Judaism.

However, considering that written ritual texts usually represent practices which have already been known within the tradition for some time, the 1871 Jewish women and men would have already had previous knowledge of the second wedding ring. The fact, therefore, that the second wedding ring has no official "memory" or foundational biblical texts that validate its legal presence in contemporary Montreal wedding ceremonies

triggers both gender and religious issues. The rabbis' claims that the second ring in Judaism has been a recent modern invention does not fully explain the long history which has been demonstrated in the 13th, 17th, 19th and 20th century examples shown in this chapter.

The process of creating and reinventing rituals is no easy feat, and one that relies on difficult reassessments of who people are, both as community members and individuals. As Grimes stated: "To reimagine is implicitly to criticize, and to criticize, implicitly to re-imagine. Resistance to ceremonial change is not just political and social, it is also imaginative. The project of reinventing ritual requires both imagination and criticism, but neither creating nor criticizing is comfortably or conventionally associated with ritual" (Grimes 2000: 299). The imaginative oversized Jewish betrothal rings of the past may very well have been the ritual outlet, that Grimes described above, for seeking freedom from overarching legal, religious or gendered biases. Psychological warfare waged upon women's lives has left its mark beyond bridal price or dowries in the way institutions value male over female leadership roles (Nelson & Robinson 1999: 100-101)[197]. If two rings lack any sense of continuity because of historical amnesia or the lack of analogous symbolic representations in other ritual scenes, they continue to exist on the fingers of men and women who consciously or unconsciously wear them. Whether this

[197]Based on liberal feminist theory, gender (which is not determined by sex) has placed women unequally within economic and social institutions because of a combination of gender discrimination and a lack of equality-quality education. This would apply likewise to religious leadership positions which have been based on long-standing traditions of all-male seminaries, yeshivas or divinity schools. "The reasonable or rational solution to women's subordination, first proposed by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792, and still endorsed today, requires that such obstacles be eliminated, and equality, defined as equality of opportunity, be assured for both women and men" (Nelson & Robinson 1999: 100).

endorsement constitutes an unconscious social practice, a conscious love commitment, a marker that says "I am married", "he is married, do not touch", a sign of equal economic status or a religious reminder, it reveals the desire and power which gendered identities play in our lives.

How does this gendered viewpoint relate to religious identities? Does a feminist viewpoint skew a historical analysis of the second ring from the past? Does the second ring represent feminist strategies for change issuing from liberal and cultural feminist[198] perspectives which suggest that women should be more like men (liberal feminism), or argue that men should be more like women? Although, we may be able to superimpose contemporary feminist jargon on 19th century double-ring ceremonies, can we do so for 13th or 15th century rituals? I doubt we can without any knowledge of ritual descriptions from those periods or narratives describing how the brides and grooms felt about their ring-wearing customs. No doubt, some sort of feminist agenda was in the minds of the Jewish women who approached Rabbi Aub in Berlin. Kunz's ideas which he expressed at the beginning of the 20th century reinforced the idea that the second wedding ring issue in 1871 was connected to feminism's first wave.

Forty-five years after Jewish women in Berlin brought their demands to Rabbi Aub, the question of Christian men wearing wedding rings emerged in different places in

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[198]Cultural feminists "identify the suppression of distinctive or different female qualities, experiences, and values as the primary cause of women's subordination. Rather than direct immediate attention to the elimination of patriarchy, their proposed solution is the identification, rehabilitation, and nurturance of women's qualities, such that they will ultimately supersede the currently dominant patriarchal system. Indicative of this orientation is a remarkable shift in feminist thinking, away from an interest in disproving, and towards an interest in stressing, the existence of gender differences" (Nelson & Robinson 1999: 105). These feminists seek to build on women's shared or unique qualities and create an alternative female consciousness. The focus for these feminists is to celebrate women's ways of knowing.

Great Britain and Europe. Indeed, the "new" custom of men wearing wedding rings was related to women's desire for them to do so, as a marker of marital status to the outside world. In 1917 Frederik Kunz commented about this new custom in his classic work *Rings for the Finger.*

> "That men should be forced to wear wedding rings is a proposition recently agitated in London. Public attention was called to this question by newspaper reports to the effect that a young lady had testified at a divorce suit that she had innocently encouraged the attentions of a married man, because she had no means of knowing that he was married. In many continental countries married men are always expected to wear such rings, although there is of course no legal compulsion to do so, any more than in the case of a wife. We can hardly deny that anything serving to fix the status of both men and women in the matter of their marital relations is eminently desirable.
>
> Apropos of wedding rings, the notice of a special marriage ceremony performed for a man and woman who were both ardent advocates of woman suffrage, suggests that such unions might be signalized by the use of a ring of a characteristic type. In this case the parties to the marriage contract were careful to emphasize the fact that the union was one between equals, each of whom made the same pledge of fidelity and love to the other. Perhaps a ring enamelled with the suffragette colors might be acceptable to the pioneers of the new era. As in many old-fashioned marriages the woman was accorded a *de facto* primacy, the man who willingly accepts the doctrine of the equality of the sexes may be rather a gainer than a loser by his adherence to the new faith.
>
> In England, it is said that a movement has been initiated to abolish the use of the wedding-ring, possibly in some sense as a war measure, to constitute a slight check on the use of gold for ornamental purposes. It is, however,

conjectured that its real source is rather to be sought in the general movement for the complete independence of women, the wedding-ring being looked upon by some extremists as an antiquated badge of slavery. It is hardly probable that such a movement will meet with any considerable measure of success, for the ideas that the ring is a symbol of faith have become too deeply rooted in the popular mind to warrant the rejection of the time-honored usage.

Perhaps the objection of the extreme advocates of 'woman's rights' might be satisfied by the introduction of an interchange of rings both at engagements and marriages. This exchange of rings is an acknowledgment of the mutuality of the relation, and it has been practiced, and still is practiced in many countries on the European continent" (Kunz 1917: 231).

The idea that men should be visibly marked with a ring, as Kunz described above, can also be found in the way Claddagh rings were and still are worn. The idea that rings could mark an individual's sexual or romantic status can be traced to this intriguing ring, worn by both men and women. Although the Claddagh ring was used as a betrothal ring, it also served as an efficient coded symbol communicating licit or illicit desires that could change as quickly as one could change the position of one's ring.

The custom of the popular Claddagh rings can be traced to Galway in Ireland (Plate 109). By measuring the diameters of the older rings (those made before 1840), Ida Delamer claims that "all extant Claddagh rings made prior to 1840 are male rings" (McMahon 1999: 60). All of these rings measured more than 1.9 cm, the standard lower measure for male rings. "[Delamer] makes the point that even if these were originally owned by Claddagh men it was unlikely that working fishermen would have worn a ring

with as large a bezel as a Claddagh. They may, however, have been kept 'for good' and worn only on occasions like the Saint John's Day processions" (McMahon 1999: 61).

One of the mythical stories relating the origins of the Claddagh ring claims that Margaret na Drehide (Margaret of the Bridges) who was married to the mayor of Galway in 1596 found in her lap a stone ring that was dropped by an eagle. She received this gem while she was surveying workmen who were building a bridge at her own expense, while her husband was traveling abroad. The story affirms the tradition in Galway of wedding rings being handed down from mother to daughter and the idea that women have some special divine relationship with rings and gems. However, the story also reaffirms the idea that women, while being quite suited to handling affairs of the heart, can also build bridges. This story, coupled with the fact that many of these rings were worn by men, suggests women's active role in the business of betrothing and marrying.

Moreover, when trying to trace the origins of the Claddagh ring, one finds interesting links with France and Spain. "Although the device of two hands clasping a heart is not uncommon in many parts of Europe, the same with the crown added is extremely rare. It has its counterpart in Spain, whence the design may have been brought to Galway by early traders" (McMahon 1999: 76). And Gennep cites a similar wedding ring made of "two crowned hearts" in the area of *la Bresse, petite pays de la Lorraine,* and "one crowned heart in Vendée" (Van Gennep 1946: 457). Today, the Claddagh ring, as it was worn in the past, can be worn coded in three different ways, each communicating a special meaning. "When placed on the right hand with the heart facing out it indicates that the wearer has not yet found a lover; when worn on the right hand

with the heart facing in it may mean that someone has taken an option; and when worn on the left hand it means that love is plighted, if worn after [being presented by a friend or lover] with the heart pointing out it may be a sign that love has died" (McMahon 1999: 78).

A Mixture of Styles, Rings, Rites and Identities

Because Romans wore rings, it does not necessarily follow that the Christians did before the Jews. "The ceremony of the ring was customary among the ancient Romans, and in some measure among the Jews. Hence it was admitted into Christian marriages" (Urlin 1969: 48). The idea that the use of one ring was originally a Christian one does not bear weight (Chadour 1994; Stevenson 1983; Tertullian 1959; Kunz 1913; Keble 1845). The ancient influences of Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Jewish customs merged with "newer" Christian ones in the first four centuries of the Common Era in a myriad places in the west.

In trying to find the roots of Jewish wedding rings, one must go further back to times and places where the rings themselves have left their traces. But, what may appear as evidence of past Ashkenazi practices may in fact belie traces of other Jewish practices, like Sephardic ones, or non-Jewish practices like Greek Christian Orthodox or Roman Catholic ones. The quest, therefore, for Jewish wedding rings leads to a quest for Jewish identities, which demands the kind of understanding suggested by Benjamin Zucker's most compelling recent novel *Blue*. Each page, designed like a page from the Talmud, reveals how Judaism centralizes the past, yet only within the surrounding context of other

bordering texts can one talk back and forth with that past. One of his narratives describes a 17th century Venetian Jewish Betrothal ring being carried around in the pocket of a New York Jew in the 1960s. Ongoing conversations sound like living dialogues which resurrect the past and meet present and future generations. Yet, there is no neat linear sequencing of events here. Zucker's novel has no clear-cut beginning, middle or end. Like each page, the reader must go inward, in a clockwise motion around each center, then proceed forward to the next page and then back again to refresh one's memory or gaze again more attentively at the non-verbal images he juxtaposes next to each written page. Photographs of Bob Dylan, Bobby Fisher, James Joyce, Yeshivah students and Vermeer's paintings all touch upon some aspect of the meaning and essence of the color blue—found in a cabachon sapphire, Yahweh's celestial home, one's eyes, or a Dylan song. Zucker succeeds in bringing the past to life. His engaging style leads the reader to enter the typed-written pages on the right-hand side, and to enter the resplendent visual pages on the left-hand side. In particular, Vermeer's art drew me in, especially the artist's self-portrait.

Vermeer's self-portrait, which shows only the back of his head and torso seated in a chair—he never revealed his face—seemed a painting no longer. The artist appeared as if he were slowly about to turn his head to get a glimpse of who was watching him, tempted to satisfy his viewer's thirst for more secrets. Leading the reader and viewer almost to a revealing point, Vermeer and Zucker understand the world of mystery, symbols and the power of the hidden. Leading one to intimate spaces where the unknown past is resurrected could only have been achieved through Zucker's continuous threads of

conversations with that past and through illustrating those beautiful objects created from that past. Hearing the imperfect voices of Vermeer, his lovers, his mother and his many sitters filled in the gaps between broad silent brush strokes, sometimes too beautiful or too perfect. In this process, we learn that flawless art objects from the past, including Jewish betrothal rings, have intimate flawed individual histories. Like Zucker, Grimes urges his readers "[to]feel resistance to flattening cultural and religious differences and more willingness to celebrate them. We have become, I hope, less susceptible to ritual romanticism. By now it is obvious that rites of passage are valuable but imperfect ways of enacting meaning" (Grimes 2000: 336).

Juxtaposing the perfect with the imperfect enables one to question more seriously any final pronouncements of absolute uniqueness within any religious tradition or in those objects that reflect those traditions. It becomes important, then, to know that "the tiny rooms of the Ashkenazi Jews in the Venice ghetto" existed alongside other rooms outside the Venice ghetto designed and occupied by Sephardic Jews. This leads one to consider images of many Jews, many Jewish artifacts and many histories. We begin to learn that drawing clear-cut lines in identifying authentic Venetian Jewish wedding rings approximates the same task as trying to find and identify "real Venetian Jews". The migratory history of European, Middle Eastern and North African Jews linked frequently to periods of persecution makes this task all too difficult. Many of the rings themselves attest to this migrational history.

For example, gold filigree on one ring refers to Venetian artists, while the enamel work on the same ring refers to South German enamellists. Moreover, diverse artistic

elements on a ring represented more than just the influence of local artistic differences. In the case of Jewish wedding rings, these local artistic differences revealed the blending, merging and separating of Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions amidst environments dominated by non-Jewish traditions. Although jewelry historian Seidmann has clearly defined the majority of Jewish betrothal rings as Ashkenazi, primarily because of the Ashkenazi expression "Mazol Tov" inscribed on them, Zucker points in another direction—his fictional novel informs more than does Seidmann's concise art historical method.[199] To illustrate some of Zucker's ideas, I have included three excerpts which describe the possible mutations and permutations within three generations of Jews, narrated through Tal, his parents and grandparents.

> "TAL'S FATHER: An Ashkenazi–Abraham wanted to know who was Ashkenazi and who was Sephardi. Suddenly in America he has a new distinction: Gypsy. In Antwerp, our next door neighbors, the Tedescos, were renting from Rachel's father. They were Italian Jews who had been living in Italy for hundreds of years. Abraham told them they were not Sephardi but Ashkenazi, as their name meant German in Italian. I will never forget the look of disdain they gave Abraham before bursting out laughing, believing my son to be totally mad. Those Tedescos remained in Antwerp in 1940. When Ephraim Tedesco came to New York after the war, having survived Auschwitz, he came to my office. Abraham didn't ask him his origins then. Abraham sat and stared at Ephraim. Afraid and terrified. Ephraim's German identity paper stated it simply: Ephraim Israelite Tedesco. We were all Israelites" (Zucker 2000: 45).

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[199] For a good summary of Seidmann's thoughts on Jewish Marriage Rings, see her articles, "Marriage Rings Jewish Style" in *The Connoisseur*, January 1981 and "Jewish Marriage Rings" in *International Silver & Jewellery Fair Catalogue*, London, 1989 (pp. 29-34).

"RACHEL, TAL'S MOTHER: The ring–I handed the ring to my poor Abraham, and out of the corner of my eye I could see his fingers quiver. 'Now it is mine,' he said breathlessly. 'I can always keep it,' he said, shuddering to himself, 'even if I never get married.' 'Even if you never get married, Abraham.' I repeated, as though submitting my family prayer book to swear on. He asked me what those letters meant to my father, and I looked at them and said, 'Mazol tov. It's an abbreviation for good luck.' And Abraham, after looking around the room and even in back of him, whispered to me, 'That is an Ashkenazic expression, mazel tov. Isn't our family Castillano and Sephardic?'

'First of all,' I responded, 'Why do you look around this room? We're alone. And don't we Castillanos need luck also?' And Abraham said sanctimoniously, 'It means Morid Tal, He who brings down the dew of blessings.' And I said to him, 'In the Shmoneh Esrei, we say each day 'morid Hatal,'' and quicker than I could speak the words learned by rote even before I went to school, Abraham said, 'The parallel lines stand for abbreviation marks but are written in the Lurianic fashion as a double yud—''Ah, but Luria was part Ashkenazic,' I parried.

SARAH ABENDANA, TAL'S GRANDMOTHER: The roof and the ring seemed of a piece—The Ashkenazim got married with a simple gold band. And they went round and round in their lives, my husband Benjamin used to say. They never knew where they were. We got married with a ring and a roof, I told my husband that I wanted to live near to my parents. Better still, on the same block or, even better, in adjoining houses. The ring of our love and the roof of my youth seemed of a piece (Zucker 2000: 63).

If we compare present-day Jewish wedding rings to the rings that Zucker describes, whose identities can be detected? Which religious tradition, ethnic group or personal imprint reflect the 18K or 22K marks inscribed on the inside of plain gold bands?

Following Zucker's line of thinking, Montreal Ashkenazi wedding customs (with loosely defined Ashkenazi wedding rings) barely reveal the mixture of rites that emanated from Alsace, Augsburg, Vienna, Venice, Bordeaux, Bayonne or Albany where Protestants, Catholics, Lutherans, Ashkenazi and Sephardim all crossed paths. Yet, one must not underestimate the cross fertilization that took place in producing Montreal Ashkenazi Jewish rites or the double-ring ceremony under the rubric of an "Ashkenazi wedding ceremony". The rings used in these present-day ceremonies can hardly be called "Ashkenazi". Indeed, when one looks back at some of the more elaborate Jewish betrothal rings of the 14th to 19th centuries, today's wedding rings betray no discernable differences between Protestants, Catholics, Ashkenazi or Sephardic Jews.

What significance lies, then, in unearthing the history of the second wedding ring with respect to understanding contemporary Montreal Jewish wedding rituals? The significance of this historical enterprise points to several areas.

It revealed that a dominant popular symbol which lacks any sense of historical continuity within a religious tradition has spanned centuries in both popular and religious spheres. It reflected divergent viewpoints embraced by religious authorities within the same religious tradition which unmask political denominationalism. It challenged patriarchal norms, by which women's ritual gestures have been historically repressed. It

raised questions about what constitutes differences between contemporary Montreal Ashkenazi and Sephardic weddings. It pointed to a need within Montreal religious communities, Jewish and non-Jewish, to re-think wedding rituals against a background of ritual histories rather than doctrinal, *halachic* or theological histories. It urges religious leaders to consider more seriously the role which wedding rings, as artifacts of identity, play in the lives of the ritual participants.

In terms of Jewish versus Christian influences on women giving men wedding rings, this history revealed that the Council of Trent was pivotal. Remaining beyond the reach of this vast powerful arm of ritual control, which suppressed the Bordeaux and Bayonne double-ring ceremonies, Jewish wedding rituals were much freer to creatively experiment with ritual diversity. Paradoxically, repressive Christian environments may have spawned Jewish progressive and innovative ritual ones. Despite *halacha*, Orthodox rabbis in Montreal have freely melded the second ring into a seamless ritual fabric. Likewise, one might imagine that Orthodox Jewish weddings before the 19th century reflected similar patterns.

As 15th century lawyers sometimes argued, "in the absence of other material evidence, a ring on a woman's finger was a plausible indication that a wedding had taken place" (Gottlieb 1993: 80). Indeed, in the past one hundred years, a particular ring on a man's fourth finger of the left hand was more than a plausible indication that a wedding had taken place, for it definitively marked that occasion and his married status. No confusion is possible within the past century about guessing if a man's ring was a betrothal, engagement or marriage ring. Men like women were also marked and

reminded of love, fidelity, bondage, sexual fulfillment, children or financial responsibilities. Moreover, the history of the second ring (in the west and predominantly in western Europe and North America) strongly suggested that the women who were instrumental in pushing for this equal sharing of marital identity were Jewish.

The stories of the second ring narrated different versions, what the official authorities decreed and what the ritual gestures and objects retorted. For centuries, rings have *belonged* essentially to those who wore them (Plate 110), and not to the legislators who may have influenced them and ruled over them. As Plate 110 illustrates, a Montreal Jewish wedding invitation between a Conservative bride and an Orthodox groom depicted two joined rings. The invitation communicated a couple's belief that two rings were *their* Jewish wedding symbols, regardless of the rabbi's interpretation. The significance of this wedding invitation reiterates the idea of a shared commitment by both bride and groom who have agreed that a woman does not become "transformed" by a religious rite or her spouse.[200] Two wedding rings, therefore, within the context of

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[200]Only one bride-to-be who was interviewed used the word "transform" to describe her anticipated wedding day. She said: "The *chuppah* is the most important, my life is transformed under there. After I come out, I am a changed person, I am no longer a young girl" (Interview: June 11, 2001). This bride-to-be's wedding ritual could be described as more "religious" than the majority of couples in this study. There would be only one wedding ring in her wedding, at least, under the *chuppah*. The second ring would be given after the *chuppah* ceremony in the bridal chamber. This couple also did not live together before they got married. A close friend to the couple, who would be the one to toast them at the wedding, made the following comments about this couple's upcoming wedding: "All her [the bride's] girlfriends are constantly talking about details, colors, flowers. It's normal for girls, it's the culmination of their dreams, their fantasies are coming true. But, for us guys, it is just a lot of stuff that is important for family and tradition, but it doesn't matter like the marriage itself. We just get a tux, they go on and on about all the details. Everything has to be just right and perfect for them" (Interview June 11, 2001). These two interviews raise several issues and questions about negative gender stereotyping where females are associated with fantasies, dreams, decorating, and weddings, and males are associated with the more "serious" enterprise of "marriage itself". Moreover, the bride-to-be's interview suggested that not having sex before marriage, her single-ring ceremony and feelings of being "transformed" would coalesce on her wedding day and represent "the culmination of [her]dreams". However, the fact that this couple have bought two rings represents some desire to share in some symbolic way, their love. But, because of religious

contemporary Jewish weddings, reflect the lives of two principal ritual actors who have succeeded in bringing their own symbols into the ritual space. Their power over these rings goes far beyond the jurisdiction of the adjudicator. The rabbi plays a necessary legal role but the rings, ultimately, belong to the couple.

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reasons, they chose not to share these symbols under the *chuppah*. This response did not represent the majority of cases in my study, but is noteworthy for future studies on single-ring ceremonies in this city.

Chapter 8

The Women and Men Who Re-Present Jewish Wedding Rituals

> *In 1948, we got married in Montreal at an Orthodox shul on Ducharme Street. I had three wedding rings. My mother lent me hers for the wedding, I bought one with tiny diamonds but the rabbi said we couldn't use it under the chuppah. I wore that one for three years until two of the center diamonds fell out. Just days before I gave birth to my third child, I stopped in at Peoples' Jewelers on St. Catherine street to buy a third wedding ring. I didn't want the people at the hospital to think that I wasn't married when I would give birth. I paid $10 for the ring. Jack always wore a wedding ring until he got hives and took it off one day. It disappeared. He never wore one again.*
>
> Shirley Krasovitsky-Sibalis

The central aim of this chapter is to highlight the voices of Jewish couples who were married by Montreal rabbis.[201] Significant insights were revealed through the data collected from these couples which reinforced and challenged Turner's methodological guidelines for the study of ritual symbols (as discussed in Chapter 1). Related to Turner's guidelines, two major points emerged from the results of these interviews. 1) The couples' interpretations of their wedding rings reinforced Turner's idea that dominant symbols contain opposite meanings, in this case opposite to those of the rabbis. Their rings were not arbitrary legal signs but symbols of love. Their rings conveyed greater meaning and power than the rabbis' descriptions of them as tools producing legal *kinyans*. 2) The couples' knowledge of ritual symbols did not indicate that as "laypersons" they were less expert than the rabbis, thus challenging Turner's category of "ritual expert" as meaning exclusively those who possess a specialized esoteric knowledge of particular symbols. Their expertise simply reflected a different category of

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[201]Most of the rabbis who married these couples were included in the interviews discussed in Chapter 6.

knowledge. From the time a couple became engaged to the day of their wedding—in handling wedding preparations and wedding symbols from A to Z—they demonstrated a high degree of wedding competence. Expertise concerning the entire lexicon of wedding symbols belonged to the couples and not to the rabbis, and quite frequently to the women in the group (brides, sisters, aunts, mothers and mothers-in-law of the brides). Given the fact that there has been a long history of domestic or secular control of wedding symbols—when as early as biblical times parental blessings dominated religious ones (as was shown in Chapter 3)—the relatively narrow roles which rabbis play in weddings can be better explained. However, in terms of what does transpire under the *chuppah* space, the rabbi becomes instrumental in assuming the role of expert. Yet, even within this exclusive domain, the couples showed their prominent expertise by introducing the second ring and confidently handling it despite rabbinic disapproval.

In addition, the interviews revealed that parents, and not only the rabbis, challenged a couple's vision of what their wedding should look like. The couples expressed their newly created married identities as being that of an equal couple, where one partner did not (or should not) override the other. Their desire to communicate these new couple identities sometimes conflicted with the more "traditional" identities pushed by parental authority. Moreover, with respect to religious identities, the couples paid little attention to denominational concerns. Rather, they expressed a larger sense of their Judaism, with a particular sense of their own individual Jewishness which they defined by their understanding of what religious observance meant. The couples' interviews also

highlighted two different trends related to gender issues. On the one hand, the brides and grooms showed a sharing of lifestyles, education and career pursuits which stressed strong egalitarian values, and their sharing of two wedding rings symbolized these values. But on the other hand, and as was mentioned in the previous chapter, the single engagement diamond ring and their engagement experiences clearly showed that the females' roles remained fixed in negative stereotypes. For one thing, the egalitarian exchange of their wedding rings flew in the face of images of brides-to-be waiting passively for Prince Charmings to request their "hands in marriage". For another, in an age when chivalry still has its positive romantic image, one might interpret these engagement scenarios as being welcome dramatic performances in which a contemporary woman can freely choose to step in or out.

