

“Is Richler Canadian Content?”

Jewishness, Race, and Diaspora

In 2004, two questions were asked in reference to Mordecai Richler, questions that position Jewish and Canadian in opposition. The questions—“Is Richler Canadian Content?” and “Whose history is being told? Jewish or Canadian?”—seem to belong to an image of the past found in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. And yet these questions not only were asked recently, but failed to draw attention to their ideological assumptions. One was posed as the topic of a plenary panel for “The Richler Challenge” conference, held at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, March 18-19, 2004. And the other was asked by Coral Ann Howells and Peter Noble in the introduction to *Where are the Voices Coming From? Canadian Culture and the Legacies of History* (2004). This paper takes up these questions and their underlying logic.

“The Richler Challenge” conference promoted itself, in the words of co-organizer Nathalie Cooke, as “want[ing] to challenge contemporary readers to come to terms with the impact of [Mordecai] Richler’s work” (qtd. in Arnold 25). On the last day of the conference, a plenary session asked panelists to respond to the question “Is Richler Canadian Content?” Glenn Deer argued that Richler’s writings displayed his discontent with national categories and that he was preoccupied with the sacrifice of the naïve or weak national self. Neil Besner pointed out that Richler’s concerns with French-English tensions and with broader issues of cultural and ethnic origins emphasized uncomfortable questions about “Canadian” content. David Macfarlane asserted that Richler’s writing transcended all categories. Although he noted the offensiveness of asking if a Jewish Montreal writer

is Canadian, he emphasized the great pleasure that Richler took in his own satiric mockery of these identifications. Blair Munro focused on Richler's unpublished first novel and its connection to American and European literary models. Frank Davey responded that Richler was more Canadian discontent than content, and that categories like Canadian and multicultural are redundant in a transnational time. Although each was quick to say that Richler would have rejected the question, they did not query its logic. Why ask the question? And why ask the question in relation to Richler? Is there something specific to him or his body of work that might prompt such a question to be taken seriously?

In the introduction to *Where are the Voices Coming From?* Howells and Noble situate the text as an exploration of "the problematic representation of Canadianness" and its "different constructions of history and its legacies" (x). The papers explore Canadian cultural history and identity in three sections: English-French, First Nations, and Jewish-Canadian. In reference to literary works by Régine Robin and Anne Michaels, and the films *Anne Trister* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Howells and Noble make a significant distinction:

The differences of perspectives are multiplied in the case of First Nations writers, while versions of immigrant experience in post-World War II in Montreal and Toronto represent yet another, far more cosmopolitan view of history. We have chosen examples by Jewish Canadians here. *Whose history is being told? Jewish or Canadian?* And how to tell European Jewish history to Jews born and brought up in Canada? (xii-xiii, italics added)

Howells and Noble do not remark on what basis they distinguish between Jewish and Canadian, other than to figure Jewish as an immigrant community. Nor do they reveal their reasons why Jewish Canadian representations of history not only figure as cosmopolitan, but also as perhaps more cosmopolitan than other "immigrant" communities in Canada (as implied by the lack of comparative ethnic representation).

The two questions "Is Richler Canadian content?" and "Whose history is being told. Jewish or Canadian?" set up a particular scene of inquiry regarding how "Richler" troubles the category of Canadian, a scene that turns on assumptions about Jewish, and by extension Canadian, identity. The questions also raise a subset of questions. Are Jewish and Canadian mutually exclusive categories of identity? What creates the terms for framing "Jewish" outside the Canadian nation-state or, as Howells and Noble's comment seems to imply, outside all national identifications?¹ Both the questions and the lack of attention to their ideological assumptions trouble me, and lead to this

paper's thesis that there is a clear need for a renewed discussion about the ways in which to speak about Jewishness in Canada.

I believe it is not a coincidence that the questions take Richler for their frame of reference. "Richler" has a unique place in the Canadian literary imaginary. He was among the first wave of ethnic writers to achieve both critical and popular literary success, and his body of work stands at the precipice between two literary and critical landscapes—representations of and by non-Anglo-Europeans and non-Europeans—that together profoundly and irrevocably altered the Anglo-European dominance of Canadian literature.

This paper first reads Richler and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959) as a barometer for understanding the frames that shape the perception of Jewishness in the two questions. From the basic perspective of plot and action, the novel portrays a young Canadian Jew's ruthless obsession with buying property in Canada, but peripheral to the main story runs a narrative about the construction of whiteness in Canada. I will explore the ways in which this narrative situates Jews in relation to Anglo-Canadian culture and post-war hierarchies of racialization. This reading, then, becomes the basis for a consideration of whether the critical reception of the text and the two questions reflect or challenge the text's construction of Jewishness and its assumptions related to nation, race, class, and religion.