Overall, the couples' interpretations were crucial in communicating the idea that their weddings were primarily public markers celebrating their new identities as married couples. While being aware of denominational differences within the context of Montreal Jewry, they were more proud of being part of a wider non-denominational Jewish community. They expressed confidence about their relationships with their partners based on the fact that they had already lived together before they got married. They had already navigated into transformative passages, when they headed to unknown territories after leaving their parental homes. And, they probably experienced similar transformative passages when they fell in love and shared sexual intimacies. Thus, their weddings were primarily rites of identity and not rites of passage, except for the fact that they understood parenthood as belonging exclusively to the married state.

The couples interviewed were married by Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis between 1947 and 2001. Most of the material included in this chapter is based on interviews with twenty-six Jewish women and men married in Montreal between 1990 and 2001, and on sixteen interviews with Jewish men and women married between 1947 and 1970. In contrast to the rabbis who married them (as discussed in Chapter 6), and given the rabbis' clear dominance over the legal ritual gestures under the *chuppah*, the couples' voices reflected a less legalized but no less confident version of what a Jewish wedding is or should be. There is no doubt that the weddings described by these couples were Jewish, despite the lack of legal or *halachic* jargon used to describe them. These weddings belonged to them (just as their wedding rings belonged to them) and neither to the rabbis' who performed them nor to the parents' who helped finance them. Most of the couples successfully incorporated personal and public symbols of their love and identities in their wedding event. The importance of showing their identities was demonstrated, long after the event was over, through the use of photographs, videos, *Ketoubahs* displayed on living room walls, and rings worn on their hands.

Their rings and the entire wedding event were forms of gift-giving which the brides and grooms shared with each other and their invited guests, through which the identities of selves, families and communities were communicated. "It is clear that the presentation of a gift is an imposition of identity. Gifts are one of the ways in which the pictures that others have of us in their minds are transmitted" (Komter 1996: 69). When serious conflicts over wedding styles and plans did occur, however, the stronger identities

of those parents or rabbis who refused to compromise usually overpowered the wishes of the brides and grooms. These conflicts, which usually centered on the couple's wishes to stray from the traditions and identities of their rabbis or parents, pointed to an important element in contemporary wedding practices—couples wanted to express their own personal identity, lifestyle and values to a larger community. This was evident even if those needs were frustrated. As one mother expressed one year after her daughter's wedding, the memory of her daughter's stubborn reluctance to adhere to certain "traditional" wedding customs remained vividly clear. The mother who won the battle was more concerned in expressing her religious identity to a community whom she believed would frown upon her daughter's choices. Conflicts that arise in planning weddings become signs for predicting what will happen afterwards. Rituals not only reflect the present and past, but they predict and embody the future.

A couple's Jewishness remained bound to particular gestures and symbols which they understood according to their own world of Jewish experiences. This world did not always reflect the beliefs or practices of their parents who were more or less observant than they were. For the majority of couples interviewed, hearing Hebrew sounds at their weddings was more meaningful than knowing the legal and religious significance of what these sounds meant. Yet, for a rare few, these Hebrew words could be recited without hesitation. The interviews with the couples expressed a diversity and variety of Jewishness and Jewish identities.

At the level of Jewish law, all the weddings in this study subscribed and adhered to the same formula. At the level of ritual, all the weddings described enacted more or

less the same script of gestures and symbols. At the level of the individual performers, all the weddings represented different casts of emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and psychologically unique actors. Yet, commonalities still could be found within this cast of individuals who all moved from a single to a married state.

What remained in common for the majority of the couples interviewed, in stark contrast to the legal focus of the rabbis, was their lack of memory surrounding the ritual gestures that took place under the *chuppah*. Having little memory of ritual events, however, must not be construed as a negative factor. The couples did not fail a "ritual test" by not remembering what they said or did. The interviews and their memories (or lack of) simply reinforced the dramatic difference between their roles as principal rather than secondary participants in the ritual process. The rabbis, as secondary participants, remembered more because they were directing the ritual. (There may be another factor contributing to this lack of clear memory as to what happened under the *chuppah*. As the rabbis indicated in their interviews, the couples generally did not know Hebrew. Remembering words from a language that one had little contact with partially explains this ritual amnesia. The other factor may be that both brides and grooms had little previous synagogue ritual experience.)

Lack of ritual memory could be better understood if ritual were interpreted as a creative or artistic endeavour. Creative activity akin to ritual activity can be compared to those powerful moments when our (thinking) mind oscillates between thought and stillness. "Thought cannot exist without consciousness, but consciousness does not need thought. When a creative solution is needed, you oscillate every few minutes or so

between thought and stillness, between mind and no-mind. No-mind is consciousness without thought. Only in that way is it possible to think creatively, because only in that way does thought have any real power. All true artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness. The mind then gives form to the creative impulse or insight" (Tolle 1997: 19-20). When interpreted as a creative activity and process rather than a perfunctory ceremony, ritual meaning then becomes intrinsically tied to the way the performers or ritual artists enact their artistic roles and handle creatively their ritual objects. Two such ritual objects played significant roles in helping the couples recall that they were in fact married.

Considering the lack of *halachic* power over the legally disputed gesture of the bride giving the groom a ring, all the couples except for one exchanged two rings under the *chuppah* and pointed to their wedding rings as evidence that they were married. Most of the couples, again with little knowledge of the legal contents of their *Ketoubah*, pointed to this visible sign as an undeniable fact that some definitive moment had occurred and had altered their status from being single to married. However, more poignant than being just reminders of their new legal and social identities, these symbols, especially the rings, mirrored deeper emotional meanings and heartfelt ties. In addition to these visible symbols, personalized photo albums and professionally produced videos helped relive their wedding day moments that for many left no conscious markings or clear images in their own minds. Unlike their parents and grandparents, every second of their wedding day, including the previously prohibited sacred *chuppah* space that was off-

limits to 1960s photographers, was now just as retrievable and memorable as Hollywood scenes replayed on home videos in the comfort of their living rooms.

Creating some faithful replica of the fantasies of a dominant popular culture while imprinting segments of one's lived reality upon the whole wedding event seemed to characterize many of the couples' views. They created "romantic" gala weddings predominantly for the purpose of expressing their identities as devotees of a larger popular cult and as particular individualized couples in a world defined by their education, money, career, family and Jewish ties. From the couples' perspective, then, contemporary Jewish weddings primarily reflected the reality of their lived-in worlds. These worlds could be said to be dominated by values represented in popular culture and their families and less influenced by direct contact with religious affiliations which only periodically touched their lives. For the Jewish couples who have exchanged rings under the *chuppah* , they have made their weddings into *events-that-re-present* (Handelman 1990: 28-41).

As *events-that-re-present*, a wedding ritual is a type of public event "where emphasis is more upon symbolic acknowledgments and demonstration of a social situation than it is on procedures for altering that situation" (Handelman 1990: 41). Clearly, for most of the couples, their weddings were primarily rites of identity and not "transformative" rites of passage where external forces coming from the opposite sex would somehow make them into radically new human beings.

If the rabbis' aim was to create weddings that were essentially *events-that-model* —in other words, events that teach the normative values of Judaism—the couples' aim

reflected quite different needs. For the rabbis, weddings as *events-that-model* were "neither haphazard nor aimless, [they] have specific directions. Given this anticipation [a ritual event] indexes or previews a hypothetical future condition that will be brought into being, and it provides procedures that will actualize this act of imagination" (Handelman 1990: 28). Essentially, for the rabbis, weddings would be seen as being "transformative" in the sense of being teleological and structured towards a specific ordered goal—to change single individuals into future married parents within a Jewish religious framework.

Both Durkheim and Handelman present useful ideas for understanding contemporary weddings as *events-that-re-present*. Durkheim's idea about religion and rites as collective *représentations* relating to human beings' creations of an ideal world, "with a sort of higher dignity" than the real profane world, accurately describes contemporary Jewish weddings. (Lukes 1973: 463). Despite their differences as to what constitutes the ideal, both rabbis and couples want weddings to communicate ideals that suggest "a sort of higher dignity".

As *events-that-re-present,* wedding rituals raise possibilities, questions and doubts about the legitimacy or the validity of social forms, within both the secular and sacred worlds that constitute the couples' lived-in worlds. The double-ring wedding ceremony is such an example of a ritual that raises questions and doubts about the legitimacy of social forms. Yet, despite its disputed legal status, it has not diminished; on the contrary, it has become the norm. Moreover, those who were responsible for such dramatic change did not come from the religious leadership who espoused certain "traditional" values of a

community, but from women and men who constituted living traditions and communities. Given the key role which community members play in the shaping of a tradition, the ethnographic and historic importance of recording the voices of couples as well as those of religious leaders brings to light the complex process of the nature and evolution of rituals and ritual symbols.

For purposes of organization, the excerpts from the interviews are categorized according to denominational affiliation. Unlike the rabbis, this categorization does not necessarily reflect the couple's ardent commitment to that denomination but rather their affiliation or parents' affiliation to a particular rabbi or synagogue, or choice of a desirable room for the purposes of performing their wedding. And, unlike the rabbis who exhibited their denominational differences through the precise ordering of ritual gestures under the *chuppah* (as was shown in Chart A in Chapter 6), the couples could hardly remember the sequencing of gestures. For the majority of couples, being identified as Jewish took precedence over being Reform, Orthodox, Conservative or Reconstructionist. Following this line of thought, the denominational categories used in this chapter only emphasize the lack of denominational concerns which preoccupied the couples getting married. The excerpts will also focus on the meanings of wedding rings for both bride and groom and how their engagement ring contrasted sharply to the egalitarian values embedded in the second ring-giving gesture.

Reform Weddings

The following five excerpts demonstrate that both single and double ring ceremonies have been performed at the Reform temple in Montreal since the 1950s. Interestingly, the Reform temple presently performs more single ring ceremonies than some Orthodox and Conservative synagogues in the city. In addition, the Reform temple in Montreal is the only Jewish synagogue that will perform mixed marriages. As the third and fourth excerpts below will show, however, mixed marriages where one partner does not convert still present legal problems or loopholes for the married couple. But awareness or knowledge of these *halachic* problems does not preoccupy all couples in the same way. In other words, some couples are more aware of these legal loopholes than others. Once again, the homogeneity between the denominations emerges through a relatively uniform Jewish wedding ritual, remembered by the same central Jewish symbols—*chuppah*, cup of wine, *ketoubah*, veil, rings, glass breaking. Two other important aspects surfaced in these interviews: first, the differences between the groom's and bride's memories of the same wedding event; and second, the differences between the rabbis' idealism and the couples' realism concerning Jewish marriage. Not all couples have long-lasting loving relationships, as the second excerpt shows. Innuendos of sexual infidelity and misunderstood love surround the discussion of a thirty-year wedding ring sitting in a bank vault, while another couple revealed that pregnancy precipitated their mixed marriage after years of living together with irreconcilable family differences. Failing, however, to bring Greek Orthodox and Jewish families together, this couple's relationship has endured the years of religious intolerance of both their families.

Finally another couple who also had a mixed marriage (where one partner is not Jewish and did not convert) and who were more aware of the legal problems involved with their mixed status, expressed both joy and frustration concerning their wedding event. However, all the informants, including those who had mixed marriages, had no doubt that their wedding was Jewish and different from a civil wedding. Because they all defined their weddings as being Jewish, based on the wedding symbols used and not on their own level of religious observance, they all concluded that their weddings were religious.

1954 Wedding at Temple Emmanu-el

> Husband: "Rabbi Stern married us. I was married in Poland in 1944 at the city office and only got a stamp on my passport saying that I was married. I wanted a religious wedding when we came to Canada so we got married at the Temple. I remember breaking a glass, saying some words, probably in English and giving my wife a wedding ring. Yes, we both exchanged rings, plain gold bands. No the rings were not from Poland, we bought them in Montreal, yes we still wear them" (Interview: May 25, 1998).

1971 Wedding at Temple Emmanu-el

> Wife: "Rabbi Stern and Rabbi Bloomstone co-officiated at our wedding. It was raining. I was very nervous waiting outside the hall, when we signed the book. No, no veiling. It was a single ring ceremony, my husband did not want to wear jewelry and did not want to wear one. We both said the same things, but I don't remember, we repeated what the rabbi said in English. The ring was placed on my index finger, right hand, I think. I wore it for a couple of years, then I decided not

to wear it anymore, since he wasn't wearing a ring. Why should I? It's in the vault at the bank. I was never attached to that particular ring, in fact I was more attached to a ring he gave me on Valentine's Day one year, it had two match sticks, I still wear it once in a while. In those days, no photographs were taken in the sanctuary. I just went to a wedding, it was awful, all the lights, videos. I still would not want a camera today, it's a ritual, a place that should not be interrupted with lights and cameras. The ring is a symbol, no not a symbol but more of an information carrier to other members of society that the person wearing it is married. My husband wasn't wearing one, if he had decided to wear one, I probably would have also. I would have felt as if I was breaking a trust or agreement if I did not wear a ring and he was" (Interview: May 25, 1998).

Husband: "Rabbis Stern and Bloomstone married us. It was sunny. Yes, she wore a veil which covered her face, to her shoulders. The whole event was nerve-wracking. After all it was my first wedding. It was a single ring ceremony. I gave my wife her ring on her left hand, fourth finger. A friend of mine made it, JB at the Drummond Medical Building. He's still in business. Squares, indentations, modern very fashionable for those days, wide yellow gold. No, she doesn't wear it anymore, I don't know where it is. I repeated what the rabbi said, in English and Hebrew, probably. I don't wear jewelry, my *Bar Mitzvah* ring, I wore for only one week. It's just a ring, we didn't even have an engagement ring. No veiling, is that Jewish? More women among our friends wear wedding rings. Maybe if there was less fashion with wedding rings, people wouldn't get fed up with it. No, I don't think her not wearing it has anything to do with me not wearing one, she just got tired of wearing it. Rings for women were signs of them being chattel, of course" (Interview May 25, 1998).

After the husband's interview, the wife added:

> The Wife: "About his friend the jeweler, tell the women who go see him to wear a chastity belt". [Her husband retorted, laughing] "He's a jeweler, he likes fine things, everything that's fine, including whatever he sees. And if the woman is wearing a wedding ring, all the better, she won't talk, no one will know" (Interview: May 25, 1998).

1990 Wedding at Temple Emmanu-el

> Wife: "We had a twenty-one year relationship when we got married. We had lived together since 1987. I was four months pregnant when we decided to get married. It took about six weeks to plan the wedding. Thanks to a great priest and Rabbi Lerner. We had two weddings, one at a Greek Orthodox Church and the other at Temple Emmanu-el, so that both camps would be happy. Separate families attended separate weddings. The Jewish wedding was slightly larger, the first one only had a dinner afterwards at Gibby's. We bought two gold rings and used the same rings for both ceremonies. We signed two sets of books. I wore no veil and there was no veiling at the Reform temple. We exchanged rings under the *chuppah*. He spoke in both Hebrew and English. I know Hebrew, so I know that I did not speak in Hebrew, only in English. I cried during the whole ring part and speaking part, call me 'racoon bride' because my mascara ran all over my face and eyes. I can't remember any of the words that we said under the *chuppah* and I don't remember which finger the ring was put on. My husband has tried to wear his ring but because he is a surgeon, he has to remove it all the time. So, he keeps it in his wallet. He even tried attaching a cord to it to his OR (green surgeon pants) but one day forgot to take it off and found the ring in the laundry. After that he keeps it in his wallet. We now have three children. I feel the ring means that now I am married. My husband did not convert but I feel that the children have the best of two worlds, Passover and Easter, *Hannukah* and Christmas. Our marriage was

always being postponed because of irreconcilable differences between [our] two families. My mother is Orthodox, although she has changed over the years" (Interview May 26, 1998).

1998 Wedding in Vermont

Wife: "Rabbi Lerner married us at an historic inn in Vermont, that's where my husband grew up. We tried as much as possible to schedule the wedding so that all our family and friends could attend, especially my brother who is Lubavitch and lives in New York and would not be able to travel during certain holiday periods. My husband is Catholic but had long lost his religious fervour. And, although he attended the thirteen week mandatory pre-wedding course (for non-Jews) I did not want him to convert knowing how he felt about religion. Some aspects of the wedding preparations did frustrate me, especially the wording of my *Ketoubah.* I had to submit several versions to the rabbi since I was told that I could not use the legal formula 'according to the laws of Moses and Israel'. I still feel saddened about this, frustrated that I could not appropriate the words of Judaism at a critical time in my life. But I was grateful that the rabbi was marrying us, so I had to concede. But I still say that my wedding was definitely a Jewish one and I am sure that my husband thinks that also. As to what actually happened under the *chuppah*, I can't remember the words spoken or when the rings were given. But I do remember adding the *Yichud* part, which the rabbi had not insisted on. We also had two cups for the wine and two glasses that we broke. It was the most perfect day that I have experienced. We both have still not seen the video, because that will alter our memory of that day. Even though we lived together for eight years, I wanted a ritualized event to mark our life together. I made the wedding canopy which was a *tallis*. I did have a veiling at the beginning of the ceremony, but the rabbi did not want my mother or my mother-in-law to

break a plate, as that would constitute a legal betrothal which could not take place since my husband was not Jewish" (Interview: July 4, 2001).

Husband: "Our wedding was very emotional which I attribute to the rabbi's words under the *chuppah.* I cried throughout the ceremony. Yes, my wedding was definitely Jewish, even though I never converted. We broke two glasses as an egalitarian gesture. And our rings represent a symbol of our union and more specifically our exclusivity to each other. I didn't want to wear a ring, but she insisted and so I do now every day. I think wedding rings should be plain and simple. For me, the most memorable part of the day was the signing of our marriage certificate, the *ketoubah,* which took place under the *chuppah* after the ceremony was over. I was very impressed with the rabbi, who hardly knew me but spoke so personably and with such insight" (Interview July 4, 2001).

A few months later, the wife added these remarks in a second interview:

Wife: "My Orthodox friends who love me dearly still had a reserved feeling about my marriage, for them I was not really married. Even in the eyes of many Reformers, I was not married in the best possible manner, because my husband had not converted. Although Reform encourage and accept mixed marriages, their ideal is to have the non-Jewish partner convert. Their full acceptance of converts, however, is unique compared to Orthodox Judaism. But, my Orthodox friends would use their reservation about my non-marriage to my advantage, saying that if anything happened to merit a divorce, my illegal Jewish marriage would facilitate this event. I could more easily re-marry since I was not married in the first place" (Interview: December 15, 2001).

1998 Wedding at Temple Emmanu-el

Wife: "The highpoint was the exchange of vows. What was said? Well, you know the standard words. But what was especially nice were the words from our own *Ketoubah*, it is a modern version of a *Ketoubah*. We got it from Florida, Boca. I had it sent to me over the net, e-mail. I had the words checked and double-checked. It was given to me during the ceremony. The lowpoint, well there were two. One was not really low but sad. We had a ceremony for having Peter's father who had died become present with us. It was moving but sad. The other was an awkward moment when one of Peter's friends who was not invited into the rabbi's study appeared. We had only invited friends and a few close friends to attend. We didn't ask him to leave, that would have ruined the day. I was veiled in the rabbi's study and we signed the book. It was a double-ring ceremony, rings were placed on our left hands, fourth finger. The vows were said in English, maybe parts were in Hebrew. I said the same as him, I think. But one thing did occur, Peter called me 'my Lord' instead of 'my wife'. My ring is solid gold, white gold; his is tri-colored, yellow for love, pink for friendship and white for fidelity. The inspiration came from Cartier where we bought the ring, but it is not a Cartier ring, but the idea is a Cartier idea or inspiration. My engagement ring has the same three colors, another Cartier inspiration. He wears it everyday, never takes it off. I wear mine everyday, but I take it off at night. I always wear my rings when I go outside into the world. My mother wore a ring, my father, I am not sure. The wedding ring means a symbol of our union together" (Interview: April 9, 1998).

Husband: "We got married at 6:30 on a Thursday night. There were no lowpoints, my whole wedding day was a highpoint. There was a slightly awkward moment when a baby cried and I did not hear the rabbi after he said 'Will you take this

woman to be your Lord?'. I thought that was what he said, and so I said 'I will take her as my Lord'. And the rabbi said, 'that will do in a pinch'. Also slipping the ring on her finger was a highpoint. Even before the ceremony began, the veiling of the bride was very special. She said the same words as I.did. No, there was no *Ketoubah*.. My ring is tri-colored, pink, yellow and white, all fused together. Love is pink, friendship is gold and white is fidelity. Her engagement ring is the same as my wedding band. The wedding ring means a shared commitment, a symbol of our love and friendship to grow together. She wears it everyday, so do I, but she takes it off at night, I do not" (Interview: April 9, 1998).

Orthodox Weddings

The following six excerpts represent the voices of couples and one mother of a bride. In the case where the mother was featured, her influence was clearly felt in the way the bride and groom should be presented to the larger community, more specifically in the way they would process down the aisle to make a grand entrance. This mother in particular, unlike most of the informants interviewed, expressed a real concern to mark the Orthodoxy of the wedding and distinguish it from non-Jewish weddings. In this case, the mother's wishes predominated over the daughter's as to who should process down the aisle and thus changed the style of the wedding. It represented more the mother's values and lifestyle than the couple's. This interview also included comments that were made by the same mother about Jewish male co-workers who wore wedding rings. Because the interview was conducted at her work place, these other comments became part of the text.

There was only one Orthodox couple who insisted on a single ring ceremony. This was of interest considering the request did not come from the rabbi but from the couple. In addition, this couple exercised considerable control over their ritual event and deviated from the prescribed Orthodox script when the groom decided at one point to show the bride her *Ketoubah* before he was supposed to. The differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardic rites became much more apparent with the Orthodox couples, where the term "mixed wedding" meant Ashkenazi and Sephardic, not Jewish and non-Jewish. They never used the word "Orthodox" to refer to their weddings, but only the word "Jewish". Once again, as with the Reform weddings, the *Ketoubah* was mentioned more frequently by the younger generation (those married within the last 10 years) than by those who were married from the 1940s to the 1970s. Also noteworthy was the description of one bride who saw her father in the role of a rabbi because he sang the blessings. The place varied, just as it did with Reform weddings. Synagogues or hotel resorts were both used. A general sense of formality and striving to do things correctly colored the contemporary weddings in comparison to those described by couples married in the 1940s . The words "event" and "perfection" come to mind in summing up the way today's weddings looked like.

1947 Wedding at an Orthodox Shul on St. Urbain Street

> Husband: "I was married in 1947 in Montreal on St. Urbain Street, at a shul, which is no longer there by Rabbi Doniger. My wife also wears a wedding ring, and she gave me mine under the *chuppah*. The jeweler's mark is inside the ring, 'Shecter' [Shectman]" (Interview: May 19, 1998).

1971 Wedding in Rabbi Newman's Study in Montreal

Wife: "I was married in the rabbi's study, not under a *chuppah*, not a religious ceremony. It was only a civil ceremony. So, to make it more complete, a religious ceremony was performed one year later in the States. Yes, under a *chuppah* and only one ring was used. There is no such thing as a double-ring ceremony. [She then pointed to a ring on her co-worker's hand.] That ring that you are wearing has no *bracha*, there is no meaning to it. It is sentimental, emotional but really has no Jewish significance. [He was quite upset by her remark and said: 'Right, according to you, according to me and the other person who gave it to me, there is a lot of meaning'.] I just like to tease him about religious matters. This is my first wedding ring (pointing to a diamond and a wedding band worn on her small finger of her left hand). My *chuppah* ring, that one is really beautiful, I keep it in the vault at the bank."[She continued to describe her daughter's wedding which took place in New York last year.]

As Mother of the bride: "My daughter wanted to add a lot of details that I did not think belonged in a traditional Jewish wedding. I wanted the grandparents to process down the aisle so that people who never met the whole family would know who these people were. My daughter and her future mother-in-law did not want all these relatives to process down the aisle. They wanted friends who were not part of the family to process down the aisle. Since the grandparents are still alive, they should be the ones to walk with the rest of the family. I did not want outsiders to walk with the family. Also, my daughter suggested that a programme be printed and given out to all members of the wedding. I absolutely refused for this to happen. For my daughter, she thought that explaining Jewish wedding symbols would be appropriate and it would let people know what was going on. But I told her 'What is this? Some sort of entertainment? Some kind of event just

like Place des Arts where you need to know what is going on, who the actors or players are? Or, what the meaning is for those who are not familiar with the language or practices? Is this for gentiles who don't know what's going on? And why should they know? Or if you are Jewish and you don't know, that's your problem. Maybe they should find out what a Jewish wedding means?' Today everybody has to know, has to analyze, can't they just do anything because it is part of a tradition? They don't have to know everything, they don't have to analyze everything. In the end what happened? No programme and the grandparents walked down the aisle. This is a crazy world we live in now" (Interview: May 1, 2001).

1994 Wedding at Chateau Royale in Laval

Wife: "I was not married in a shul. I was married at Chateau Royale because of their kosher kitchen. The rabbi was Orthodox and I did ask for a double-ring ceremony but the rabbi absolutely refused. He had no reason except that he would not do it. Neither I nor my husband pursued the issue, although I think that I should have. I did end up giving him a ring after the ceremony, but it wasn't the same thing. I wanted to give him the ring during the ceremony. But I would be very surprised to hear that there are double-ring ceremonies in Orthodox weddings in Montreal. I didn't speak during the ceremony, but the rabbi did ask me if I wanted to say something. I was much too nervous to speak. I would have fainted if I spoke. But giving him the ring without speaking would have been more meaningful than not giving him the ring at all or speaking. My husband observes high holidays, so I do because of him, not for me. When I have children, I may become more observant. My grandmother was very observant, my mother to some extent, she tries to light shabbas candles. No, I don't. I do not keep a kosher home but I do not eat pork. Actually I don't eat any meat, I'm vegetarian. My husband

eats pork. Well, I do feel bad about not pushing the issue with the rabbi about the ring, but he was a relative. So I couldn't say much. I am even surprised that I married a Jewish boy. I went out with a non-Jew for five years" (Interview: February 19, 1996).

1997 Wedding at Beth Tikvah Synagogue

Wife: " No, I did not speak under the *chuppah*, even though the rabbi said I could have. But I did not want to. I wanted Jason to do everything. I wanted him to give me the ring, to speak, to give me the *Ketoubah*. It was the rabbi who married us. No, actually we married each other. No, I don't think that Jason married me and I did not marry him because I did not give him a ring. You know the rabbi said that I could have given Jason a ring under the *chuppah*, and I did give him one but not under the *chuppah*. I gave him his ring in the bridal chamber, when we were alone. But the best moment of the wedding was when I circled him. I was beaming at him and he at me, it was so wonderful. And I remember exactly what Jason said. He said '*Harei at mekuddeshet li be tabbah'at zo ke-dat-Moshe ve-Yisrael*'. The other important part was when he gave me the *Ketoubah*. We chose our own with our own parchment, words, calligraphy and art work. But I had not seen the final product. Can you imagine, he saw it first, he and the other men in that room before the ceremony where I could not go. And then when the moment came under the *chuppah*, he wanted to know if I liked it, so he did not say anything but opened it, unscrolled it without the rabbi or anyone else knowing that he would do this, they seemed a bit bothered because it took time and he and I just did not care. This was our moment, he wanted to know if I approved of the final product. I looked and smiled finally. We had everybody waiting" (Interview: May 15, 1998).

2000 Wedding at Sheraton Four Points Hotel

Wife: "We were married with three rabbis, two Sepharde and one Ashkenazi. Not at the synagogue. It was a beautiful outdoor wedding, under a big tent and the weather was perfect. We were engaged for one year, also held at the Sheraton. I was expecting a ring. He actually designed it himself. I got him a watch which he picked himself since he is so fussy. My ring, though, was totally his design. I think the most memorable part of my wedding day was when he came to pick me up. It was his reaction when he saw me. He is not usually an emotional guy, not too expressive. But at that moment he was very emotional. So for me seeing that emotion was the highlight, his reaction to me. The second was under the *chuppah*, the whole ceremony. And the third was the whole day, I felt like Cinderella. The rabbi had told us that it was very important to know what was going on under the *chuppah*, that we understand what we are saying. So I was very concentrated and very present when the ritual was happening. We don't circle, that is an Ashkenazi tradition which we do not do and my *Ketoubah* is sung, and there is only one ring under the *chuppah*. Before the ceremony when we signed the papers, I gave him his ring. But I don't remember the words under the *chuppah*. My husband said something in Hebrew. He put the ring on my index finger but I don't remember what hand. I remember a glass being broken but I don't know what that meant. I wear a wedding ring because it is perfectly round, representing eternity, no ending like our marriage. I never take it off, even when I was swollen when I was pregnant, I kept it on. For me the engagement ring meant a 'promise ring'. In our religion, being engaged is as important as being married. If you cheated while you were engaged it would be like adultery, just as if you were married. My husband wears his ring and it is his choice. We did the planning together, my husband was very involved. Both sides of the family got involved. My wedding was Jewish because I went to the Mikveh with my mother and my wedding was on a Sunday.

And, on the Friday we had a special Shabbas dinner and on Saturday my husband read from the Torah. Also, my wedding was Jewish because two rabbis were present and there were witnesses, and I had a *Ketoubah.* I would consider walking down the aisle as being non-Jewish, I know that in Israel it is not done. And I would consider the mixed dancing that we did was not Jewish, although we did start with the Jewish *hora.* The food was kosher, but I am not strictly kosher and I do not observe Shabbas, unlike my brother who is very religious and is strictly kosher" (Interview: August 6, 2001).

2001 Wedding at Chateau Vaudreuil

Wife: "Rabbi Zeitz and Rabbi Kramer officiated. I can't remember who read the *Ketoubah* and I can't remember who gave the small speech. We didn't want a synagogue wedding, we wanted something different. I don't go to synagogue but my father is very involved with the synagogue. So out of respect we invited the rabbi from my father's synagogue. And my father sang the blessings, so it was very special. It was like my father was marrying us, like he was one of the rabbis officiating. We loved the Chateau, the weather was warm and the water was in front of us. I stared at the water the whole time. It was like a Hollywood fairy tale. Since there is no kosher food service, we had to bring in our own kosher food from El Morrocco. I was engaged in October but the party was officially in January when all our family was in town. I did not expect it so soon. He gave me a ring which he bought in Paris. It was a bit too small, we had it fixed. It is a solitaire on platinum. My parents and I gave him a watch and I received a watch from his parents too. My wedding was the best day of my life. My dad sang the blessings with violin music playing, it was incredible. We listened more than we spoke. We both spoke in Hebrew after the rabbi cued us, we didn't have to memorize anything. Zeitz is so good that way. Bit by bit, we repeat after him. I

remember turning around three times, drinking some wine and there was a broken glass. I thought that I was wrapping my husband up when I turned around, like a protection, not suffocating him. I know that I received my ring under the *chuppah* but I don't remember if I gave him his ring. Yes, I think I did when I said some words. My ring is simpler, his is more decorative. I know that I didn't wear any jewelry under the *chuppah*, the rabbi told me that I couldn't. So I removed my bracelet, watch and diamond. I kept my earrings and necklace. His mother did not mix too much with the plans. My aunt and mother did most of the planning with me. We had no arguments. The whole ceremony was Jewish and even the reception is Jewish because traditional Jewish music was played. Just like Italian or Greek music makes those weddings Italian or Greek. I also know that I am at a Jewish wedding when it is late in the afternoon, around 5 or 5:30. The food also tells me that it is Jewish. Even though I had an Italian band, 'Giovantu', they played Jewish music. But I guess there are similarities, like the sweet table. And I know he took off his *kippah* when we were dancing.

About our rings, well I didn't know until the rabbi told us that Marshall had no choice in giving me a ring but that I had a choice. It is a contract for him. Yet, we see in the movies two rings given at weddings and we think 'that's what a wedding is about, giving rings'. My dad doesn't wear a ring, but he says it itches him. Just the other night, I forgot to wear my rings. Marshall commented that it looked as if I was not married or that he was out with an unmarried woman. Marshall said that now that he is wearing a wedding ring, more women would probably be interested in him. He is very proud about wearing it" (Interview: August 6, 2001).

Conservative Weddings

Like those couples from Reform and Orthodox congregations, the couples who married within Conservative Judaism in Montreal had little memory of any *halachic* words spoken under the *chuppah.* Moreover, like the Orthodox but different from the Reform couples, Conservative couples were faced with the obligation of going to the *Mikveh.* With one particular Conservative rabbi, this option was presented to the couples in his congregation in a most unusual way. Rather than have the couples go to the official *Mikvehs* in the city, he suggested to both bride and groom that they go to a lake, north of the city, and immerse themselves in this natural body of water with the intention of purifying themselves for their marital life ahead of them. Because no official paper is required in the city to prove whether a couple has gone to a *Mikveh*, many couples do not go, or if they do it will probably be the only time in their lives that they will do so. Although denominationalism was not a main concern for the couples who were interviewed, it was with the Conservative couples that the topic came up the most.

A mixture of family denominational affiliations surfaced more often with the Conservative couples who often chose rabbis from different denominations to officiate at their weddings. Egalitarian issues also became more evident with the Conservative weddings, partly because in the late 1990s Montreal Conservative synagogues were undergoing dramatic changes. Deciding whether their congregations should accept egalitarian *minyans* or become more Orthodox than Conservadox was a challenge faced by several communities in the city at that time. Finally, a sense of a fluid mobile Montreal

Jewish community emerged where denominational affiliations have less importance than simply being Jewish.

1960 Wedding at Shaare Zedek

Wife: "I was married in Montreal in 1960, where Rabbi Friedman is today, and the wedding was a double-ring ceremony. But I can't remember when the second ring was given. I know my husband said something, and I was silent. My son also got a ring under the *chuppah*. I attend Beth Zion (Orthodox shul) but because my husband belongs to Shaare Zedek, we go there for high holidays. I'm a member of the Women's Auxiliary at Beth Zion, you know you don't have to belong to a particular synagogue to belong to a women's auxiliary" (Interview: March 30, 1997).

1996 Wedding at Shaare Zion

Husband: "We were married by Rabbi Moses and Rabbi Zeitz. Because it was Rena's family synagoguge we were married at Shaare Zion. We were engaged for about a year and a half before we got married. For me, my whole wedding day was memorable, from the picture-taking in the morning till the dancing at the end. I cannot remember the exact words I said under the *chuppah* but we both repeated traditional words pledging our devotion and responsibility towards each other, or at least that is the way I felt it happened. I gave her a ring under the *chuppah*, but she didn't. I always wear my wedding ring because I am proud to have entered into the institution of marriage with Rena. For me, the ring is a sign of our bonding and life-long devotion to each other. My ring has grooves along the edges, but hers is a simple smooth gold ring. I felt that my wedding was Jewish because it incorporated Jewish traditions under the *chuppah* like the blessings and

the breaking of a glass. Most of the preparations for the wedding were done by Rena and our mothers. I think that all weddings, Jewish and non-Jewish have something in common, a gathering of family to celebrate the start of a couple's long and happy life together" (Interview: July 31, 2001).

Wife: "I planned most of the wedding. I got engaged in 1995, yes I was expecting it to happen at some point. We both chose my diamond ring. On my wedding day, I remember feeling happy and excited. Under the *chuppah* remains a blur. I don't remember much. I remember the veiling, drinking from a cup and Mitchell said something in Hebrew. I knew it was Hebrew because he stumbled a lot with the words. I don't remember getting a *Ketoubah*. I remember Mitchell broke a glass. Yes, I did receive a ring. It signifies a concrete physical evidence of our love. And, yes, I wear it all the time. Yes, Mitchell wears his, no he does not protest. Our rings are plain gold. I gave Mitchell his ring after the ceremony, at the reception. Mine was placed on the wrong hand [her right index finger]. And then I moved it to the correct hand [her left hand]. During the ceremony it did not feel right on the right index finger. The whole issue of not giving Mitchell his ring during the ceremony was that we felt it would not be appropriate with an Orthodox rabbi officiating to do so. Rabbi Moses was new in town and so he did not know how Rabbi Zeitz would react. We just followed Rabbi Moses' cues, but it was not such a great idea. I was very surprised to find out that when my sister got married a couple of years after me, that Rabbi Zeitz allowed her to give the second ring under the *chuppah*. I do remember what I said, though, '*Ani ledodi, vedodi li*'. I did feel awkward though saying those words at the reception, with all the noise and waiters and people eating. I know my wedding was Jewish primarily because of the place, it took place in a synagogue and because Hebrew was used in the ceremony. I think what makes it different from a non-Jewish wedding was

also the *bedekung* (*b'kekin nog,* the veiling). But I had not really thought about the similarities or differences" (Interview: July 1, 2001).

1996 Wedding at Adat Re'im

Husband: "I was brought up Orthodox and my children went to Hebrew school. I am divorced and am about to be married in a Conservative synagogue because my girlfriend has belonged to a Conservative synagogue since she was little. But she doesn't practice. Now though she will have to Kosher the kitchen and observe kosher in the house, otherwise my parents will not be able to visit and eat with us. When I was married twenty-five years ago in Calgary, we did have a double-ring ceremony. My parents who were married in Winnipeg did not, about fifty years ago. I also remember that at the time of my wedding, our synagogue was fighting over the issue of separate seating. The majority finally decided to maintain the status quo. I don't remember whether my wife said one word under the whole ceremony, that was twenty-five years ago. I do remember the rabbi telling us that we were married after signing some document in his office before we went out to exchange rings or break a glass. I got the impression that all the rest of the ceremony was symbolic but not legal. The wedding ring signified that we were married and now considered together. I believed and trusted in the rabbi that everything was done right and correct. Giving the *Ketoubah* to my wife was only a public showing of what was actually already legally done. I thought there was a wider gap between Orthodox and Conservative, but I find they are much closer than I thought. My children don't care too much about observing, even if I did send them to Hebrew school" (Interview: February 18, 1996).

Wife: "I did not know that women could not speak under the *chuppah*, during the wedding ceremony. And I did not know anything about single-ring ceremonies or

that only one ring was the way it was done. If I am not allowed to speak at my wedding, then I will join Reform, or I will not get married in a synagogue. I want to give a ring and speak at the same time, no way will I be quiet. I am not even sure what our rabbi allows, I will have to soon find out" (Interview: February 18, 1996).

Their wedding which took place four months after this interview did occur in a synagogue and their Conservative rabbi did allow her to speak. But he did not allow her to speak the exact same words as did her husband. She said, "You are sanctified unto me with this ring", but did not say "according to the laws of Moses and Israel". They both circled each other and they both broke glasses, which years later her husband would say never happened.

1996 Wedding at Beth-El

Husband: "I don't remember much under the *chuppah*. I think I placed a ring on her index finger, but I am not sure. I don't remember if she was wearing her diamond ring. I remember the veiling but I did not like the Rabbi's tone. He was too somber and talkative, not sensitive enough to emotions or aesthetics, not very spiritual. He just talked too much. I don't really remember what I said, but it was brief. I probably said the same thing as Alyssa did '*Ani ledodi*'. When I received the ring, which must have been after my prayer to her, she said '*Ani ledodi*'. I bought her an engagement ring for $3000 and two gold bands and another diamond ring for $2000 from a diamond dealer in Montreal. The engagement ring meant a promise to marry, confirming our marriage. The gold means finality, well not like the end but a partnership for life, a beginning as well. I don't want to

sound chauvinistic, but really she belongs to me and I to her, we belong to each other, we own each other. Both my parents wear wedding rings. It was Alyssa's choice to not circle me, she said she felt it reminded her of women in Judaism that were secondary to their husbands, trying always to please them, like those Lubavitchers, women who are secluded. But I think she was just afraid to trip on her gown or train or get dizzy. I did not care about the circling, but the *mikveh* was not negotiable. Also, I felt that Alyssa's family took more time than my family for the speeches at the reception. I think that the most difficult part of the wedding was this political family part at the reception of who should speak and for how long.[At this point they began to argue and he admitted that his brother did take a long time for his speech, and she admitted that her mother and grandfather also took a long time.]There is one thing that has bothered me, though, since the wedding. I spoke to the rabbi just a couple of weeks ago, it's about our *Ketoubah* but I don't really want to talk about it" (Interview: June 25, 1997).

Wife: "Steven's uncle from New Jersey married us, Rabbi Katz just co-officiated. About the *Ketoubah,* well this is the story. When we had it framed, the framer who was Orthodox and knowledgeable said that my Hebrew legal name was incorrect and so the *Ketoubah* needed to be corrected. Steven said the rabbi told him that he was making a big deal over nothing. But Steven is still not happy with the rabbi's answer. We got married at Beth-El because that's where I belong and Steven's parents got married there, even though Steven was Orthodox because his family moved away from Beth-El closer to Hudson with Rabbi Shoham. But Steven never liked Orthodox synagogues because as a child he was separated from his mother. He wanted his brother and father and mother to all sit together. It was also possible for Steven's uncle to marry us because he is a Conservative rabbi. It would have been problematic with an Orthodox synagogue and rabbi. For me the

highlight of my wedding was the double-ring ceremony and the fact that Steven's uncle was the rabbi, that made our ceremony more personal. For Steven, I know the breaking of the glass was the highlight. I thought the ceremony was too long, though, almost one hour under the *chuppah*. The video is three hours long, it was unbelievably too long. I did all the preparations, the invitations, the guest list. But we discussed everything along the way. My mother and Steven's mother helped. Both our parents paid for it. Our wedding album only cost $3000, but with no videos. They were done by our friends. It was a really low cost wedding, about $25,000. Steven insisted that I go to the *mikveh*. I debated it back and forth, and decided to go but never again. It was a nice way to start our marriage together, but for Steven it was more important. Most of our friends did not go, nor do we know any of our male friends who have gone. Under the *chuppah*, I remember receiving a ring and giving a ring, but I don't exactly remember when I gave it. I know he said something in Hebrew, I do not know. I said '*Ani ledodi*,' and Steven had these words embroidered on his *kippah*. I know that I received the ring on my index finger and that I was not allowed to wear my diamond ring. If there is a ring already on your finger it might look as if I was coerced and did not freely accept in front of witnesses to be married and therefore my consent would have been in doubt. The wedding ring must be smooth and have no bumps on it. [Steven's ring was braided and not smooth, but she did not mention his ring.] When we went to the bridal chamber, I put on the rest of my wedding ring, in total two gold bands and a diamond half-eternity ring in the middle, sandwiched, and my engagement ring. In total I wear all four rings every day. The ring means commitment, a symbol of our life together, our love, our life will go round and round, I know we will die but hopefully it will last forever. Steven does not like it when I go out without my rings. Once he did not have his ring, and we came back home to get it" (Interview: June 25, 1997).

Reconstructionist

The following three excerpts are similar to the others in that once more the memories of what was said or done remains obscure and muddled in the minds of the couples. With the first excerpt, the rabbi was interviewed as a husband in a couple and not in his role as rabbi. He could not remember the words that he or his wife spoke under the *chuppah*. However, while answering in his role as rabbi he remembered clearly what verbal formulae are uttered by the couples he marries under the *chuppah*. He, like the husbands he marries, could not remember what he said when he was center-stage under the *chuppah*. It would be the rabbi's wife who would remember what they both said and why her words were so important to her and not to him.

With the second excerpt, where two rabbis co-officiated, denominational identities were discussed by a wife in terms of which rabbi was more religious and spiritual, or in her words, more "Orthodox". She also described her long-time desire to wear that clear marker on her finger which defined who she was privately and publically. In the third excerpt a husband's wedding ring remains invisible and forgettable because it was never appropriated by the wife as the ring which she bought him.

1978 Reconstructionist Wedding

> Wife: "I was married eighteen years ago in a Reconstructionist synagogue. I said the mirror formula of my husband, except I did not say 'according to the law of Moses and Israel'. I was very aware of what I was saying, and I asked to say these words. I did not include 'according to the law of Moses and Israel' because it was not in the law of Moses and Israel what I was saying. I do not remember any other

woman in the Reconstructionist synagogue ever saying these words before me. I think I was the first, nor do I remember any other woman saying those words after me. It was very important for me to say '*Harei et mekuddeshet li*' because I wanted to sanctify the relationship in an equal manner" (Interview: February 22, 1996).

1996 Wedding at Fritz's Farm

Husband: "We had a single-ring ceremony, no we definitely did not exchange rings under the *chuppah*. I have had this ring since I was sixteen years old. [He did not remember that he took it off under the *chuppah* and his wife put it back on his finger as his symbolic wedding ring.] I think I said 'I do' and repeated some words in Hebrew after the rabbi. I think we spoke at the same time. Her wedding ring means infinity, that she is married. It tells the rest of the community that she is marked, so to speak, she's mine. There is a religious and social meaning, it is a sign, a territorial sign, a gentle reminder that if you are going to hit on her there will be consequences. She wears it all the time, never takes her diamond and wedding band off. When she bathes, sleeps, except on vacation, for security reasons, she takes off the diamond. No, we did not do the circling. We don't go to synagogue but we wanted a Jewish ceremony because we are both Jewish, not all couples have that in common.

Wife: "I'm not sure whether we had a double-ring ceremony. And I don't remember at what point he gave me the ring, I think the *Ketoubah* was at the end. The rabbi evoked such trust, I feel that I could go to him with a marital problem or advice of any sort. He made us reflect about Judaism and think about something we had never talked about. I wish we could observe the Sabbath, at least one night during the week. I do remember my first marriage, at Beth Israel, and yes it was a

double-ring ceremony, that was in 1979. Rabbi Aigen did not demand that the food be kosher, just that there would be no meat. I feel that the wedding ring means commitment, and that I'm married to Michael. It is a physical link to him, I look at it and I am connected to Michael. I think I said something but I am not sure. No, I had no veil, because I was previously married. My father had this beautiful sculpture made in New York out of the broken glass that Michael broke under the *chuppah.* [She showed me this beautiful cube about 6 inches on each side with the date of their wedding etched on it.] The high point for me was to walk down the aisle with my daughter, Ali and to be in the presence of a community. And at the reception, Michael made the most beautiful speech. My brother was the low point because he criticized the rabbi and said my wedding was disorganized. But all our friends said it was very nice, there was a serenity about it, the water and mood and the weather. Since we were both married before, it was not extravagant. We picked Rabbi Aigen because he was the most affordable. Reform was way too expensive" (Interview: April 1, 1998).

1996 Wedding at Dorshei Emet

Wife: "I belonged to the Reconstructionist synagogue since I was a child, and my husband belonged to the Shaare. So we had a co-officiated ceremony with Rabbi Grussguot and Rabbi Aigen. I thought Grussguot would be more Orthodox, but when he met with us he asked questions like: 'How do you know you are in love?', 'What does marriage mean?', 'Why are you getting married?', Why do you want a Jewish wedding?'. He asked questions that I thought were less concerned with religious matters, whereas Aigen asked more mystical type questions and talked more about what being Jewish meant in a spiritual sense. I liked Grussguot's practical questions. I was surprised to see how Rabbi Aigen was in fact more 'Orthodox' in the way that I think 'Orthodox' means, that is

'religious. When I was not married, young, I always imagined that when I would get married it would be like walking in a field of flowers, I never imagined that I would choose a religious framework for my marriage. But after we had lived together for a couple of years, we knew we would get married one day. But I was totally surprised when Michael presented me with the engagement ring, a diamond on platinum band, and asked me to marry him. I was shocked. He must have taken one of my rings from my drawer to get the measurement right. Six months later, we got married. I knew since I was young, that I could not wear a ring with stones under the *chuppah*. I must have read it somewhere or heard it in school. So when we had our rings designed, mine with smaller stones around the band, I knew that I needed another ring for the ceremony. I finally borrowed one from my best friend, a plain gold band, she doesn't wear it either. I wore my diamond engagement ring right up to the *chuppah*, took it off and gave it to my girlfriend. She kept it and then I put it back on when I was in the bridal chamber after the wedding. The plain gold band was slipped on to my right index finger under the *chuppah* and then I put my own wedding ring on as soon as the ceremony was over. Michael's ring is a solid band of five different rings fused together, two pink gold, two white gold, and one yellow gold. A very fine, not wide ring, you cannot really tell that they are separate strands. I don't remember if we exchanged rings under the *chuppah*. I could look at the pictures. Yes, I remember, we did. I know that I didn't place his ring on the right index finger, that finger is for women. I told him that he had to wear a ring. He never wore one before. And yes, we wear them everyday and I wear my diamond engagement ring also. I circled him seven times and I decided to kosher the house before we decided to get married. I am a vegetarian and I know that doesn't explain it all. Michael is not vegetarian but in the house he eats what I make, when we go out, he eats meat. We do serve meat for guests. I don't really know why I wanted the house kosher. My *Ketoubah* is

hanging on my bedroom wall. Yes, I think both Grussguot and Aigen signed it. Let me go check. Yes. I was supposed to say my own words during the ceremony, but I got sick. I was supposed to say 'My whole soul is yours' but I ended up saying '*Ani ledodi*' from the Song of Songs. Michael spoke in Hebrew and I think we said words in English, not sure about the words. I think rings are more a woman's thing, not really for men. When I wasn't married, I was sick wondering if I would ever have a wedding ring. You don't have to say anything or explain anything. You just look at the person's hand and you know that they belong to someone. Looking at the ring reminds you of each other. The hand tells the whole story that you are no longer available to others" (Interview: March 10, 1998).