Then I will turn to what I believe is a contradictory perspective on Jewishness found in contemporary diaspora studies in Canada. Richler's text, and by extension Canadian Jewish literature, seem to fit uneasily into this new critical territory, as the terms of what constitutes diaspora have shifted. This criticism reflects a particular relationship to whiteness. Although it recognizes the historical place of Jewish experience in the development of the conception of diaspora, the discourse of diaspora in Canada has become tied to racialized communities in such a way that Jewishness falls outside its concerns. This study locates these two disparate strands of contemporary thinking concerning Jewishness in Canada and argues that they not only reveal an uncertainty about how to speak about Jewishness, but also possibly reflect the ambiguities and complexities within Jewish identity formation itself.

Racializing Jews

Mordecai Richler's body of work overlaps two landscapes, landscapes best characterized by different relationships to whiteness that have accompanied radical changes in the domination of English Canadian literature by those

of British descent. From a critical perspective, I read the landscapes as discontinuous, but realize that they are also developmental in the sense that A.M. Klein's success opened the door to the first wave of literatures by ethnicized minorities published in Canada. The narrative realism of these texts energized representations of racialized working-class, immigrant, and refugee communities in Canada and their transgenerational interactions with larger social and cultural structures. There is no question that the characters depicted are perceived, internally and externally, as other to mainstream Canadian culture.

Within this early wave of representations of and by these "other" Canadians, Richler's texts stand out. As John Ower notes, "as a 'Jewish' novel, *The Apprenticeship* has both a pungent ethnic flavour and the convincingness that arises when a writer deals with a milieu with which he is completely familiar" (413). The text's *odour*, itself a typical displaced criticism levied at ethnic groups, comes from the way it powerfully critiques social and political post-war Canadian culture. By moving away from realism's stock character types, Richler's novel is among the first to expose and, in so doing, challenge calcified assumptions constituting "Canadians" as well as "Jewishness."

Early criticism of the text focuses primarily on class and religion in its understanding of Jewishness. In reference to Montreal, Ower describes "Duddy's Montreal [as] divided along social, cultural, and economic lines" (414). He understands Jews as forming a collective based on overlapping categories of class, religion, and culture. In his study of the text, Terry Goldie does not construct Jewishness per se, but situates Jews, as he does Hindus in Trinidad, as a marginal and disenfranchised community. Goldie writes "The Hindus and Jews are doubly removed from control. The Jews are of little concern to the rulers of Canada, the Hindus to the rulers of Trinidad" (16). It is open to speculation on what basis Goldie believes Jews to be marginalized. Yet, the alignment with Hindus in Trinidad suggests religion may be the factor. Alternatively, Stephen Henighan reads class as the central focus of the text's depiction of Jews: "Richler's novel . . . projects . . . the egos of the upwardly mobile second- and third-generation Montreal Jews who grew up in poverty on St. Urbain Street, and broke out of the ghetto and into the business and professional class, eventually establishing themselves in the upper-middle-class redoubts of Hampstead and Cote St. Luc" (22-3). Yet, all three critics read Jewishness as a stable category, rather than picking up on the ways in which Richler reveals Jewish culture to be contested and fragmented.

None of the critics mention race, which I believe is key to understanding the text's reflection of Montreal's social hierarchy, represented through the nexus of Anglo, French, and Jewish communities. Race, in this reading, however, is not a pre-given category, but a result of the process Michael Omi and Howard Winant define as racialization: "the term racialization . . . signif[ies] the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group. Racialization is an ideological process, an historically specific one . . . emerg[ing] from the struggles of competing political projects and ideas" (64).

Speaking as the voice of British cultural values and beliefs, a teacher at Duddy's school articulates a clearly demarcated social hierarchy that places race at the center of various markers of identity formation. In commenting that "there were already three gentiles in the school (that is to say, Anglo-Saxons; for Ukrainians, Poles, and Yugoslavs, with funny names and customs of their own, did not count as true gentiles)" (7), the teacher approaches identity equipped with overlapping assumptions about class and religion and yet arranging them in a racial hierarchy. The text establishes "Anglo-Saxons" on the top and Jews and other non-Protestant communities on the bottom. Like other European ethnic groups who practice other forms of Christianity, Jews are racialized pejoratively as non-gentile or non-white. White is a category reserved for Anglo-Saxons, a community whom the teacher certainly would describe as having "normal" "names and customs." Other religions, as well as visible minorities, do not even register in the hierarchy the teacher lays out—their total absence, throughout the text, speaks to their social and political non-presence in the imaginary of this textual world.