Analysis of the Couples' Interviews

Several insights and general observations can be derived from the couples' interviews. First, all the couples' interviews revealed that denominational differences were of secondary importance to other more critical factors in the planning and performance of their weddings. Their choice of a particular synagogue or rabbi was dependent on factors like: the date of their wedding, the availability of their preferred caterer, family and friends' time availability, parental affiliations with a particular synagogue, financial factors, or the need to find a suitable co-officiating rabbi. They described their weddings as "Jewish" and not as "Reform", "Reconstructionist", "Conservative" or "Orthodox". They made more allusions to Ashkenazi and Sephardic differences than to denominational ones. There were three cases, however, where denominational affiliation was critical. Two involved mixed marriages and a third the concerns of a young very observant Orthodox couple. In these cases, denominational

affiliation was of primary importance in serving the wedding needs of these couples. For the majority of couples, however, considering that they could not remember what was said or done under the *chuppah*, differentiating a Reform wedding from an Orthodox one based on their descriptions of their weddings would be difficult indeed. Again, with one exception, where a very knowledgeable young Orthodox bride could recite verbatim every word said under the *chuppah*, the other couples could not reveal whether the words or order of their ritual gestures defined a Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist or Reform ritual. One could conclude from this that the rabbis and not the couples were the ones concerned and preoccupied with denominational differences as revealed through the rabbis' denominational ordering of wedding symbols during a Jewish wedding rite (see Chapter 6, Chart A). This point supports the use of the term "rites of denominational identity" to describe the weddings from the rabbis' viewpoints and "rites of Jewish identity" to describe them from the couples'.

Second, for the couples, unlike the rabbis, the criteria defining a successful ritual depended primarily on social or aesthetic elements, and not on whether *halachic* gaffes occurred. Frequently, family members who meddled or "interfered" with the couples' wedding plans, unplanned appearances by unwanted friends in the rabbi's study, inappropriate reception speeches, speeches that went on forever, rabbis who were not in tune with the couples' views, rabbis who sermonized for too long under the *chuppah*, or siblings that were too critical about their choice of rabbi created wedding tensions for the couple. Weather, photo/video shoots, music, flowers and food became other major factors that made or broke a contemporary picture-perfect wedding. Thus, whereas the rabbi's

domain remained the twenty minute framework under the *chuppah*, the couple's domain covered a wider terrain of ritual symbols and activities. Once more, this point suggests that the public presentation of their weddings was paramount in communicating positive and pleasurable ideas as to how their wedding looked and transpired. As visible portraits of themselves, weddings which could be framed in photo albums and watched on video served the purpose of reflecting a couple's identity for generations to come.

Third, with the exception of two couples, all the informants who were married since 1990 had lived together before their wedding. This fact, which was always subtly suggested in the interviews, conveyed contradictory messages. On the one hand, the couples were confident about who they were marrying. In this way, their weddings did not represent Gennep's idea of rites of passage whereby they move from known to unknown territories. On the other hand, the couples conveyed excitement about their wedding day as if they were starting a "new life" together, which became evident with the wearing of brand new wedding rings. (The nervousness about their weddings stemmed more from the complications involved in planning a huge party, not from their choice of mate.) Furthermore, they all seemed to know that they would eventually get married, but this decision depended primarily on the grooms' timing of when he "popped the question". Even though they lived together, the proposal and diamond engagement ring still produced shock and delight for the surprised fiancées. Their new identities as "engaged couples" were marked clearly by diamond rings worn exclusively by the women. All the couples, even those who stressed the importance of egalitarian wedding gestures such as exchanging two wedding rings under the *chuppah*, made no mention of

the unilateral and gender biased custom of only women wearing engagement rings when becoming engaged.

Fourth, individual qualities distinguished each bride, groom and couple from the rest such that the sharing of a common repertoire of Jewish symbols could not adequately describe all weddings as being one and the same. Their Jewishness had each a particular personality, style and emotive aspect. A legalistic or *halachic* interpretation of wedding symbols would unify their weddings on one level, but miss the emotive and textured meanings on another level. The interplay of legal and emotional aspects of their weddings provided room for commonality and diversity. "In the action situation of ritual, with its social excitement and directly physiological stimuli, such as music, singing, dancing, alcohol, incense, and bizarre modes of dress, [a ritual symbol effects] an interchange of qualities between its poles of meaning. Norms and values, on the one hand, become saturated with emotion, while the gross and basic emotions become ennobled through the contact with social values. The irksomeness of moral constraint is [changed] into the 'love of virtue'" (Turner 1967: 30). Their choice of music, floral decorations, colors, food, invitations and place defined how they wanted to re-present themselves to their families and friends. These weddings were primarily rites of identity not only because they modeled ideal Jewish values but because they re-presented individual Jewish brides and grooms as couples who conveyed ideas of autonomy within the overarching process of complying to obligatory communal norms. Again, as Turner stated, "ritual is precisely a mechanism that periodically converts the obligatory into the desirable" (Turner 1967: 30).

Fifth, although this point needs more research, the interviews demonstrated that the level of religious observance did not dramatically change after the wedding. Couples who were observant before their wedding continued to be so afterwards. Likewise, those who were not observant before their wedding continued not to observe afterwards. The evidence from the couples' interviews corresponded with the rabbis' comments about the couples they married—that is, that most of the couples in this study were not observant.

Sixth, the wedding rings were never called "Jewish" symbols by any of the informants, despite their dominant role under a Jewish *chuppah.* The rings were not defined in the same way as were other Jewish symbols like *Ketoubahs*, *mikveh*, *kashrut* or *bedekung.* Yet, they were important enough for the couples to have them included under the *chuppah* and were referred to constantly as *the* symbols of their union and love. In addition, despite their lack of *halachic* knowledge about the problem of using two rings rather than one under the *chuppah,* there was a confidence in the way the couples spoke about and handled the rings. No doubt, jewelers helped in providing information about clarity, cut, carat and color; while couples were eager and proud to share the names of *their* jewelers as good references for future buyers.

The entire gamut of ring scenarios under and outside the *chuppah*, however, revealed a subtle and facile approach to these symbolic love objects which gave the appearance of their being familiar objects. For both the rabbis and couples, the movement of the rings under the *chuppah* was communicated as if no noticeable rupture were discerned in the ritual scene. The game of switching rings from the right to left hand after the ceremony, using plain gold bands borrowed from friends, keeping the

chuppah wedding ring in a bank vault, adding other rings to complete the wedding set, and insisting that husbands wear them betrayed a real historical chronology of expert usage and real inventiveness by the men and women who used them. Not remembering that a second ring was ever given under the *chuppah*, or knowing whether one's father ever wore a ring only pointed to a lack of authoritative historical status in the history of women giving men rings. Regardless of the rabbis' views that the rings were mere arbitrary signs, the well-honed practice of giving and wearing rings demonstrated that all the informants had a firm attachment to and control over these less than arbitrary love symbols. As was mentioned in Chapter 7, these rings were *their* rings.

Like the wedding rings from the 13th, 15th, 17th and 19th centuries, contemporary wedding rings remain primarily symbols of affection and sentiment and not symbols of dowries or monetary worth. In contrast, however, from the medieval period the second wedding ring has now acquired another meaning. Within the context of changing sex roles in the workplace during the past 150 years, the second wedding ring has become a symbol of egalitarianism in the public world at large, where women now mark their men as being married and unavailable. However, in striking contrast to the double wedding rings is the single non-egalitarian diamond engagement ring.

As discussed earlier, there is a mixed message conveyed here between symbols striving for equality in the wedding ceremony and symbols resisting gender equality in the engagement ritual. Engagements represent a passive waiting where a bride-to-be is Other and not subject. The groom-to-be's proposal flies in the face of the progressive feminist movements toward the social equality of gender roles. As a fiancée with a diamond ring,

a woman becomes marked as being flagrantly inferior or equivocally superior to her fiancé. In the inferior role, she plays a damsel waiting for Prince Charming to capture or retrieve her. In the superior role, she plays a queen receiving her lowly Lancelot who approaches her on bended knee. Echoes of how weddings and engagements, when viewed together, represent a conflicted and still unliberated state for contemporary women can be found in Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of Stendhal's ideal woman. "Stendhal wants his mistress intelligent, cultivated, free in spirit and behaviour: an equal. But the sole earthly destiny reserved for the equal, the woman-child, the soul-sister, the woman-sex, the woman-animal is always man! Whatever ego may seek himself through her, he can find himself only if she is willing to act as his crucible. She is required to forget self and to love" (De Beauvoir 1989: 251).

Not to be downplayed, as the historical evidence demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 7, the lack of legitimacy attributed to the second wedding ring in Jewish weddings reflects an attempt to silence both the rings and the voices of those who have worn them. Yet, given the positive historical information garnered from material objects, the full meanings of the rings remain difficult to decipher without the accompanying voices of those who have worn them. Hence, the ethnographic recording of the voices of the women and men in this chapter aims at historicizing and validating these voices. As Susan Stewart writes, "Speech leaves no mark in space; like gesture, it exists in its immediate context and can reappear only in another's voice, another's body, even if that other is the same speaker transformed by history. But writing contaminates; writing leaves its trace, a trace beyond the life of the body. Thus, while speech gains authenticity,

writing promises immortality of the material world in contrast to the mortality of the body. Our terror of the unmarked grave is a terror of the insignificance of a world without writing. The metaphor of the unmarked grave is one which joins the mute and the ambivalent; without the mark there is no boundary, no point at which to begin the repetition. Writing gives us a device for inscribing space, for inscribing nature: the lovers' names carved in bark, the slogans on the bridge, and the strangely uniform and idiosyncratic hand that has tattooed the subways. If writing is an imitation of speech, it is also a 'script', as a marking of speech in space which can be taken up through time in varying contexts. The space between letters, the space between words, bears no relation to the stutters and pauses of speech. Writing has none of the hesitations of the body; it has only the hesitations of knowing, the hesitations which arise from its place outside history—transcendent yet lacking the substantiating power of context" (Stewart 1993: 31). Stewart's point that repetition becomes impossible when no marks have been left behind reinforces the ideas argued in both this chapter and Chapter 5. The continuity of symbols relies on repetition, but the manipulation and handling of this repetition through history, analogy, and popular culture will ultimately determine whether daughters remember if their fathers wore wedding rings or what their mothers said under the *chuppah*.

Desired images of women and men filter through symbols which are endorsed and repeated in a community's most valued voices and histories. Hearing only religious leaders' voices does not suffice for the narration of a whole community's tradition.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

> *It is the [writer's]business to find reality and collect it and communicate it to the rest of us. For the reading of [certain] books seems to perform a curious couching on the senses; one sees more intensely afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life.*
>
> Virginia Woolf

There is no one answer to the question of the significance of double-ring ceremonies in contemporary Montreal Jewish weddings. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, double-ring weddings serve as a means of communicating and expressing multiple meanings at the same time. Some of these meanings are more evident or come into focus more clearly when viewed from particular perspectives. Minimally, as Durkheim argues,[202] like all ritual gestures, double-ring ceremonies serve as a means by which participants in the rite re-present themselves to themselves. As members of particular Jewish communities, couples as principal ritual participants re-present themselves as newly married couples to communities who in turn act as witnesses to their newly acquired married status. Through the interviews with the couples, a clear idea was continuously expressed—namely, that their weddings were "Jewish". This fact confirmed both Durkheim's and Bird's views that rituals are above all rites of representation. The interview data showed that the couples' weddings brought them closer to a much larger community of Jews beyond that of familial or denominational identities. In addition, the elaborate way in which most of the couples got married

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[202]Frederick Bird's views on ritual as communicative action reinforce Durkheim's idea that rituals are primarily "rites of representation". Bird's ideas are discussed in *Ritual and Ethnic Identity* (1995).

demonstrated that marriage and weddings within the Montreal Jewish community were momentous.

Getting married is a big event for Montreal Jewish families. Chapter 4 demonstrated this fact with a collection of photographs illustrating Jewish wedding symbols. Moreover, getting married may be one of the few times in which personal and "secular" symbols come into such close proximity with religious symbols. Especially for females, who have not had elaborate *Bat Mitzvah* rituals in synagogues, their wedding day becomes all the more a heightened religious event. In weddings, all the Jewish community comes forth to initiate a couple into a critical life-cycle marker, their marriage. This marriage is , in effect, the most important part of a Jewish person's life, for it will augur the forthcoming event of parenthood. In bringing a child into the world a couple participates in a direct sacred act whereby their parenthood, in particular the mother's, confers religious status on the offspring. Judaism maintains a strong link with marriage by associating it with the sacredness of parenting.

Most of the couples interviewed—many of whom already had children since their wedding took place a few years before—seemed to know that getting married really meant "becoming parents". While, in pre-20th century times, pregnancy did occur between betrothal and the time when the marriage was completed, for Montreal Jewish couples parenting has become synonymous with getting married. Thus, within this context of initiating couples into parenthood, contemporary Jewish weddings can be viewed as setting the stage for a future rite of passage. (Moreover, in light of current divorce rates, to claim that contemporary weddings are transformative rites of passage is

to tread on dangerous ground. The high divorce rates in Canada can attest to this. In 1997, the divorce rate in Canada was 224.6 per 100,000. "If recent patterns remain constant, it is estimated that approximately 40 percent of marriages contracted recently in Canada will end in divorce" [Nelson 2002: 345].)

With the giving of a second wedding ring under the *chuppah*, Montreal Jewish couples have been expressing their desires to define themselves as autonomous loving human beings but within a specific Jewish context. For the couples who informed this study, then, their weddings were clearly rites of identity by which they confirmed their love in a way that both identified who they were as a couple and as members of a larger Jewish community. When compared to their sense of being Jewish, however, denominational affiliations were secondary.

In terms of their gendered identities, the couples demonstrated who they were as feminine brides and masculine grooms in the way they dressed and in the way they exchanged their wedding rings under the *chuppah*. Moreover, a visible and social process of presenting self (gender) and group identities (religious affiliation) was condensed in one micro aspect of the wedding ritual—the ring-giving ceremony. The importance, then, of the double-ring ceremony in Jewish weddings is its ability to communicate an intensity of information about the religious and gender identities of the ritual participants. However, because weddings are historical products of entities much larger than individual rabbis or couples, the rings conveyed a complex layering of Jewish, non-Jewish, Ashkenazi, Sephardic, rabbinic, magico-religious, and popular influences. Yet, one might still ask what value there is in learning about the religious and gender identities

of ritual participants. The answer to this question has to do not only with scholarly desires but also an interest in applying scholarship to community life.

Within an academic context, the historical and anthropological benefits of learning about the religious views of ritual participants enable a researcher to analyze more carefully the written historical documentation which often does not incorporate these views. Furthermore, as in the case of Jewish wedding rituals, the couples' lack of interest in religious denominational ties contrasted greatly with the rabbis' more emphatic interest in this area. This leads to questioning what defines denominations in Montreal and within the larger North American context and to what degree political motivations characterize contemporary Judaism. The role which the Canadian rabbis (those who have served in Canada) have played in this process becomes a subject of historical interest and merits future investigation. For example, the difficulty in clearly delineating Conservative Judaism within Montreal's Jewish history was partly due to the fact that "a Montreal Conservative Jewish history" has not been written. To rely on American sources does not adequately fill in these critical gaps on the Canadian side. In addition, because critical religious events have often been intertwined with political events throughout the ages, trying to sort out religion from politics can only help one to re-think what religion means on an institutional and interpersonal level.

Such a re-thinking would challenge dichotomies that privilege views held by religious leaders over the general membership of a religious community. The need to alter the persistent imbalance that exists in gender roles in religious traditions would also be part of this re-thinking process. Moreover, the material cultural angle can act as an

integrating force in this challenge to eliminate dichotomies which keep disenfranchised groups, such as women, outside of more meaningful roles in the public and private spheres. In studying material cultural symbols that are handled and known by various categories of individuals within a religious community such as males, females, religious leaders and general members, reality has a better chance of being rendered. And what benefit does the grasping of reality have in the life of an academic? It enables a more tempered, scholarly and truthful work to be expressed and communicated.

An academic investigation into the history of Jewish weddings and rings cannot be done without the support of community. To write about customs and beliefs requires an impetus from the people whose lives are being written about. Going "into" a religious community's history without experiencing the community's daily conversations which inform that history would be to miss an ingredient basic to any historical work. This approach of incorporating ethnography and the present when studying the past has been clearly demonstrated by the work done in this dissertation and illustrates what Geertz meant by anthropologizing history (Geertz 2000). Moreover, lived daily contacts, such as the ones I experienced during my six-years of research, deepened the scope of book learning. Some of these daily contacts could be described as: being welcomed at a synagogue without calling first, being given free access to a particular synagogue's archival material, receiving generosity of spirit and knowledge from archivists and librarians, having a rabbi sing to you during an interview, having a couple take you on their daily walk, having prayers said for a sick member of your family, being invited into the home of a private collector of Judaica, being given the opportunity to meet and talk to

volunteers from the Jewish community while viewing thousands of photographic negatives, having a volunteer worker at the CJC National Archives bring you the perfect light table to view negatives, and having Benjamin Zucker in New York City take a telephone call from you on September 12, 2001. (September 12, 2001 is significant in light of the fact that on the previous day, September 11, 2001, the twin towers of the World Trade Center were destroyed in a terrorist attack.) Listening to different voices within the context of a lived tradition reminds the historian of religion that micro-histories form the basic texture of history.

In the same vein, and based on the findings of this research, a future work inspired by this initial investigation of Jewish wedding rings would be to trace the life of one or two wedding rings over a period of several generations. The context for this micro-history could be Bordeaux or Bayonne in France, or Côte-St-Luc, Quebec. Inspirational for the Bordeaux research have been references to the "ASTER" ring dated from the 4th century (as was previously mentioned in Chapter 7; see Plate 93) and Chenon's mention that Jewish couples were exchanging rings in Bordeaux since the 13th century (Chenon 1912).

In focussing on the "second ring phenomenon", however, this dissertation has raised questions within the field of ritual studies about what defines a "rite of passage". The main argument of this dissertation that contemporary double-ring ceremonies examined in this work were primarily rites of identity more than rites of passage highlighted questions that dealt with issues of ritual theory, methodology and interpretation. Relying on Turner's views was helpful in bringing these questions to light,

but he did not fully appreciate the gender issues involved when using words like "transformative rituals" to weddings. Puberty rites are quite different than wedding rites.

Turner described the transformative quality of ritual as opposed to the confirmatory quality of ceremony in his classic chapter "Betwixt and Between: Liminal Period" in *The Forest of Symbols* (1967). He refers to the new status or condition embodied in the Bemba girls' puberty rites as being transformative because the girls are seen as "growing" from girls to women. This "growing" rite is "to effect an ontological transformation; it is not merely to convey an unchanging substance from one position to another by a quasi-mechanical force" (Turner 1967: 102). Moreover, Turner's idea that rituals are also performances raises the question as to whether a moving performance (in this case weddings) constitutes a transformative action.

Bird's work on ritual as communicative action connects here to Turner's ideas about rituals being performances, and will further elucidate the meaning of the word "transformation" (Bird 1995). Bird's typology shows how weddings can be constitutive, self-representative, expressive, regulative or invocative in their modes of communication. His ideas reinforce the argument presented in this work that contemporary Jewish weddings communicate identities—real and ideal—and so are primarily rites of identitiy. As with a good theatrical performance, wedding participants and guests can come away from the event feeling different than they did before. However, in order for these feelings to be called "transformative", one would need to examine how the lives of the participants were changed after the event took place. "Radcliffe-Brown would agree that

'it was possible to see what sense rituals actually make in people's lives by examining the consequences of ritual participation for social interaction'" (Bird 1995: 49).

As for determining whether decisive ritual moments are "transformative", Lévi-Strauss' research on the "shamanistic complex" can be relevant. He compared the shaman's return to his normal state after a séance to a point of abreaction in psychoanalysis. "Abreaction" refers to the decisive moment in treatment when the patient intensively relives the initial situation from which their disturbances stem. In this sense the shaman is a professional abreactor. Lévi-Strauss concluded that the experiences of neither the devotee (or patient) nor the shaman (or psychoanalyst) determine whether the cure is complete or transformative. This is a question of how the devotee (or patient) reintegrates back into society and how their relationships with community progress (Lévi-Strauss 1979: 181).

Without further investigation of how the couples from my study re-integrated into their respective Jewish communities and families after their weddings, to claim that "transformations" took place would be premature. The limits of theories become relevant here in a discussion which assumes that transformative elements can always be known or observed during rituals or their aftermath. However, relying on evidence from the interviews and the fact that two wedding rings indicated that a change in lifestyle had occurred since the early 1960s, insights about transformation were nevertheless possible using a social scientific approach.

Two factors seem integral to experiencing transformation—time and risk. Time and risk were mentioned by the couples when they described important changes in their

lives, such as their engagements or weddings. One interview excerpt, in particular, echoed how these two factors came into play.

> "We lived together for eight years before we got married. Feeling married did not stem from my wedding day or the ritual, it has been a gradual process of feeling many things. Signing the bank mortgage for our house, four years after living together was the most traumatic transformative event that I experienced. I had wedding jitters for that event, not for my wedding. Buying the house was truly significant as a sign of a long-term commitment with legal entanglements. The doubts and risks involved with that step were not present at my wedding. I knew who I was marrying, there were no doubts that we were going to be together forever. There were no risks there. Getting married was a solidifying of what was already present before. The bonus of getting married was now the words 'wife' and 'husband' could be used in public. I had always used these words, jokingly, with my husband before we were married. I like the words 'wife' and 'husband'. When I meet some strangers, I use the title 'Mrs., but otherwise I always use my single family name. I also use my husband's last name because it sounds more Jewish than mine. If I would not have been married with a Jewish ceremony, I would not have been married at all. For the Jewish community, there is another level to this marrying. I have now become a full fledged member" (Interview: December 15, 2001).

This bride's views reinforce the idea that her new status in the community could be described by the words "change" or "alteration" but not "transformation". Trying to put into words emotions aligned with fear, uncertainty and risk, she used "wedding jitters" to describe the most traumatic event in her life—but that event was buying a house and not getting married. Moreover, what becomes clear from this interview is the temporal

dimension in differentiating the reality of living in relationship with someone for eight years from experiencing a 45 minute wedding ceremony.

Even though newlyweds are acquiring new status and the bride a new name, this is not the kind of critical movement that Van Gennep described when he articulated his classic rites of passage theory. Their new experience of being called "Mr. and Mrs." has no relationship to words like "critical transition", "unfamiliar territory", or "transformation".

As for weddings being transformative because newlyweds enter new relationships with their in-laws and because weddings officially unite two families together, this still does not warrant the use of the words "transformative event" or "critical transition". Many of these new family liaisons, which many couples had already been nuturing and developing while living together, do take on a new status and are perceived by the community as being different than when the bride and groom were simply "boyfriend" and "girlfriend". Language accurately reflects this change or alteration in a newly married person's identity. Within the Jewish community, words like "husband" and "wife" carry more meaning than "girlfriend", "boyfriend" or "partner". In addition, becoming a married person in the Jewish tradition means being able to become a parent, which ultimately means becoming a full adult member of the community. But, the idea of a wedding being defined as transformative fundamentally finds resistance with the two rings.

The double-ring ceremonies which reflect gender issues resist the idea that Jewish brides are ontologically transformed, or made into new women as a result of something

happening *to* them. A sense of autonomy, in the sense of Mauss' gift-giving (as was discussed in Chapter 1), permeates the egalitarian gesture of a woman giving *her* ring as a gift to the groom. As such, ring-giving becomes a moral sign that demonstrates publically to the community that women are indeed equals capable of giving and therefore capable of taking on the responsibilities and obligations which gift-giving entails. More importantly, in giving a ring under the *chuppah* the women see themselves as equals in a community of subjects and not Objects (De Beauvoir 1989). The comparatively similar outward appearances of the groom's and bride's wedding rings reinforce this egalitarian desire. Earlier oversized Jewish Betrothal rings from the 19th centuries (Plates 105, 106), which contained two look alike miniature wedding bands inside, also gave evidence that this desire towards equality between the sexes had been present within Judaism for some time.

However, it is critical to remember that within Jewish wedding rituals, the rings remain closely linked to sacred blessings and fertility, and as such touch the core of Jewish law and marriage. But, since contemporary women are no longer the sole focal point in birthing and parenting issues, and given the fact that many women visibly occupy public social roles (at work and in politics), the single wedding ring has diminished in meaning. Not to deny that women's fight for equality is far from complete, as the single engagement ring testifies, double-ring ceremonies are nevertheless significant markers of women's resistance to subordinate ritual and lived-in-the-world roles. Being a rite of identity more than a rite of passage does not diminish weddings—in fact, it enhances its meaning when considering how women have fought so long and hard in acquiring their

visible identities (Geller 2001; Plaskow 1990; De Beauvoir 1989).

Because Turner specified that "ritual" and "transformation" belong intrinsically together, he might have concluded that weddings as rites of identity were more ceremony than ritual. I would not entirely agree. Jewish weddings still initiate couples into the unknown territory of parenthood and they remind couples that transformative religious powers can exist through religious symbols such as the *chuppah* and rabbi. These religious symbols suggest the idea of a God that exists beyond the human realm, and yet is accessible through the human realm. However, to say that religious or spiritual transformations occur at weddings is to say too much.

If one were to align feminist thinking and spirituality of the post-1960s with contemporary Jewish weddings, the transformative powers of a divine presence would be interpreted as working best within the context of each individual's unique nature and not primarily through the powers of a rabbi or spouse (Tolle 1997; Woolf 1993; Plaskow 1990; Ruether 1983). Alicia Suskin Ostriker writes about feminist thought during the post-1960s. She says: "On the basis of reading approximately two hundred individual volumes of poetry by women in the post-sixties period, and perhaps a dozen anthologies...I concluded that [these works revealed] women [who]strive toward autonomous self-definition as women, which should be no surprise, since they have been defined by patriarchy for four thousand years. They write of the struggle against gendered muteness, gendered invisibility, and their own sense of being divided selves. They write of the body's previously taboo realities including menstruation, sexuality, childbirth, the nursing of children, the horror of incest and rape, the facts of aging and illness, the

absurdity of the cult of 'beauty'. They explode with anger at the entrapment of gender roles and at their own helpless complicities. Then they explode with erotic desire that is very different from conventional male desire, as it insists not on conquest but on intimacy, and ripples out to include every relationship, and on into the body politic. Finally, they write revisionist mythology, invading past tradition in order to change it" (Ostriker 1993: 101). If the word "transformation" were to be accurately used in relation to double-ring ceremonies, it should be used in reference to the Jewish women of 1871 who presented their requests to the Reform rabbis of the Augsburg Synod and *transformed* single-ring weddings into double-ring ones. To claim that "weddings" transform the bride or groom is to undermine the work done by these 1871 women. Holding back on the word "transformation" and calling a wedding a "rite of identity" are enhancements—not diminishments. More specifically, when thinking of connections between feminist spirituality and double-ring ceremonies, a woman's enhanced spirituality depends on an enhanced identity belonging to her in the realized symbol of the second ring. Harold Schweizer describing Ostriker's writings in *Feminist Revision and the Bible* says that Ostriker "insists with moral eloquence and moral urgency that the strongest argument for the viability of an emerging female spirituality is to point out its existence" (Ostriker 1993: 14). Expression of identities, then, became a prominent finding in this research, and would further lead to a series of questions and possible answers that would be linked to the second ring.

Why had the official memory of the second ring been suppressed and was this suppression due to pure rabbinic legal concerns or external pressures generated by

dominant Christian influences? Were the restrictions, then, on the second ring primarily reactionary moves towards what were perceived by the rabbis as "Christian" customs? Could it be that, in the past, just as today, knowledge as to what really goes on in another religious tradition's rituals remains distorted? Speculation about the earlier evidence, before the mid 1800s—namely, the 1690 Wertheimer Ring and Chenon's 13th century reference—needs more investigation. These early sources simply attest that a tradition of exchanging rings, which Mutembe and Stevenson describe as "egalitarian" gestures, existed in Jewish communities (Mutembe 1974; Stevenson 1983). But the evidence dating after the mid 1800s—namely the 1871 Reform Responsum (see Chapter 6), Stauben's references to the *grosses bagues* in *Scènes de La Vie Juive en Alsace* (1860), the 1930 ring mentioned by Seidmann (Plate 104) and the oversized rings that I examined at the Jewish Museum of New York (Plates 105, 106), indicates that reactionary attitudes from within Orthodoxy towards Reform may have been the primary motivating factor for the rabbis' suppression of the second ring. Within Judaism, this raises the question as to how Orthodoxy views Reformers—as outsiders or insiders within a larger community of Jews. Overall, what became clear from the historical material and from the interviews (especially with the priests and rabbis) was that both sides of Jewish and Christian religious leadership within Montreal had little knowledge about each other's rituals. One of the possible outcomes of doing historical ritual studies like the present work is to share research findings with different groups of people. Within the Montreal context, the aim would be to build bridges between Jewish and Christian communities, between different

Jewish denominations, or between men and women whose daily lives include some form of ritual.

Finally, Handelman's idea of ritual as public event reinforces further the argument that weddings are primarily rites of identity more than rites of passage. (Specific examples might be helpful here to illustrate what contemporary rites of passage might be. The list would include the following: becoming a parent, a child's first entry into school, a girl's onset of menstruation, falling in love, leaving the parental home, graduating from school, divorce, change of career, retirement, mourning and burying the dead, menopause or going through a terminal illness.) Contemporary weddings, when compared to this list, are clearly more events than passages. Handelman reiterates that as public events, contemporary Jewish weddings *present*, *model*, and *re-present* the live-in world rather than transform the protagonists of these events (Handelman 1990: 41).

I agree with Handelman that 'transformation' is an overworked word. "Their commonplace usage suggests that the words 'change' or 'alteration' would do as well. The term 'transformation' should refer to processes through which one kind of phenomenon is utterly made over into another. This is a qualitative change in whatever is thought to distinguish one phenomenon from another" (Handelman 1990: 31). As Handelman says, as *events-that-model*, weddings are less self-transformative than they are symbolic demonstrations of what a community is or should be.

The significance of two rings lies in the hope that self-transformative work will be done by two free individuals who have decided to mark their relationship in a communal and spiritual/religious manner. Jewish couples marry precisely because of the powerful

marking effect their marriages have within their *own* communities, and not *per se* within the larger non-Jewish world. Within the context of contemporary double-ring ceremonies in several Montreal congregations, then, Jewish weddings could clearly be called "rites of identity" more than transformative "rites of passage". The highly charged emotional content of these weddings should not mislead one to conclude that, because feelings abound, transformations occurred.

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Appendix I

A Brief History of Finger Rings

Hoops wrapped around our fingers suggest love, fidelity, future hopes, past memories, religious beliefs, political affiliations, powerful offices, healing amulets, auspicious occasions, scholastic honors, secret clubs, coded messages, birth and planetary gems, good luck wishes, financial status, royal power, medicinal cures, superstitions, or simply whimsical tastes. Why do we slip on gold, silver, platinum, iron, ivory or plastic rings? Seemingly quite useless, we nevertheless continue to make them, wear them and sometimes when we lose them fret anxiously over them. As objects of beauty and meaning, plain or embedded with gemstones, rings have been around for thousands of years. Evidence of their antiquity can be found in 8000 small rings that were part of the excavation of Troy that date from approximately 2200 BCE (Phillips 1996).

Rings act as historical documents in transmitting and preserving those values which particular cultures have embraced over time. The evolution of rings probably originated from two parallel beginnings, both functional yet quite different. Rings used as seals for marking possessions or legal documents are the earliest examples found alongside rings used for talismanic or therapeutic purposes. In the case of the latter, aesthetics played a larger role with talismanic rings as the outward pleasurable appearance of gemstones could draw the eye's attention much more effectively than could seals or bezels with engravings. Since talismanic or medicinal rings relied on the use of precious or semi-precious stones, rings of this kind were often objects of rare color, worth and beauty. Therapeutic rings, however, had two very different sources for their curative powers and effects. The first was attributed to the natural chemical or color characteristics of a particular gemstone or mineral which would transmit to the wearer its corresponding qualities. By virtue of close contact with the wearer's skin or through the

stimulation of the eye by the visual effects caused by the color or brilliance of the gemstone, healing or protection from injury occurred. For example, resembling the blue of the celestial sky, the blue of sapphires bestowed many blessings on the wearer like protection from fraud, and freedom from fear or envy. In order to attract divine favor, rulers and kings often wore a sapphire around their necks or set them in bracelets or rings. In a Midrash, the Law given to Moses on the Mount was also engraved on tablets of sapphire. "The color blue and its connection to sapphire also appears in Judaism in the Biblical pronouncement concerning the laws of *tallit* and *tzitizit*. 'And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and order them to make fringes for themselves in the corners of their garments throughout their generations and they should put on the fringe of each corner a *thread of blue*. And it shall be to you as a fringe, that you may look at it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; so that you go not astray after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you go astray; that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the Lord your God" (Numbers 15:37-41)". As to how looking at a blue thread can move one to remember God's laws, the Talmud (Menahot 43b; Sotah 17a) says: 'The blue thread reminds us of the blue waters of the Mediterranean; the blue water is a reflection of the blue sky; the blue sky, in turn, is a reflection of the sapphire seat of God. Thus, by a chain reaction the blue thread reminds us of God's commandments'" (Chill 1979: 11-25).

By the 12th century, sapphire was the favoured stone for ecclesiastical rings in the Roman Catholic Church and as an antidote against poison. The famous "Star of India", an aesteria or star sapphire weighing 543 carats, reveals a living star when moved or if the light changes. "One of the most unique of talismanic stones, it is said to be so potent that it continues to exercise its good influence over the first wearer even when it has passed into other hands" (Kunz 1913:107).

The second therapeutic source for talismanic rings was not the external wearing of the ring, but the taking internally of the powder ground from the stone dissolved in water or some other liquid. For example, ground rubies were taken for inflammatory diseases and the prevention of hemorrhages. Ground emeralds would be taken for relief from eye ailments and yellow stones injested for cures of the liver and bilious disorders. Adhering to the principle *similia similibus curantur*, therapy often followed the idea that there should be a correspondence between the color of the ailment and the color of the stone. Although the therapeutic nature of rings from the past may seem like superstitious folly based on faith and not sound science, our modern practice of ingesting magical capsules (pills) must often go along with the belief that whatever cure we take somehow will work. The power of the human mind over or in conjunction with the body remains a formidable force, which is not to deny the evidence of the therapeutic uses of minerals and chemicals for battling diseases. Rings, however, were not only used as therapeutic or talismanic objects or seals to identify property. If not simply as additional adornments for the body, rings were worn by humans for other reasons.

Ring historian, Beatriz Chadour, says: "Since antiquity, the pleasure of viewing rings seems to have ranked above any actual purpose or function derived from the finger ring. The special fascination with finger rings can be generally explained by the diversity of the ring's interpretations, which do in fact cover a broad spectrum. A finger ring can be symbolic of the bond of a sincere relationship, the outward sign of a particular honour, an amulet, a token of commemoration, a piece of jewelry, an indication of wealth." (Chadour 1994: xxi). But ultimately, for Chadour the intrinsic fascination lies not in the ring's symbolic character but in its size—its compactness of its form.

There are several early references to finger rings which demonstrate the wide variety of functions and meanings that have been attributed to these seamless circular hoops or twisted pieces of wire, grass, cord or metal tied by a knot. According to Kunz,

the ring may have originated as a modification of the cylindrical seal which was first worn attached to the neck or arm, and was eventually reduced in size so that it could be worn on the finger (Kunz 1917:1). This kind of ring acts both as a tool, or writing implement, and as a marker of identity.

The knot ring, around which twisting or tying was very much in evidence, seems to have originated with the idea of charms or spells. With this gesture of binding or attaching, a spell was bound to its object and would ensure the containment of whatever was wished for, evil or good luck. Knots have been attributed to the origins of rings as magical and curative sources of power.

On the other hand, rings with the perfectly circular shape of a closed hoop (which can also be used as part of a link in a chain) represent more often the binding powers of sovereign authority, free love, duty or forced enslavement. Rarely would one find the ring of a king or religious leader in the shape of a knot. Moreover, official wedding rings are usually shaped into a solid band with no gemstones or interruptions in the circular shape, which conveys the idea of duty or obligation. When one considers the ancient Brahman *kulsa*-grass ring, tied together in the form of a knot, the magical attributes of the ring clearly overpower any authoritative character belonging to the Brahman.

We know that rings were symbols of authority from the biblical story in Genesis 41:42, when Joseph was given the Pharaoh's ring as a mark of authority. Rings as complete circular hoops resembling links in a chain were not only used as symbols of authority and sovereignty but also as signs of slavery. Binding others and being bound could be represented by the same circular shaped hoops, save the different identities of their wearers. The Greek fable relating the origin of the ring found in Pliny's *Natural History* (circa 75 CE) reveals this idea of attachment through enslavement. "For his impious daring in stealing the fire from heaven for mortal man, Prometheus had been

doomed by Jupiter to be chained for 30,000 years to a rock in the Caucasus, while a vulture fed upon his liver. Before long, however, Jupiter relented and liberated Prometheus; nevertheless, in order to avoid a violation of the original judgment, it was ordained that the Titan should wear a link of his chain on one of his fingers as a ring, and in this ring was set a fragment of the rock to which he had been chained, so that he might be still regarded as bound to the Caucasian rock" (Kunz 1917:2).

Rings signaled one's social and economic class. In Roman tradition, as illustrated by Pliny's popular story of the rock, iron rings can be traced back to about 700 BCE. A distinction was made about the third century BCE as to who should wear gold rings. "A senator sent on an embassy received a gold ring, all other senators being restricted to iron ones. Soon, however, senators of noble birth, and, later on, all senators without distinction, enjoyed the right of wearing gold rings. Before long even some free men and certain of those pursuing the least reputable vocations were permitted the enjoyment of a distinction once so jealousy guarded" (Kunz 1917: 11). In the year 107 BCE, we find an iron ring by Marius at his triumph over Jugurtha. We know, however, that during the first three centuries of this era, the Romans acquired quite different usages for iron rings which pointed to new social distinctions through the different use of iron, silver and gold. By the third century CE, we see a shift in the practice of wearing rings and a subsequent change in social values. All Roman soldiers could lawfully wear gold rings, as well as every freeborn man. The iron ring became a badge of slavery. It seems that Roman women were not subject to the strict regulations of wearing rings of precious metals, as were the men. According to Kunz, Roman women who were simple plebians or wives of senators were known to wear rings of gold on every finger.

Early Christian women who were admonished to avoid all superfluous adornments were permitted to wear a ring for sealing up the household goods. But even this practice was discouraged by Clement of Alexandria who said that if both servants

and masters were properly instructed in their respective duties and obligations, keys would not be necessary and women would not have to wear key rings.

Indeed, gender has played a part in the history of rings, but it has not always been the case that women have been more closely connected than men to jeweled objects. One of the most famous examples of this remains the legendary high-priest's breastplate given in Exodus (28: 15-30). Believed to be emblematic of many things, the 12 stones of the sacred Jewish breastplate can also be found in the book of Revelation in the New Testament as the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21: 9-21). A close association, then, between men who occupy high religious positions and precious gemstones used to visibly mark their status and power in the community has also existed alongside the erroneous perception that only women and jewels belong together. The papal and bishops' rings in the Christian Church, together with masonic rings, belong to this all-male ring category.

Moreover, the image of God as a divine jeweler appears in the Babylonian Talmud as someone who sets the stones after the angels have done the cutting. Commenting on Isaiah 54:11-12, Rabbi Johanan says in *Baba Batra* that God would bring jewels and pearls thirty ells square and twenty ells in height and ten in width and would place them on the gates of Jerusalem (Kunz 1913: 306). God plays the role here of setting the final jewels on the gates which surround the city of Jerusalem.

In the South-Asian traditions of India, "The earliest forms used by the Brahmans in their forest life were woven of *kusa*-grass (*Saccharum spontaneum*) and even in our time [1917] rings of this kind are worn by those assisting at a religious ceremony, as otherwise the water offered to gods or to the spirits of ancestors will not be accepted" (Kunz 1917: 77). There is also another famous and ancient reference in South-Asia to rings found in the *Ramayana* of Valmiki. "When Sita, the wife of Rama [and] hero of

the [epic] poem, is abducted by Rávana, the ten-headed [Sinhalese] giant, Rama sends a monkey called Hanumán to seek for her, giving him a seal ring as a token. As soon as the monkey succeeds in finding Sita, he approaches her holding out the ring and saying, 'Gracious lady, I am the messenger of Ráma. Look, here is his ring engraved with his name'" (Kunz 1917: 77). Moreover, in Sanskrit, according to T.N. Mukharji, there are approximately fifteen different terms to describe types and kinds of rings that are found in Indian written texts (Kunz 1917: 78).

Rings have just as long a history in Syria, Persia, Egypt, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and among the peoples of indigenous nations like the Navajo in New Mexico and Australian aborigines. If silver or gold were not used in these very early examples, shell and bone rings with turquoise or coral inlays can be found. In the case of the Navajos, as well as other Indians of the southwest before the arrival of the white people, it seems most probable that silver jewelry was not made by these Indians until Spanish silver coins reached them. The Navajos are believed to have acquired their knowledge of jewelry-making from the Pueblos. As to the importance of finger rings to the Navajos, we can find twenty different designations of the word "*yostsá*" or "ring" in the Navajo language at the turn of this century. The custom of wearing a ring on every finger was a sign of a Navajo woman's aristocratic birth (Kunz 1917:29).

Another early source in tracing the ancient history of rings can be found in documents from jewelry businesses. One of the earliest documents found has been the 730 tablets unearthed at Nippur, of which one was a contract dated the eighth month of Elul, in the thirty-fifth year of Artaxerxes I of Persia (429 BCE), in which Bêl-ah-iddina, Bêlshumu, and Hâtin give the following guarantee to Bêl-nadin-shumu, son of Murashu:

" As concerns the gold ring set with an emerald, we guarantee that in twenty years the emerald will not fall out of the gold ring. If the emerald should fall out of the gold

ring before the end of twenty years, Bêl-ah-iddina, Bêlshumu, and Hâtin shall pay unto Bêl-nadin-shumu an indemnity of ten mana of silver" (Kunz 1917: 4).

The task of summarizing the innumerable ways in which rings have been worn over human history is daunting. Although it remains difficult to group all rings into clear-cut categories, I suggest the following five areas might be useful in doing manageable comparative work. A ring can be: 1) a marker of identity; 2) a magical amulet; 3) a tool; 4) an expression of sentiment or a communication device; or 5) a pure aesthetic object. These categories will help clarify why different communities in different periods fashioned and wore rings in the way they did.

Appendix II

Legal Aspects of Jewish Marriage

(summarized from Abraham Chill's *The Minhagim* 1979: 275-277)

For the Rabbis, a marriage in its legal aspect is a meeting of minds between a man and a woman for the purpose of concluding a marriage contract. Yet it would be wrong to misconstrue this seemingly business-like framework of marriage in Judaism as devoid of all tenderness and love between husband and wife. The Rabbis expressed high esteem for married life. "One who does not have a wife lives without joy, without bliss, without happiness" (Yevamot 62b).

The Rabbis stressed that love and mutual respect between husband and wife are essential for the stability of their life together. At the same time, the Sages recognized that without a legal transaction executed with all the requisite formality the union of two strangers might be but a casual and therefore unstable union. Since it is the man who acquires the wife, he must indicate in some tangible way that his intention in acquiring the woman as a wife is legitimate and serious. The woman, on the other hand, has to consent to her being acquired as a wife of her own free will and is not to be coerced into marriage. Accordingly, the Talmud (Kiddushin 2a) states that a wife can be acquired in one of three ways: through her acceptance of an object of monetary value, such as a coin or ring; through a written document in which the man declares his intention to marry her; through cohabitation.

This act of acquisition is called kinyan. The first step in the Jewish wedding procedure is *erusin*. It is also referred to as *kiddushin*, the basic meaning of which is "separation", since through the act of betrothal the bridegroom separates his bride from everyone else. It also means "consecration": indeed, far from being a mundane act,

matrimony in Judaism is the mutual consecration of husband and wife for the purpose of fusing their lives into one holy union.

Through *kiddushin* the bride becomes an *arusah*, his betrothed, a status in Jewish law in which she is considered his wife only to the extent that she is forbidden to marry any other man, and if he desires to dissolve the betrothal, he would have to present her with a bill of divorce (*get*). Otherwise they have no obligation to each other and are forbidden to cohabitate.

The next step is the *nissuin*, the consummation of the marriage by symbolically receiving the wife into the house of the husband. This is effected by the act of *huppah*, "enveloping", generally a canopy symbolizing the house which the newly wed couple set out to build together. The final step of consummating the marriage is the *yihud*, the seclusion of the bride and groom.

Appendix III

Jewish Wedding Customs

Dates: Jewish weddings cannot take place on *Shabbat*, on major festivals and fast days like *Pesach, Shavuot, Sukot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur* and during the 49 days between the second night of *Pesach* and the beginning of *Shavuot*, with the exception of *Lag Ba'omer* ("Scholar's Festival")the 33rd day. Also, weddings cannot take place three weeks before *Tisha B'Av.*

Groom's Attire: Ashkenazi grooms often wear a white robe, a *kittel*. Sometimes Sephardic and Ashkenazi grooms also wear a *tallit*, prayer shawl draped over their shoulders (which the bride or his parents would give as a wedding gift to the groom). The groom often gives the bride a prayer book, *siddur*.

Aufruf: An Ashkenaz custom whereby the prospective groom and in some synagogues the bride are called to the Torah for an *aliyah* (the honor of reciting or chanting the blessings before and after the reading of a section of the Torah) on the Shabbat morning prior to the wedding. Just before the couple leave the *bimah*, some congregations shower them with raisins, nuts and candy, symbolizing good wishes for a sweet and fulfilling marriage.

Mikveh: Jewish law requires that brides visit the *mikveh* prior to their wedding. In Israel it is compulsory. In Montreal, most Orthodox brides go but no written papers to show proof are required by the rabbis. Some Orthodox and Conservative rabbis also urge the grooms to go. This ritual immersion in water can also take place in any body of running or "living" water, *mayim chayim.*

Fasting: Most Ashkenazi Jewish couples fast on their wedding day, just until they share the wine under the *chuppah.* Jewish tradition teaches that all sins are forgiven on a wedding day.

Ketubah: The Jewish wedding contract is signed by two witnesses before the couple enters the *chuppah.*

Kinyan Sudar: The groom takes hold of a kerchief (or part of the rabbi's *tallit*) and pulls on it as a visible sign of the marriage contract being accepted.

Badeken di kalah: Seating the bride and veiling the bride occurs after the *Ketubah* is signed, just before the couple go to the *chuppah.*

Shoshvinim: Escorts, sometimes dancing, escort the groom and his parents to meet the seated bride before the signing of the *Ketubah.*

Circling: The first ritual gesture performed under the *chuppah* is the bride circling the groom, 3 or 7 times.

***Birkat erusin*(The Betrothal Blessing):** The blessing over wine by the rabbi is accompanied by the couple drinking from a cup of wine. Immediately following this blessing is the giving of the ring by the groom to the bride.

***Sheva Berachot* (The Seven Blessings):** After the betrothal is completed and the ring is given, the bride is handed her *Ketubah*. Afterwards, the seven blessings are recited over a second cup of wine. The rabbi, cantor, family members or friends may read or chant these blessings. The first *beracha* blesses God for creating the fruit of the wine. The second blesses God for creating the world. The third blesses God for creating human beings. The fourth blesses God for having endowed us with divine potential. The fifth blesses god for giving us the power to bring children into the world. The Sixth blesses God for the joy of the wedding day, re-creating the marriage of Adam and Eve. The seventh and final blessing holds out a messianic vision of a world of true peace. These seven blessings are repeated at the meal.