Although he does not use the word "white," Duddy's teacher's reference to gentiles speaks to what Daniel Coleman describes as "white civility," performative projects based on "the standardizing ideals of the ideals of whiteness, masculinity, and Britishness" (10). As I suggested with regard to Duddy's comment, religious affiliation plays an important role in the normalizing of what it means to be a Canadian. It is not the teacher or any other member of his community, significantly, who speaks of whiteness as the touchstone for cultural belonging; rather it is Duddy who articulates whiteness as signifying a larger set of modes or "performative projects": "White men, Duddy thought. *Ver gerharget*. With them you just didn't make deals. You had to diddle . . . I suppose he [Mr. Calder] wanted me to play golf with him for eighteen years or something. I haven't got that much time to waste . . ." (227). Duddy understands that Mr. Calder, a

wealthy establishment figure who initially seems to mentor Duddy, has time to entertain himself—the luxury of leisure, a luxury Duddy views as an upper middle-class white privilege. By contrast, Duddy is literally and metaphorically always on the run, trying to make his mark in the world and establish himself as a “contender.” Beneath the sarcasm, Duddy understands that there are unwritten modes-of-being that represent and maintain the stability, security, and power of white cultural dominance, and alternatively the fragility, insecurity, and powerlessness of other peoples racialized as non-white. As Coleman asserts, “at the same time that civility involves the creation of justice and equality, it simultaneously creates borders to the sphere in which justice and equality are maintained” (9).

Duddy is prevented from penetrating the mainstream society, as he has not yet internalized what Coleman calls the “manners and behaviours” (21) of white civility. Duddy and Mr. Calder have a conversation about their relationship that illustrates this point further, while also emphasizing the relationship between race and class. Duddy asks,

“[H]ow come you never introduce me to any of your other friends?”

“They might not understand you.”

“You mean I might try to make a deal with them like I did with you over the scrap and that would embarrass you. I’m a little Jewish *pusherke*. Right?”

Mr. Calder didn’t answer.

“If I was a white man I wouldn’t say that. You guys never say what’s on your mind. It’s not—well, polite. Right?” (259)

Duddy knows his lack of “civility” or whiteness structures his difference. Mr. Calder may entertain himself with Duddy in the privacy of his home, but their relationship has no real place in his larger life. And Duddy finally realizes that his hopes that Mr. Calder will foster his entrance into the mainstream cultural milieu are a fantasy. Yet, the fact that Duddy is of European descent—he is, to borrow Homi Bhabha’s phrase, “almost the same, but not quite” (114)—enables some sort of relationship between them. For, if Duddy were a member of a visible minority, in today’s lexicon, one can imagine that there would be no possibility that Mr. Calder would spend time with him.

For in the moment of the text’s imaginary, the hierarchical structure offers only communities with European descent the promise of social and political rewards. Assimilate and be recognized as a Canadian! The act of bridging the difference between non-Canadian and Canadian relates to the central motif of the text, the equation between owning land and becoming somebody: “A

man without land is nothing” (48). Put more directly, Duddy “knew what he wanted, and that was to own his own land and to be rich, a somebody” (75). As Duddy notices, working-class Jews and French-Canadians seem to occupy similar marginal social and political positions that relate to the land they occupy:

Duddy saw for the first time the part of Ste Agathe where the poorer French-Canadians lived and the summer residents and tourists never came. The unpainted houses had been washed grey by the wind and the rain. Roosters crowed in yards littered with junk and small hopeless vegetable patches and Duddy was reminded of his grandfather and St Dominique Street. (92)

The depiction of Duddy’s grandfather’s backyard shares a similar sense of fruitlessness: “His family lived upstairs, and outside in the gritty hostile soil of his back yard, Simcha planted corn and radishes, peas, carrots and cucumbers. Each year the corn came up scrawnier and the cucumbers yellowed before they ripened” (45). Although Duddy’s grandfather is credited with the phrase “a man without land is nobody,” it most likely comes from a larger cultural view of communities wanting to share in the possibilities that middle-class resources and, alternatively, civility can endow.

Perhaps referring to a popular perception of the text and possibly anticipating subsequent readings such as John Ower’s, in which he comments that Duddy plans to “mak[e] the resort into a sort of little Israel” (425), George Woodcock argues that “Duddy Kravitz in his obsessive longing for land is in fact not living out the Zionist wish for homeland; he is living out the Canadian desire to possess land which he can immediately tame, transform, cover with buildings, fill with people, and put to a commercial use” (36). I strongly agree with the relevance of Woodcock’s focus on class and believe it overly simplistic, not to mention politically problematic, to overlay the complexities of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict onto the text. Woodcock’s class orientation also points towards a postcolonial reading of the text, and his rebuttal of reading Duddy as a Zionist raises an important question: why has there never been a postcolonial reading of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*?