Breaking the Glass: Just before the couple leave the *chuppah*, the groom and sometimes the bride also break a glass. This reminds the couple of the destruction of the Temple and of the fragility of love. It also is an ancient custom to ward off evil energies with the sound of crashing glass. Everyone shouts "*mazel tov*" or "*siman tov*", meaning "lucky sign" or "good luck" or "good horoscope".

Yichud: An Ashkenazi custom whereby the couple go to the bridal chamber, a private place, for a short period of time before joining the guests at the reception. They can break their fast here and share a quiet moment together. Symbolically, this ritual represents the consummation of the marriage.

Motzi: The wedding banquet begins with a blessing over a large *challah*.

Badchan: A master of ceremonies who organizes toasts that often make fun of the couple while praising them.

Traditional Dancing: Today, no Jewish reception begins without a traditional *hora* dance, where men and women either separately or together dance energetically in circles.

Lifting the Bride and Groom: At the reception, the guests life the bride and groom on their shoulders or on chairs like a royal couple lifted high above the crowd.

PLATES

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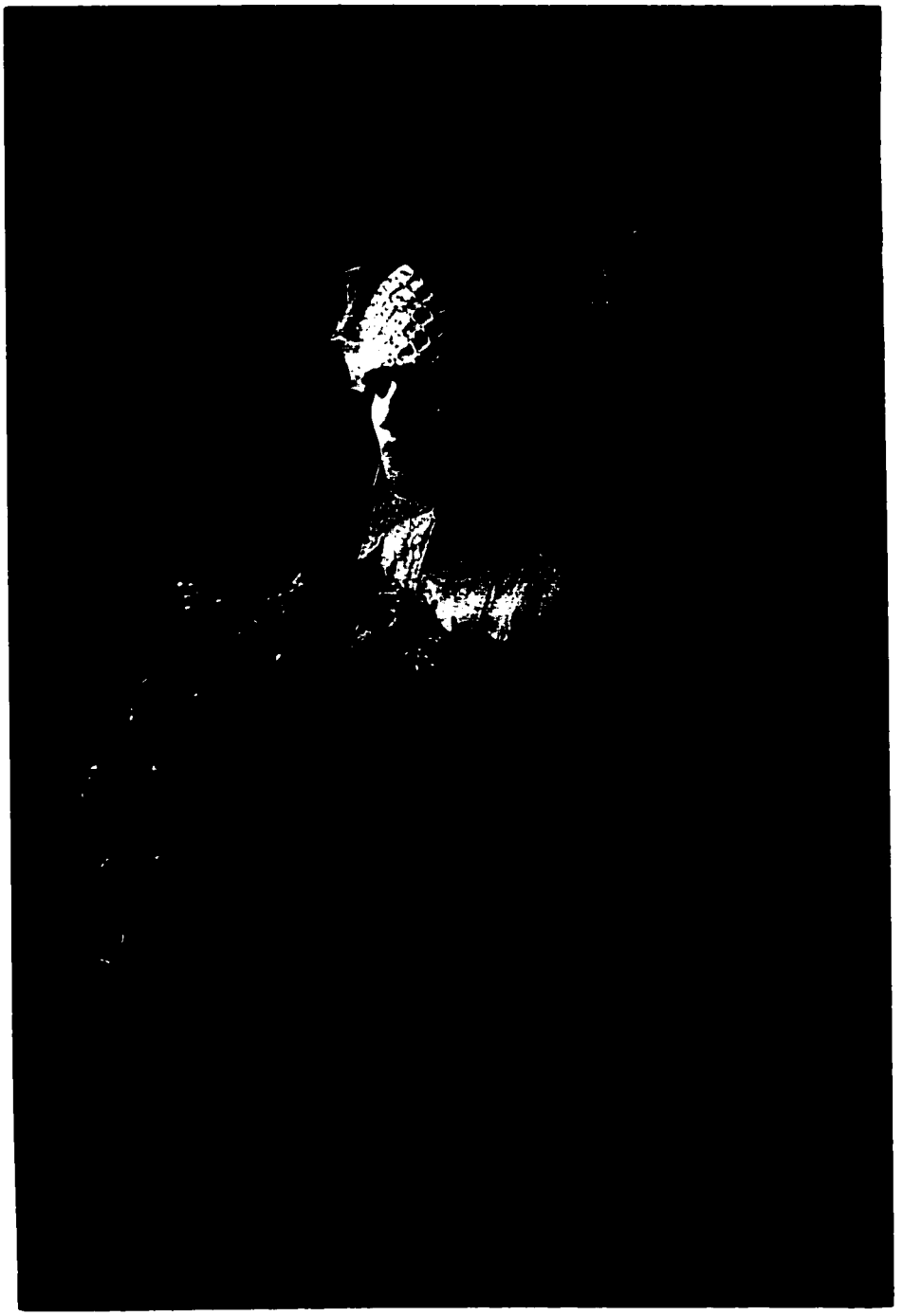
Plate 2



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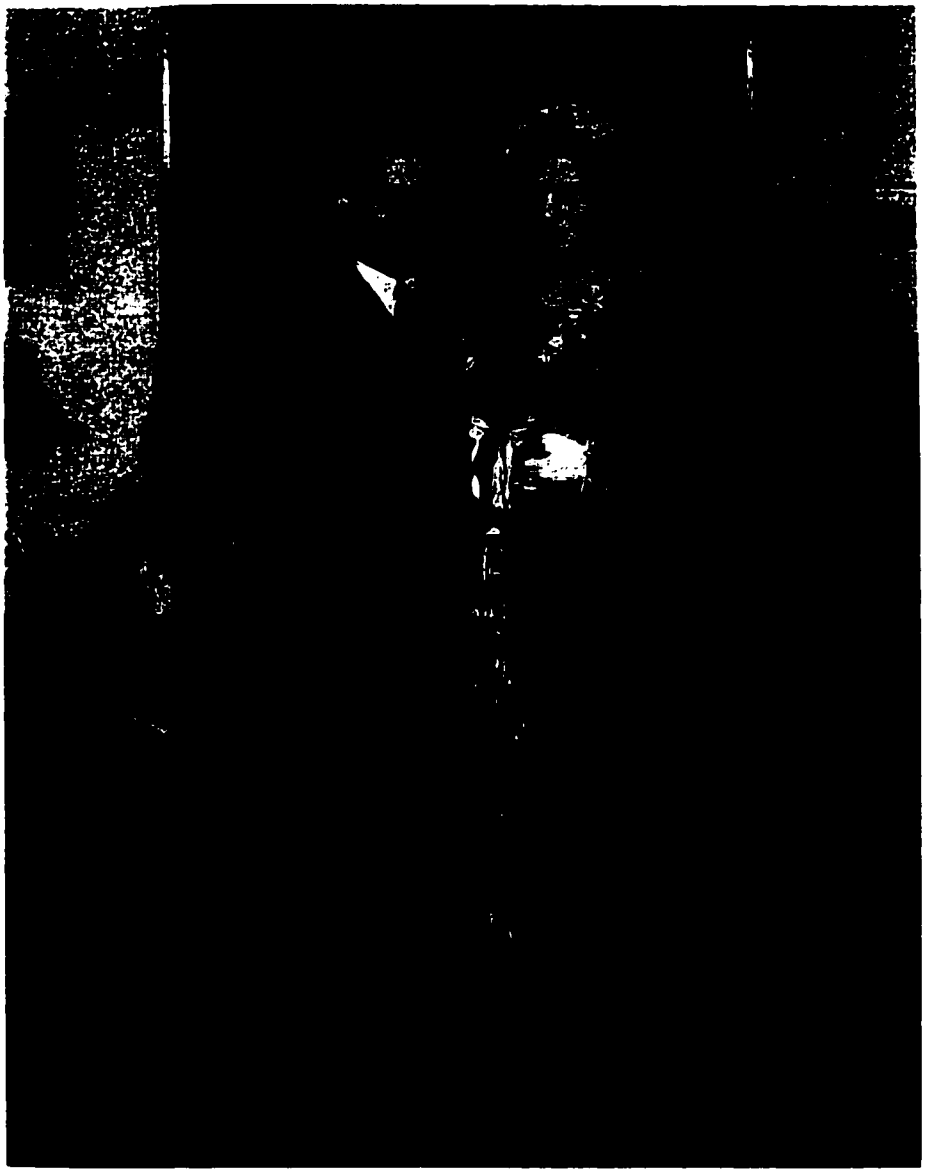

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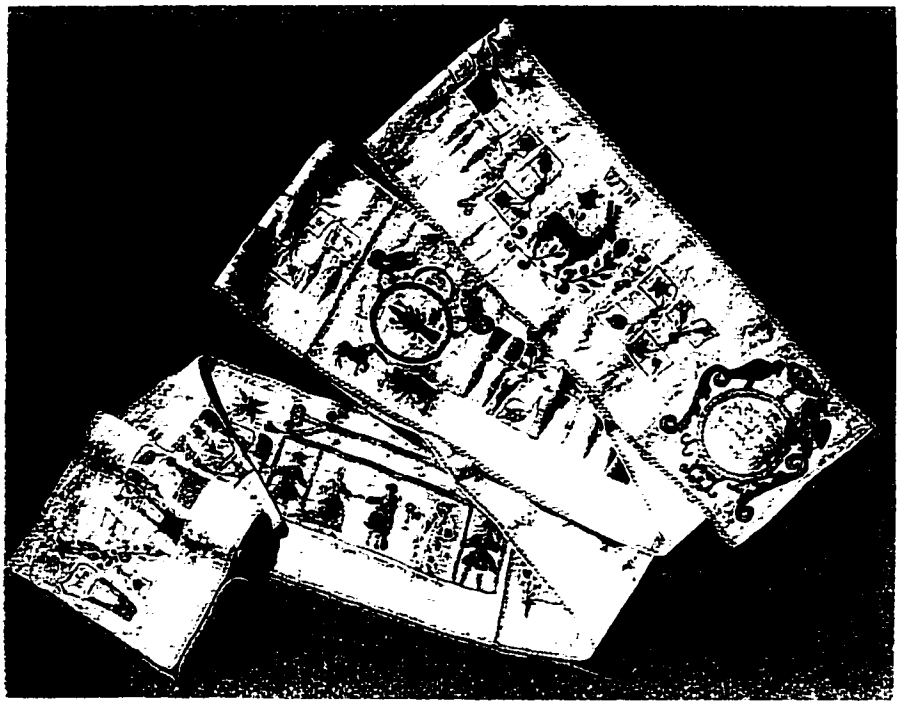

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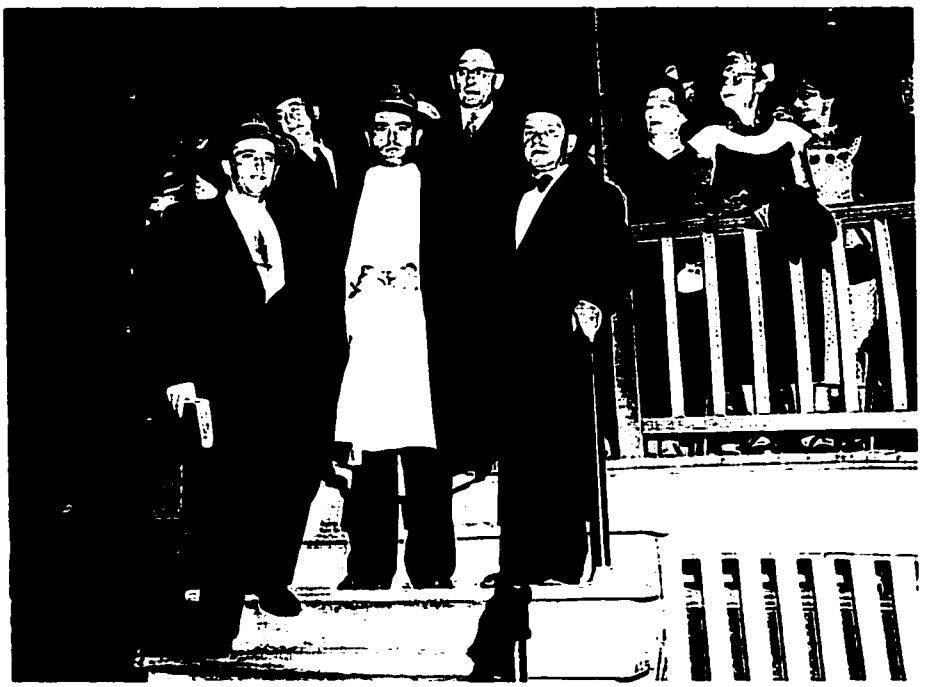

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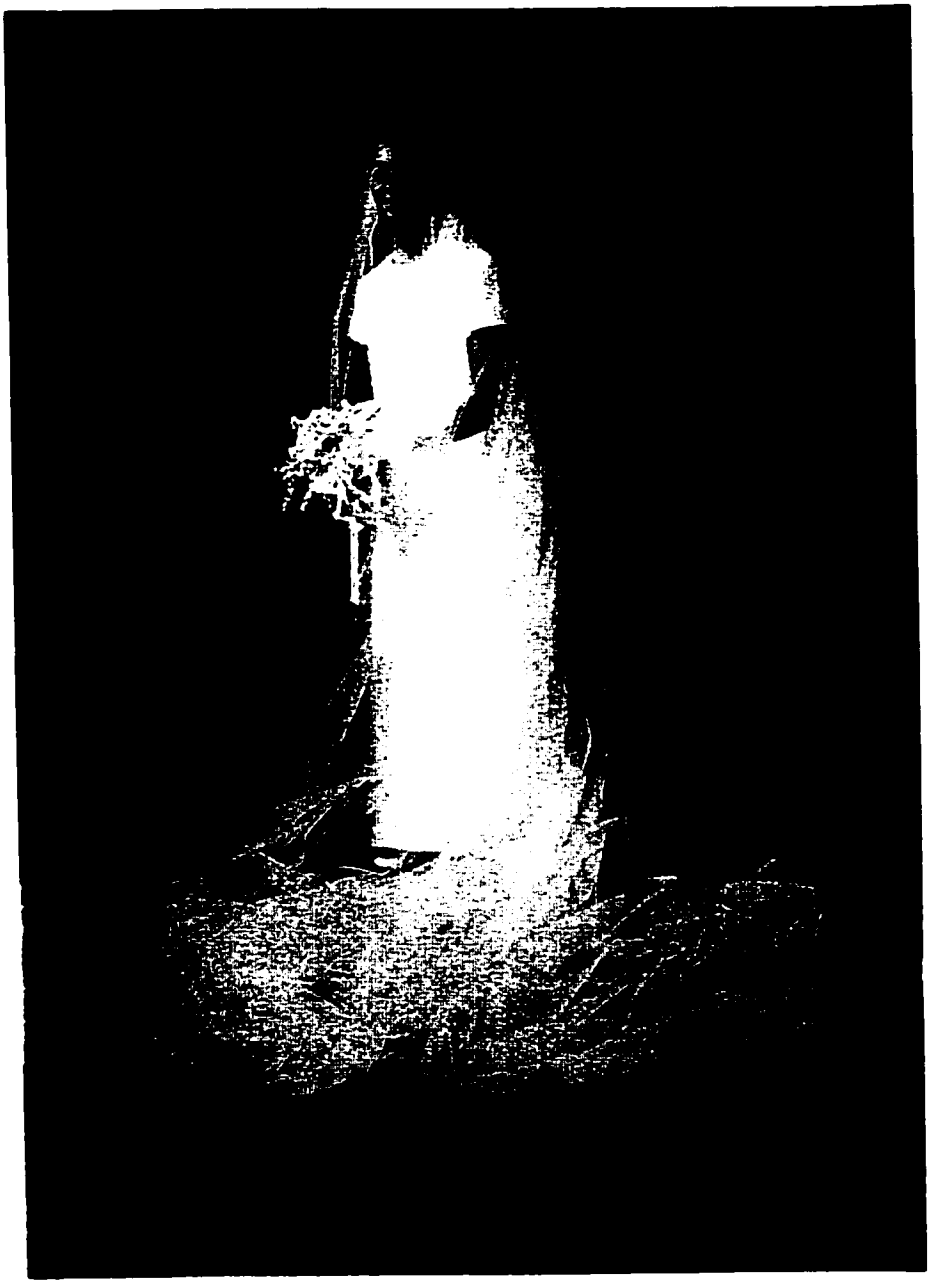

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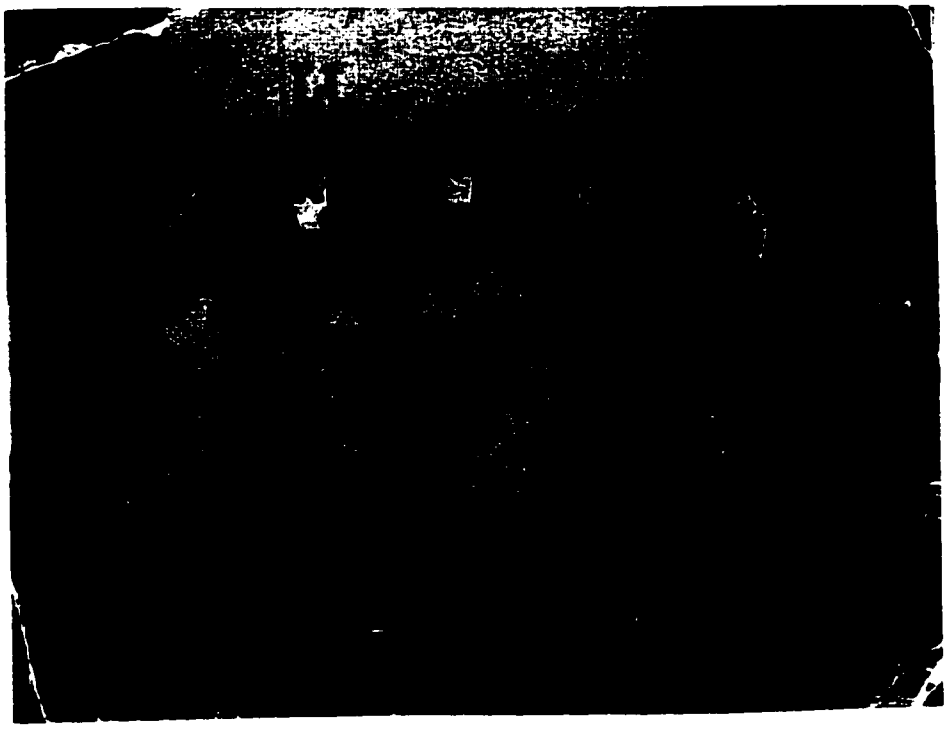

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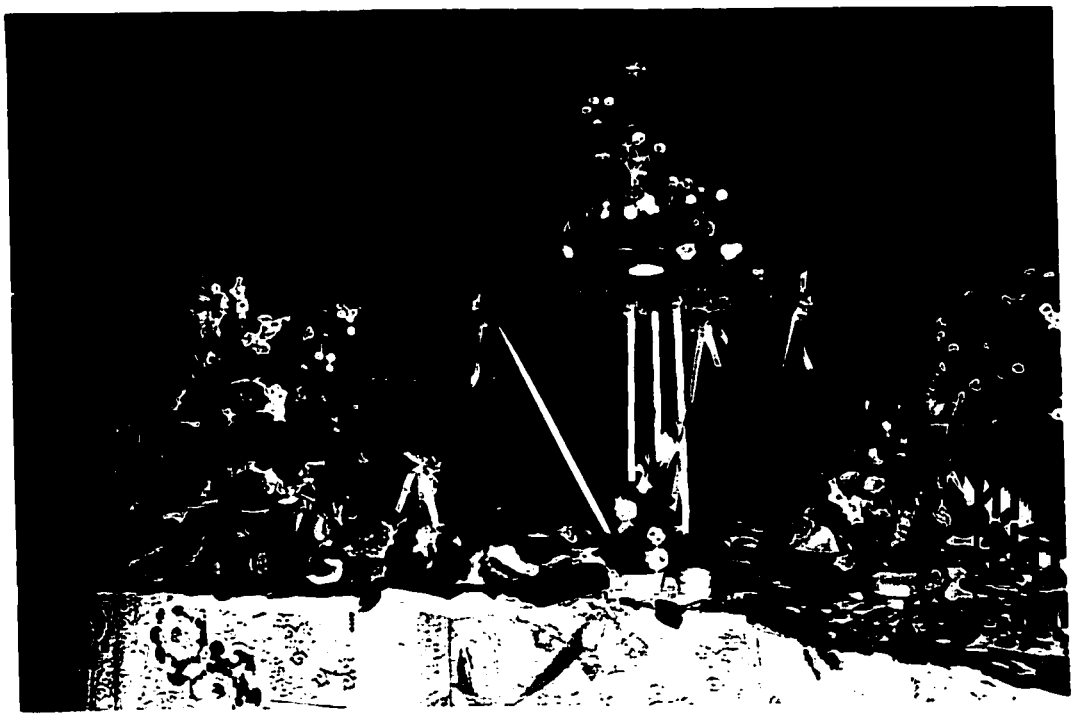

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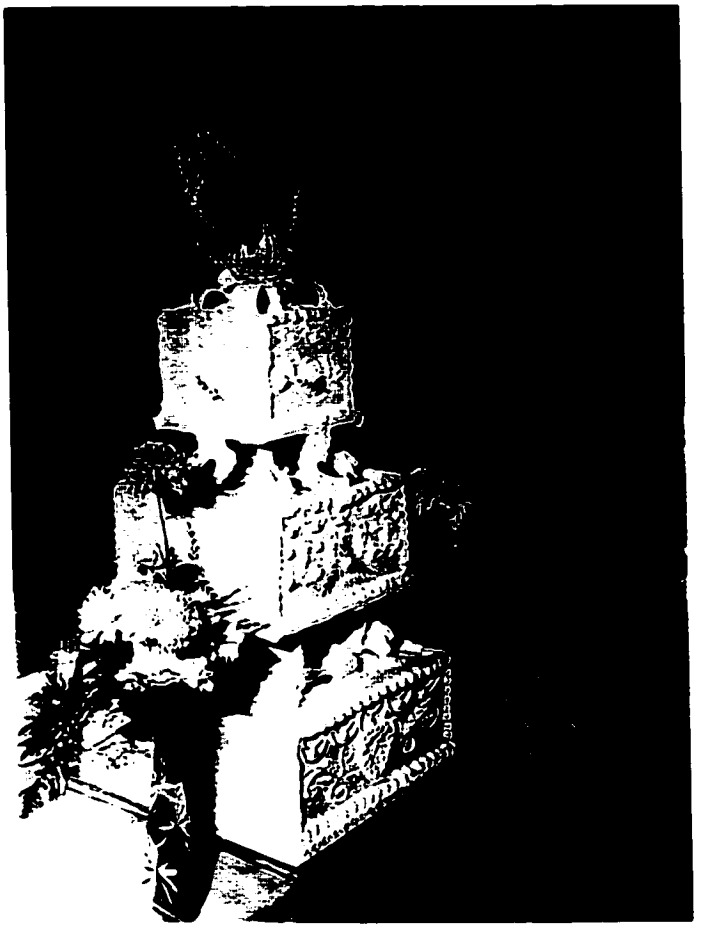

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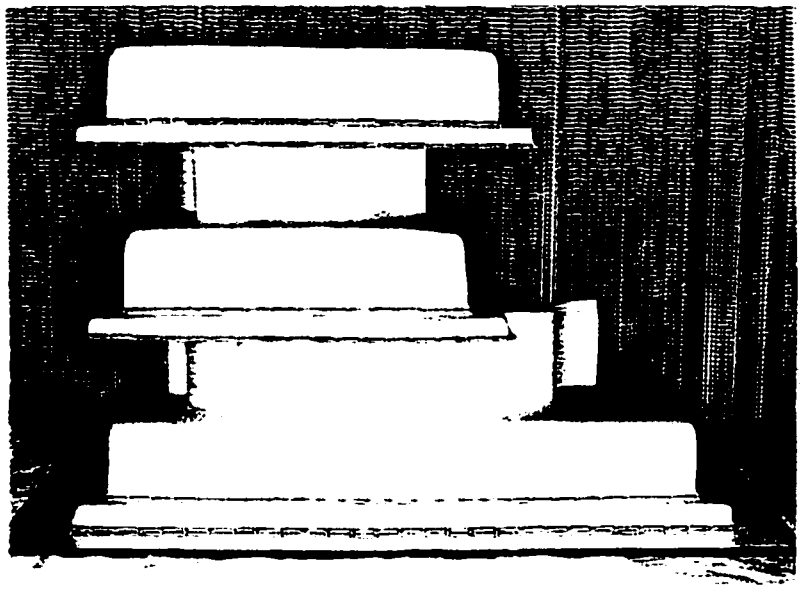

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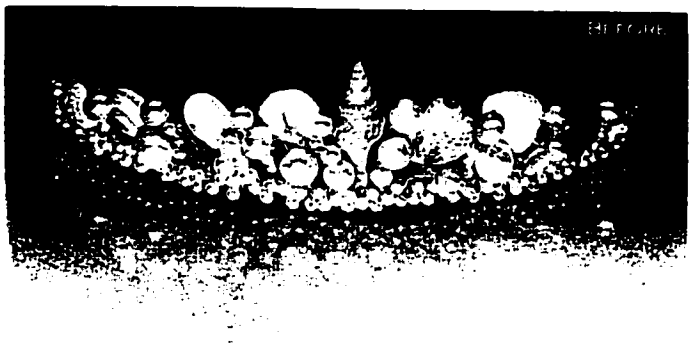
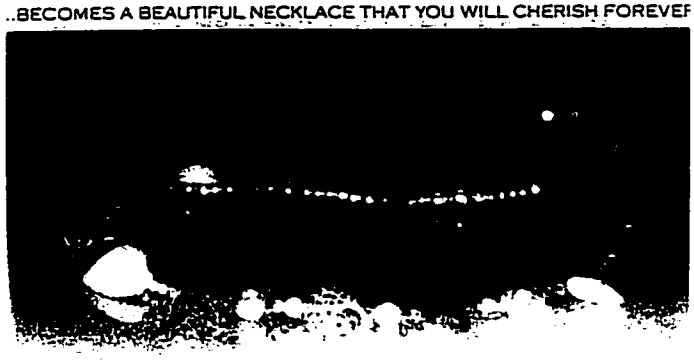


..BECOMES A BEAUTIFUL NECKLACE THAT YOU WILL CHERISH FOREVEF



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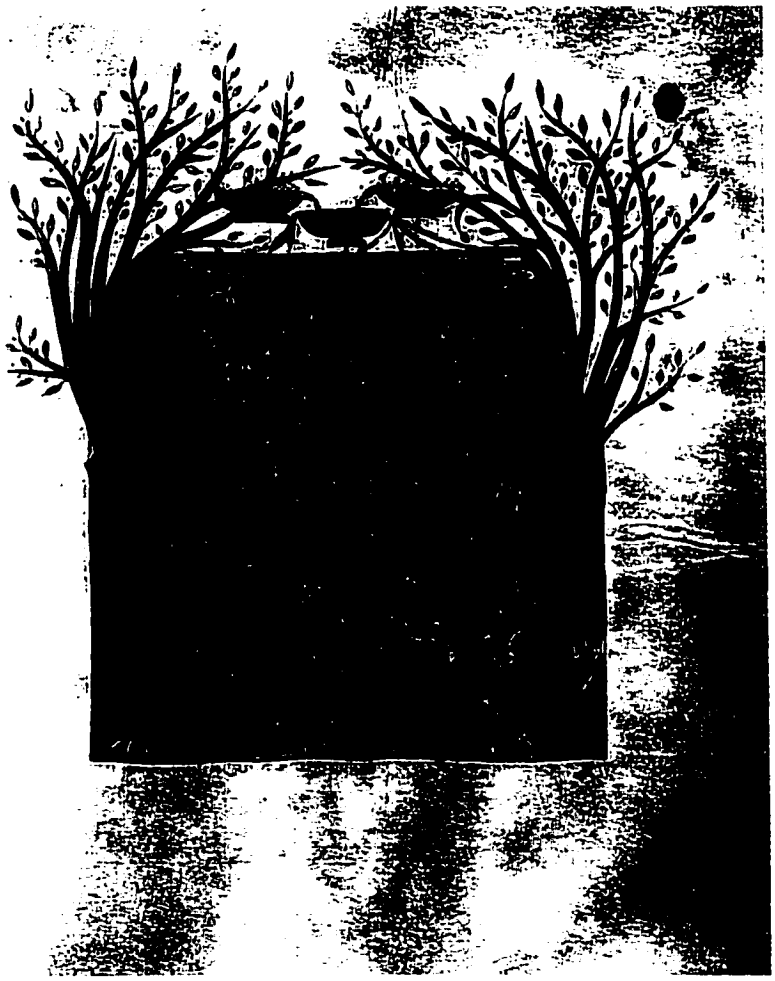

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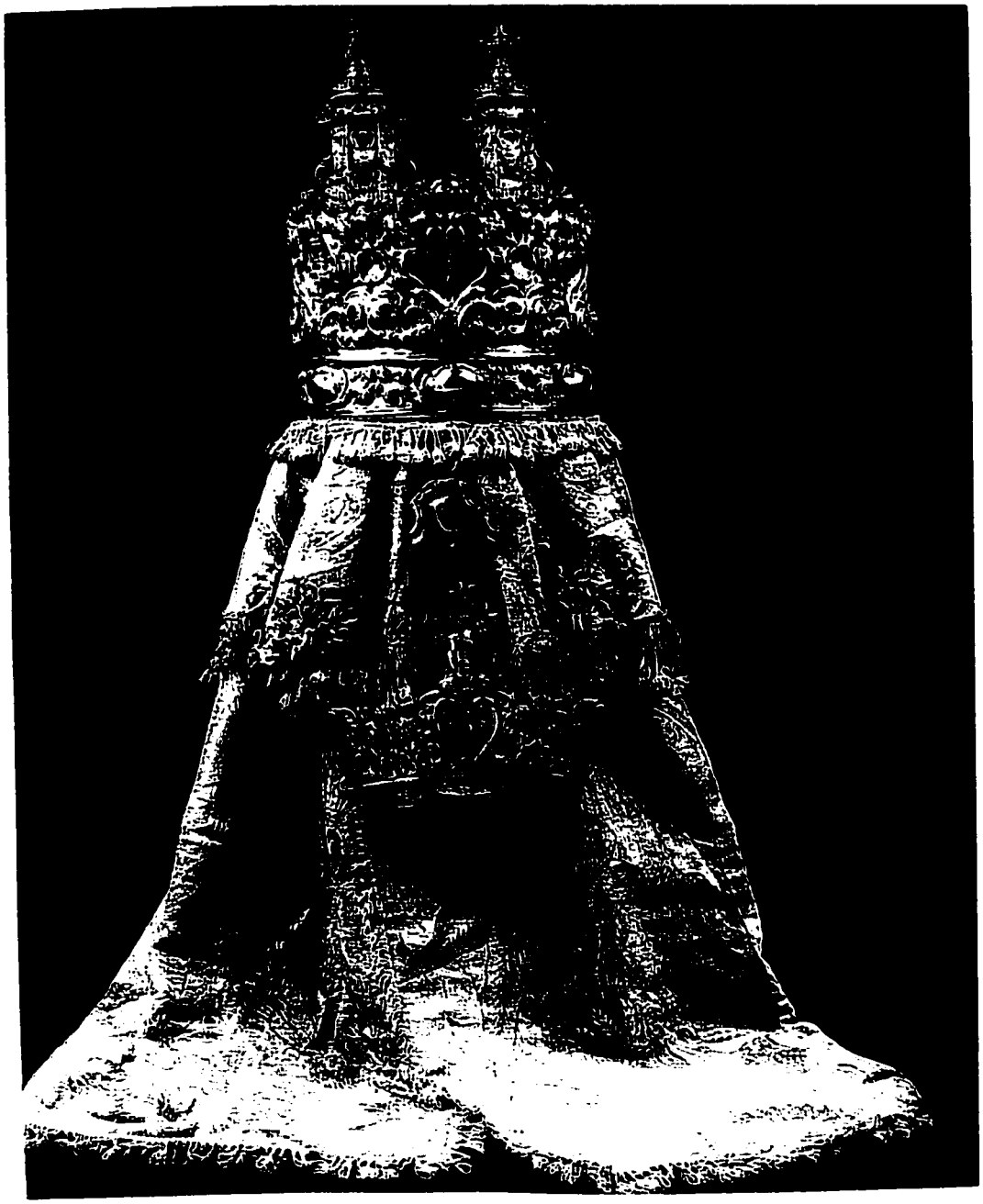

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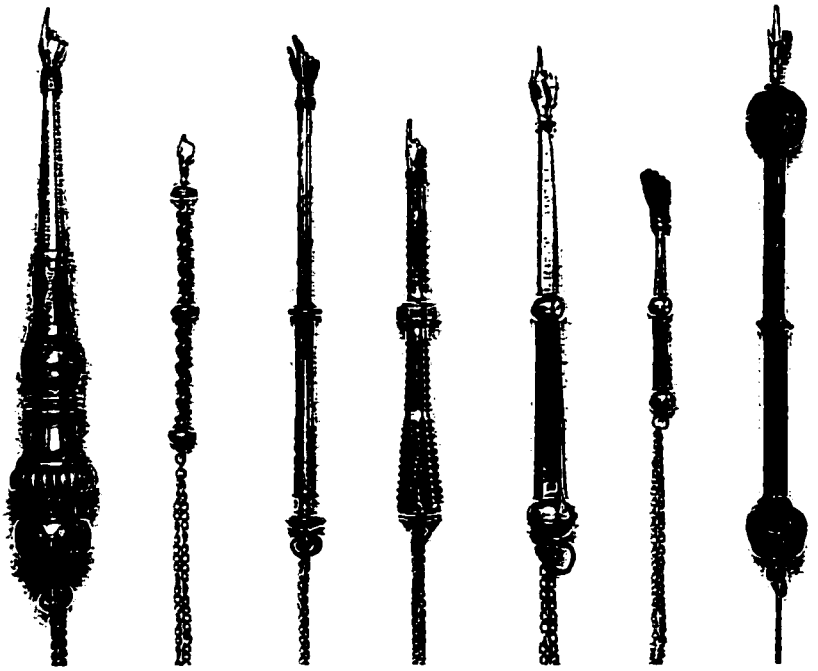

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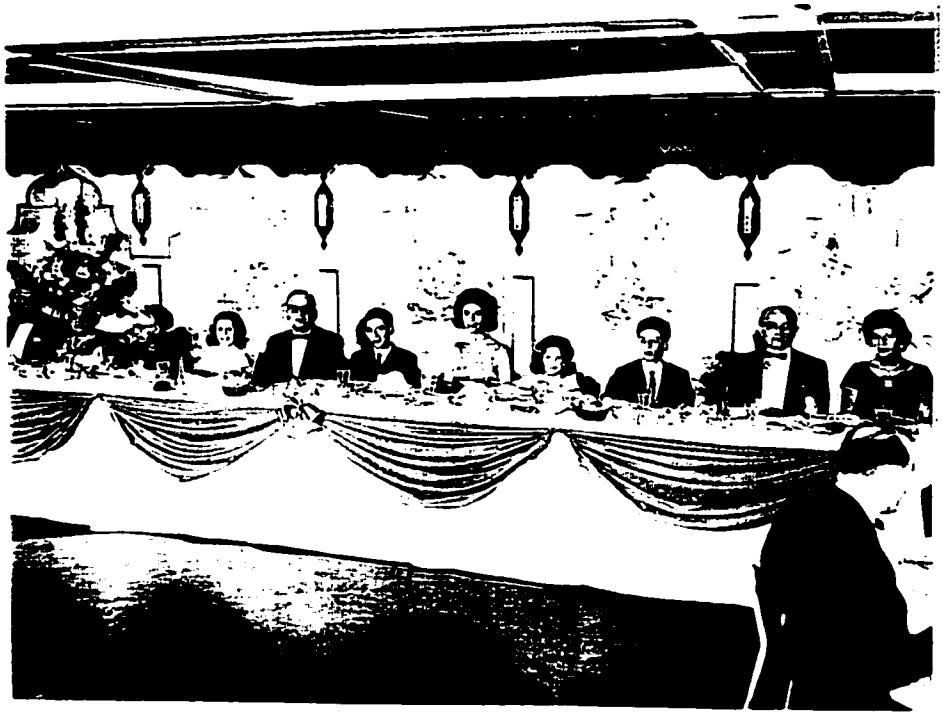

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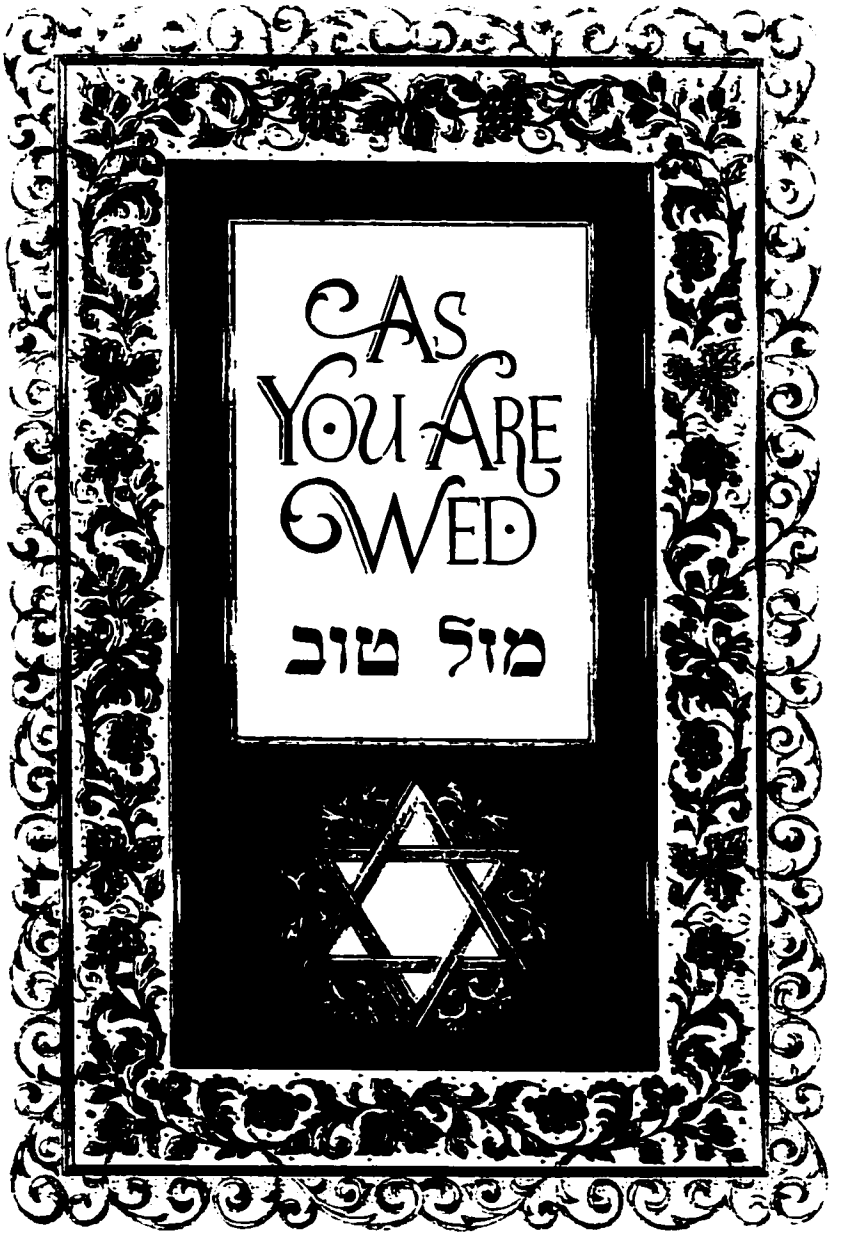

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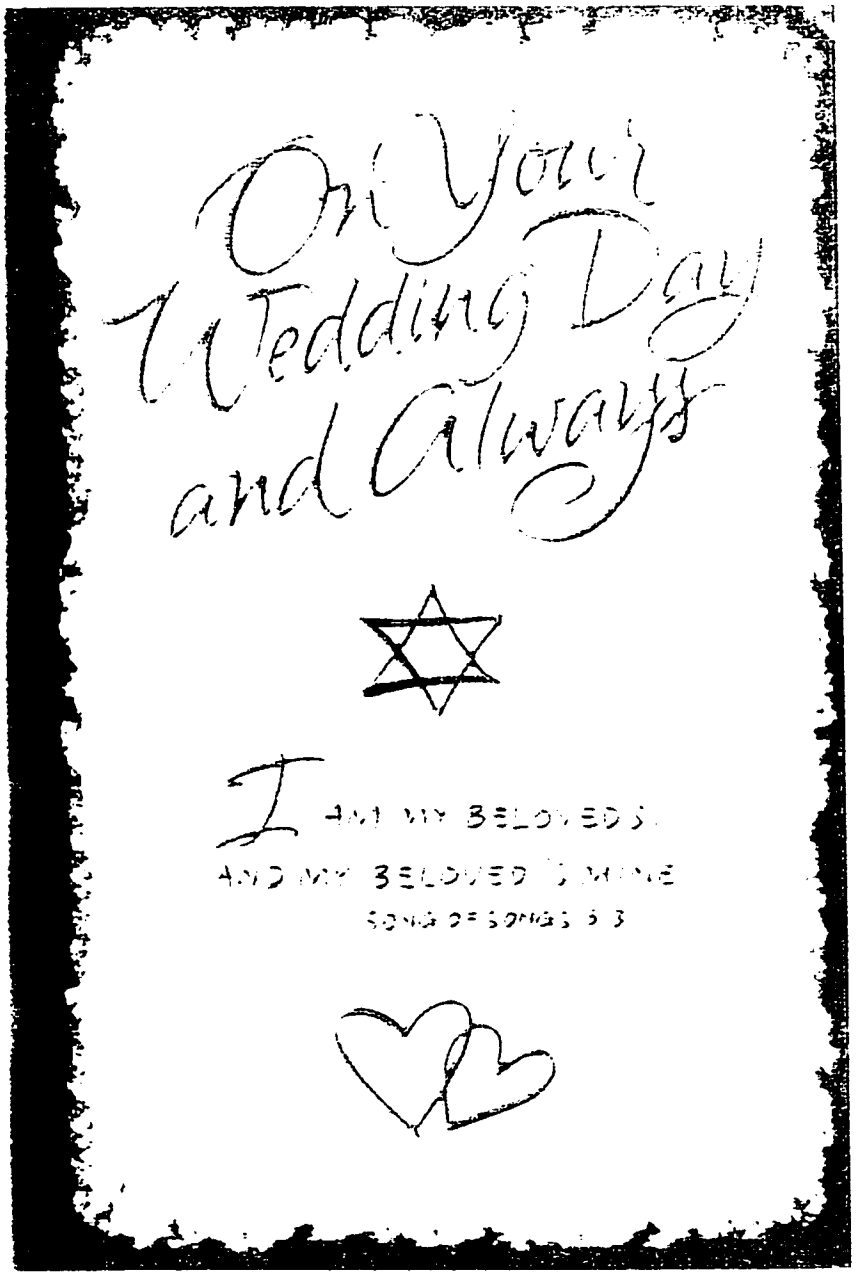
On Your
Wedding Day
and Always
I AM MY BELOVED'S
AND MY BELOVED IS MINE
SONG OF SONGS 6 3

Plate 88

The Bridal Gift Registry
BED BATH & BEYOND
The best in-store registry is now also online.

Plate 89

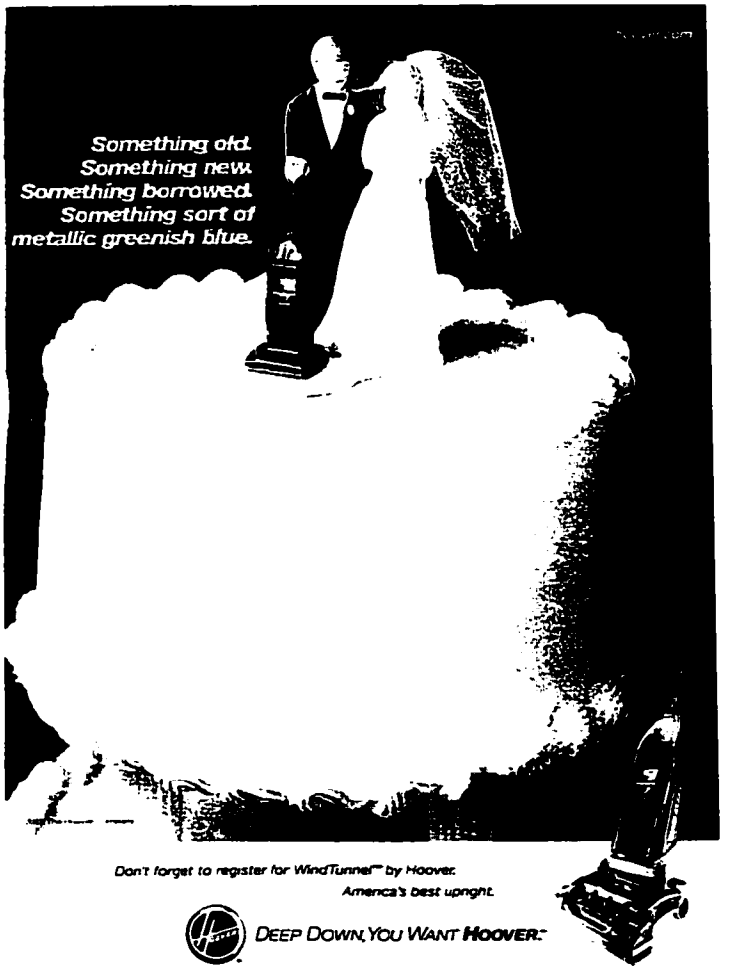
Something old.
Something new.
Something borrowed.
Something sort of
metallic greenish blue.
Don't forget to register for WindTunnel™ by Hoover.
America's best upright.
DEEP DOWN, YOU WANT HOOVER.®

Plate 90

Carpet Sweepers

Bissell's Carpet Sweeper is the greatest labor saver of the age in the home. An absolute necessity in every home.

MODERN MARRIAGE – MODERNE EHE
Anno 1900

She is wearing the Pants
Sie hat die Hosen an

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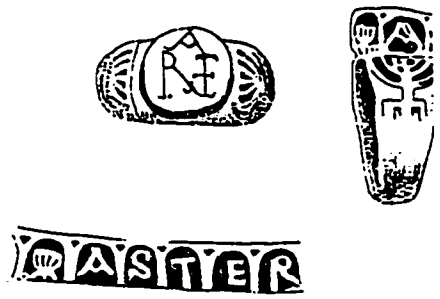

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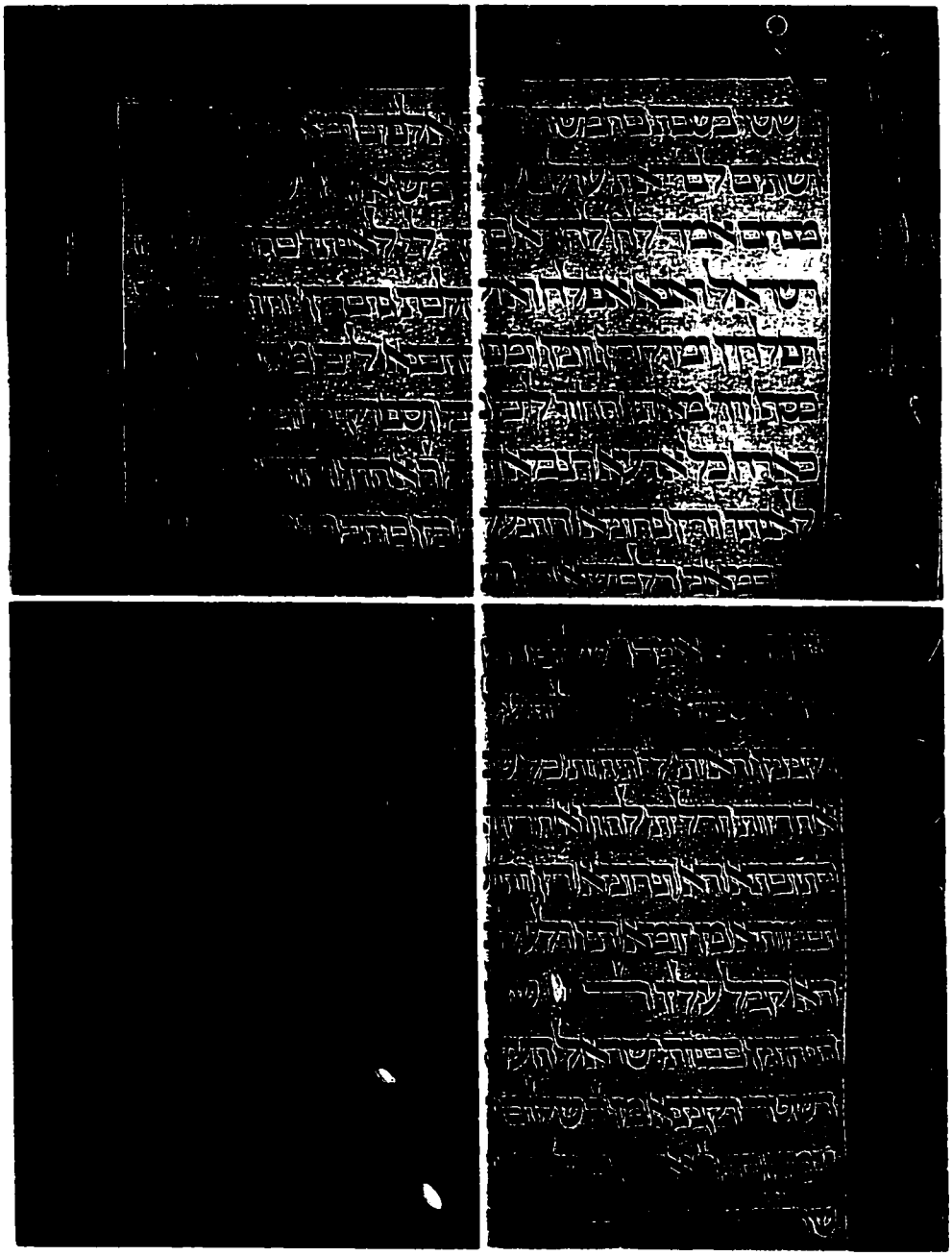

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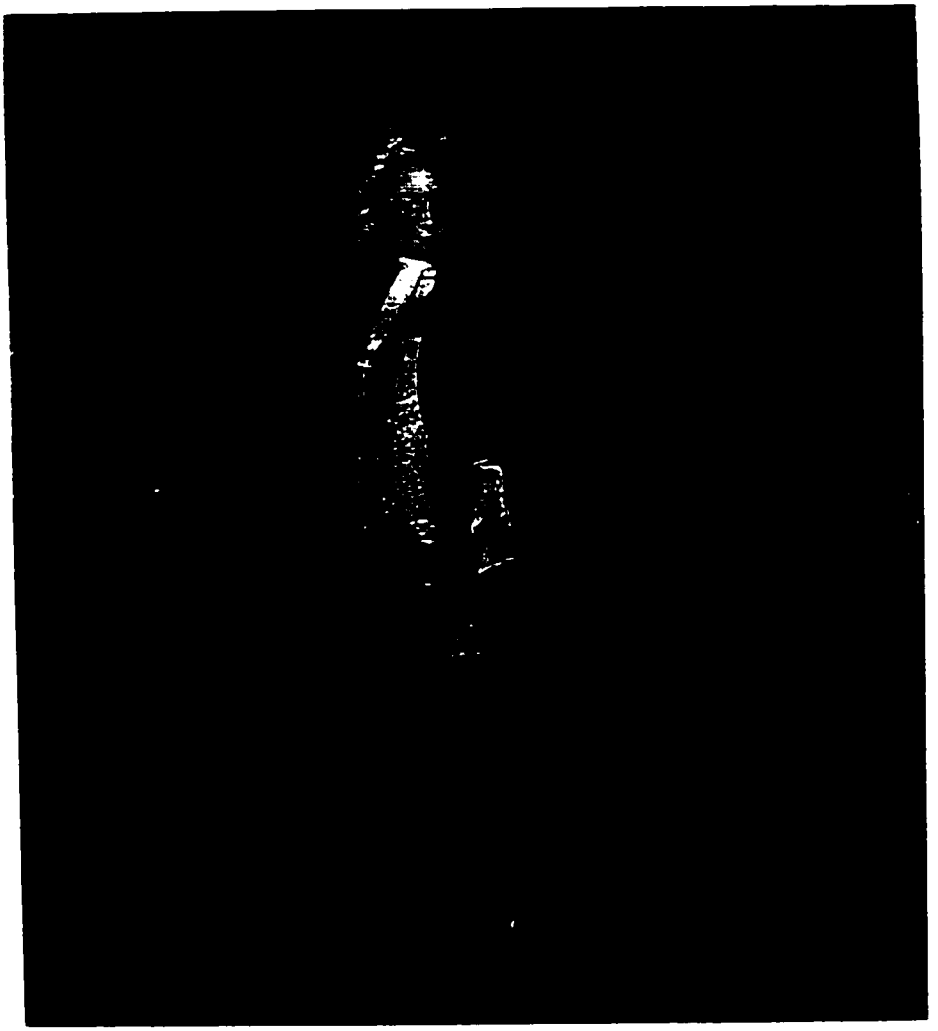

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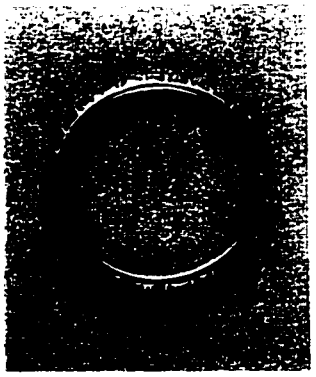

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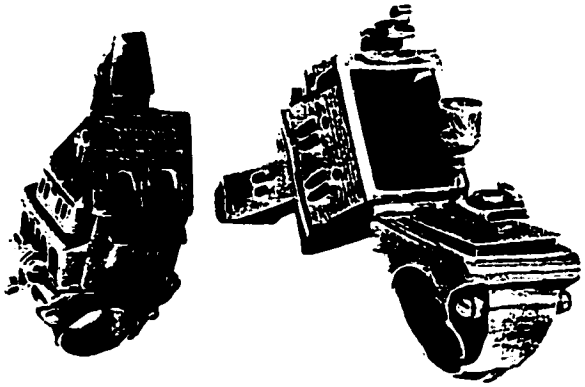

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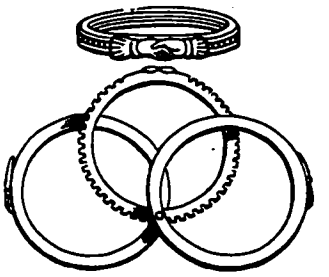

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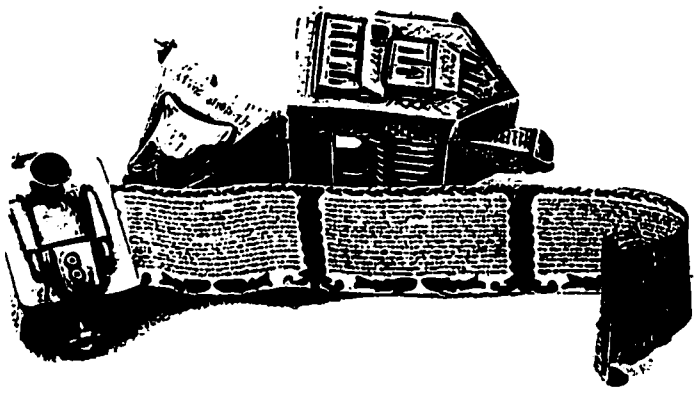

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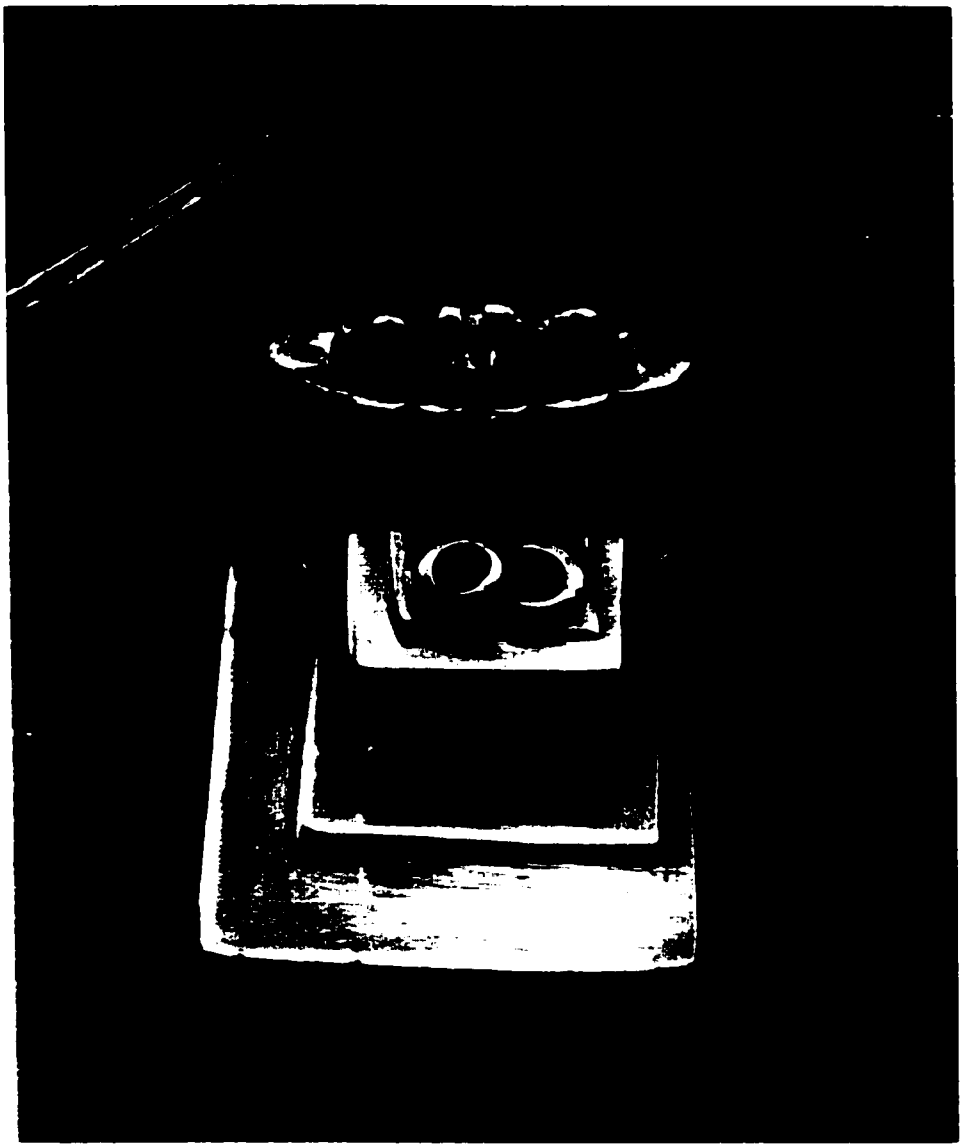

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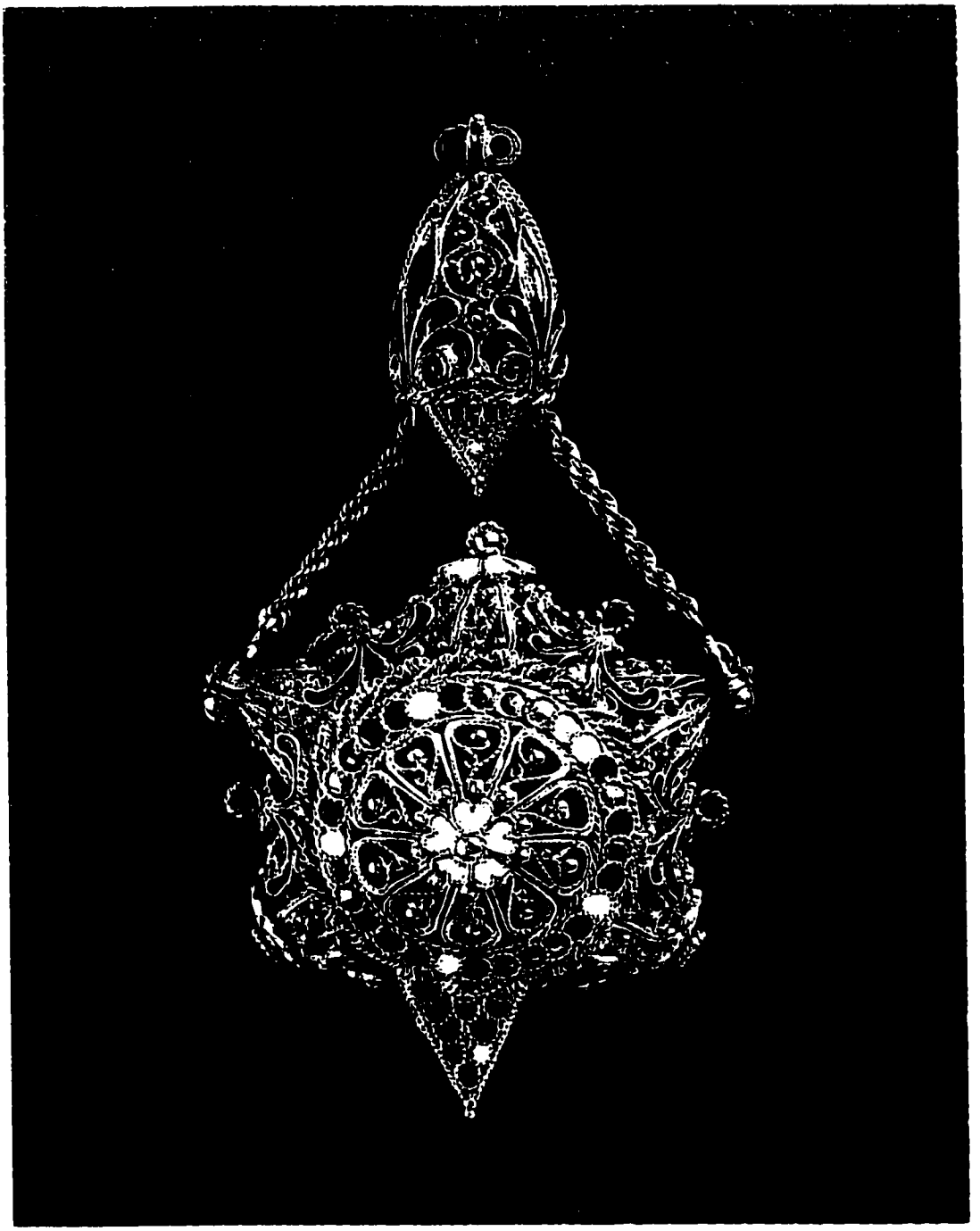

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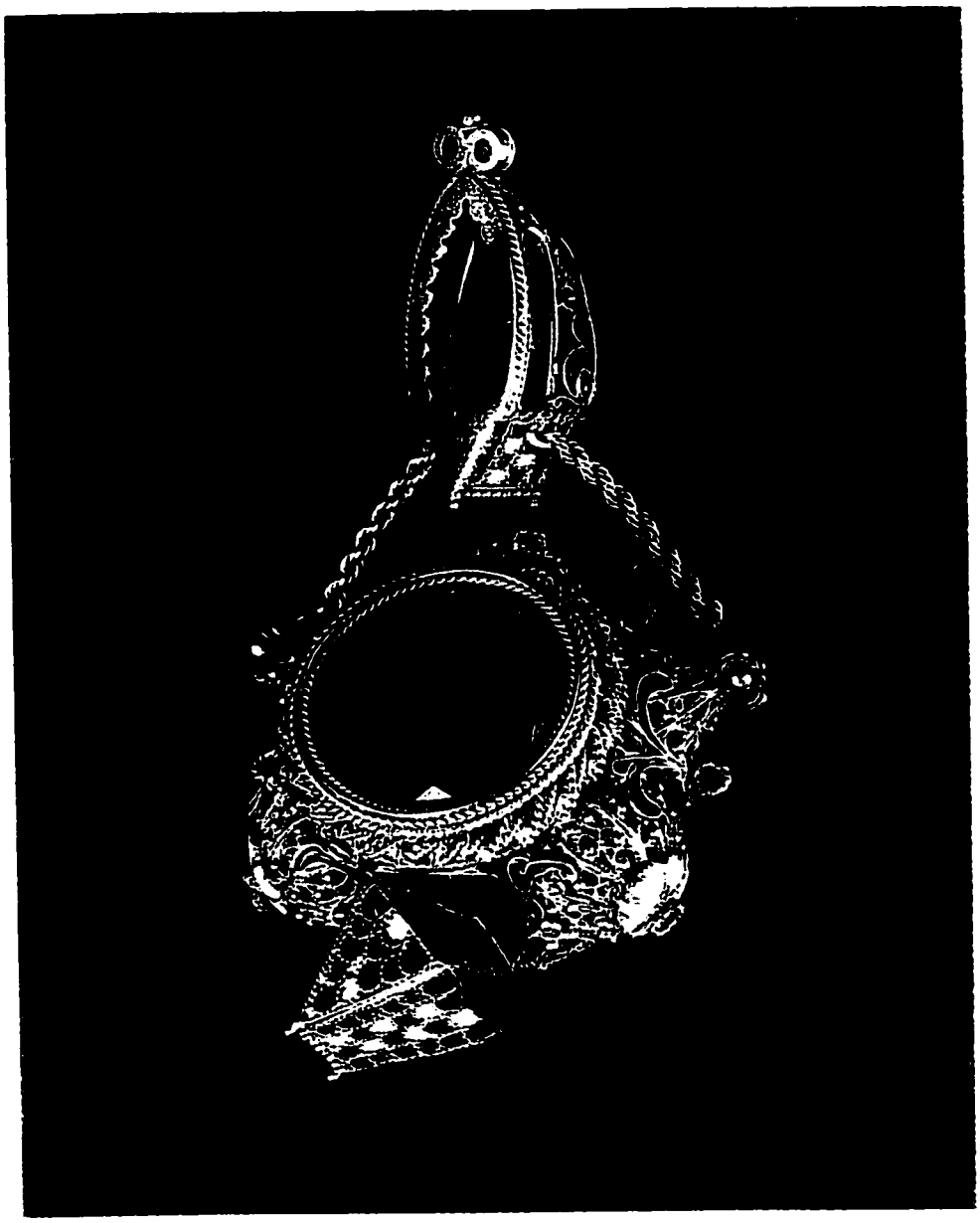

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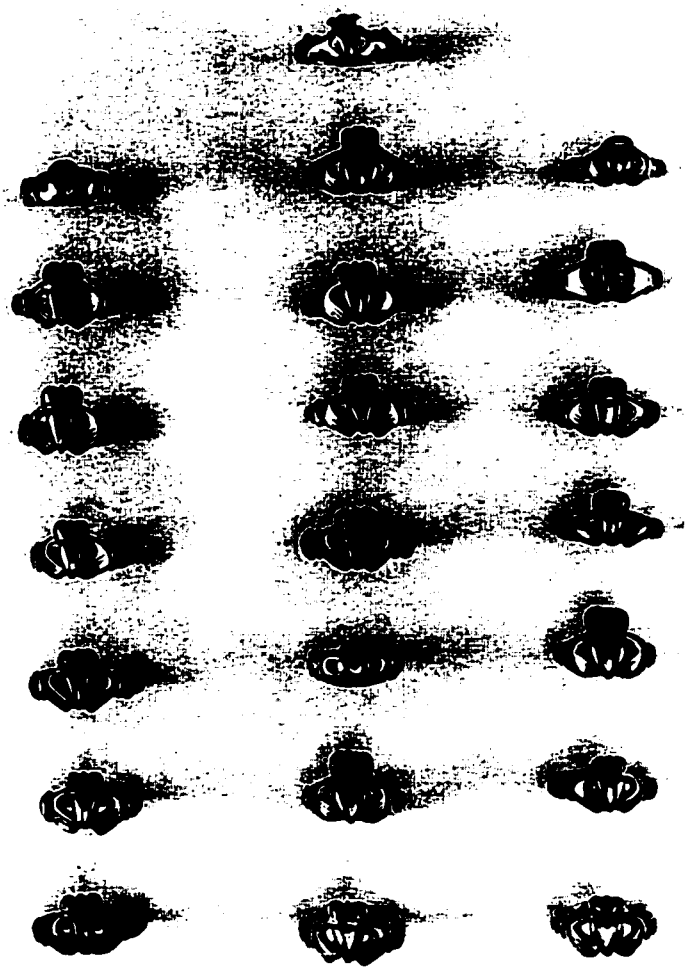

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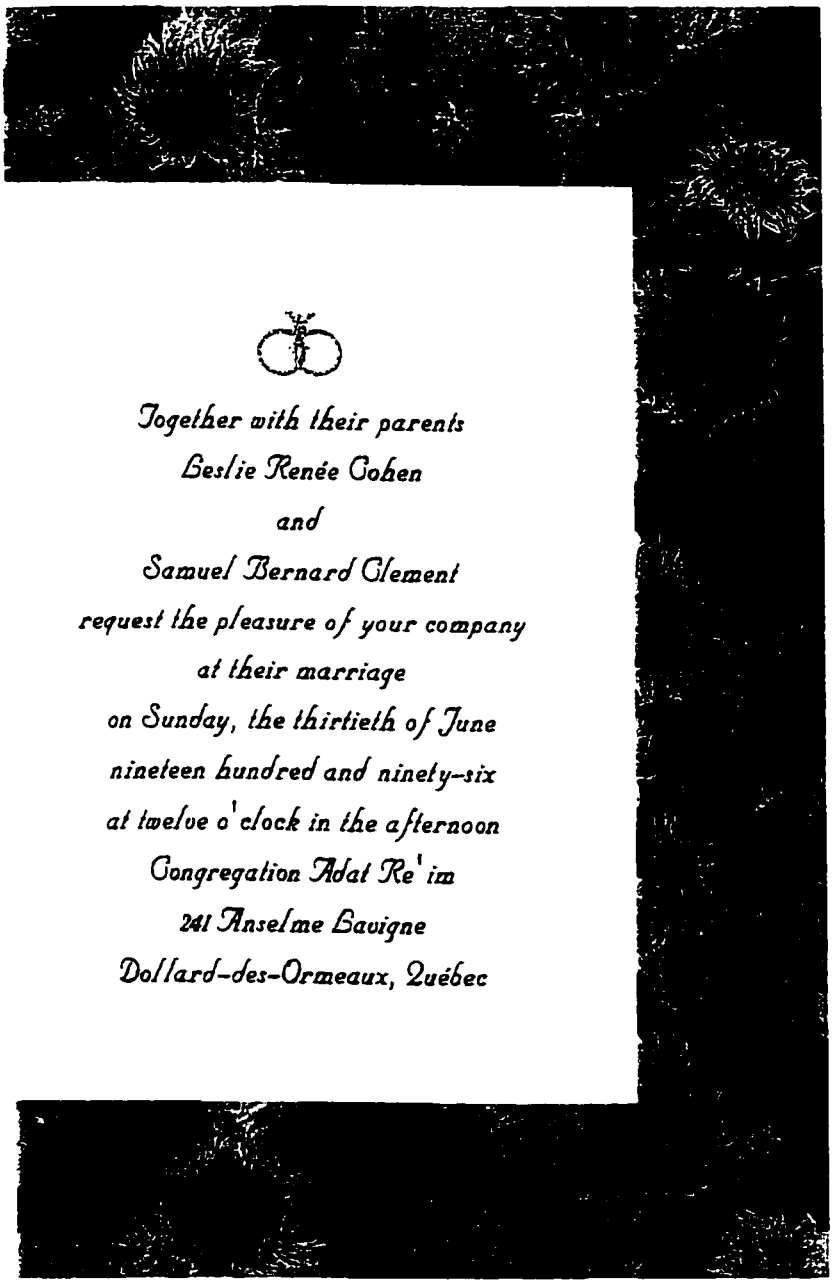
Together with their parents
Leslie Renée Cohen
and
Samuel Bernard Clement
request the pleasure of your company
at their marriage
on Sunday, the thirtieth of June
nineteen hundred and ninety-six
at twelve o'clock in the afternoon
Congregation Adat Re'im
241 Anselme Lavigne
Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Québec

Plate 110