Is it not possible that Richler is satirizing Canadian history as it pertains to Jewish communities and experiences? Alternatively, because Richler is a Jew, however defined, is he, or must he, always be looking beyond Canada towards Israel? As Woodcock points out, the novel clearly situates its action in Canada, and responds to specific Canadian relations pertaining to the covert theft of land and ownership rights. Those who seek “land” have no

historic or contemporary indigenous claims; Duddy is Canadian but the land he desires is described as "Injun territory" (308), thus making the present French-Canadian owner, Duddy, and Westmount WASPs equally guilty in the capitalist-colonial enterprise. Duddy's obsession with land is a modern-day invader-settler narrative. A classic Canadian story. Land and its resources are, after all, the engine that drives the colonial project. Owning land, for Duddy, a minority, also represents a passport to obtaining mainstream visibility and power, as ownership carries with it the inherent possibility that it will cleanse him of the *odour* or "grit" (45) of his working-class and religious affiliations. Duddy's desire for land is an aspirational desire, a desire to become a part of the upwardly mobile middle class—the class that, perhaps best, embodies the invader-settler belief that the highest achievement is owning land: a belief that the rewards of citizenship stem from becoming a shareholder in "Canada." Duddy thus seeks to free himself from his internalized self-construction as "a nobody" and become a somebody, or otherwise put, a full-fledged Canadian.

The Contemporary Terrain

The questions—"Is Richler Canadian Content?" and "Whose history is being told? Jewish or Canadian?"—seem to belong to an image of the past I traced in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. And yet these questions not only were asked recently, but the answers also failed to probe their ideological assumptions. In light of the absence of similar questions posed about other canonical British-descended writers, such as Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, and Timothy Findley, the questions are revealing. Such questions might well be asked about a writer like Dionne Brand, an immigrant herself whose texts explore transnational patterns of oppression and marginalization. Although Richler lived in Europe for an extended period of time (from 1951 till 1972), Montreal was his home for most of his life. Furthermore, his body of work is largely set in Canada and explores distinctly Canadian problems and events, which are also explored in his journalistic responses to particulars of Quebec social and political life. (My own father read Richler in the early 1970s as a humorous "guidebook" to Canada and Canadian political culture after his emigration from Germany).

Yet Richler and Brand occupy two related but differing landscapes. Richler's fictional texts animate a trajectory that moves the Canadian canon from depictions of British-inflected cultural landscapes to include other cultures. From the contemporary perspective, this first turn away, however

radical it was at the time, was one towards Canadians who shared European descent, albeit with ethnicities, like Richler's Jews, who have been racialized as non-white. The second shift began in the early 1980s, with increasing interest in the representations of and by peoples from visible minority or non-European cultures, who may have been in Canada for many generations or new immigrants.

In light of this shift, Richler's work, in content, experience, and narrative form, seems entrenched in the past: the perception of his work changed, in critical reception, from that of radical otherness to being suspect for its gendered and nostalgic old-school blindness and concerns. Warren Tallman, in 1973, notes that "[t]o a newer generation of writers it's doubtless [that] Richler's prose . . . seems elegiac, inviting comparison, not forward to the much more open, freely improvisational modes in which they work, but back to modes they have all abandoned" (77). By the 1980s, Richler had become part of the establishment, a major CanLit insider. Yet, in 2004, planning "The Richler Challenge," the event's organizers found that scant scholarly attention was being paid to Richler. I believe the complexities that face Jewish Canadian writing—in terms of a lack of critical and contemporary vocabulary to speak about and argue for the continuing relevance of thinking about Jewishness—contribute to this impasse.

In contending with the question of what Richler shares with Brand and other immigrant writers, we arrive at a more careful examination of processes of racialization. On one level, Richler's and Brand's bodies of work express a common sense of otherness. They both examine the ways in which "white" Canada has *overdetermined* their identities as non-Canadian in racialized ways. An early influential examination of these concerns appeared in the writings of Frantz Fanon.

The Jew . . . is a white man, and, apart from some rather debatable characteristics, he can sometimes go unnoticed . . . the Jews are harassed—what am I thinking of? They are hunted down, exterminated, cremated. *But these are little family quarrels.* The Jew is disliked from the moment he is tracked down. But in my case everything takes on a new guise. I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance. (115-16, italics added)

Fanon's characterization of the history of European anti-Semitism as "little family quarrels" positions Jews as a part of the family of "white men." He reads the attempted genocide of European Jews as an internal "white" war that will, paradoxically, cleanse Europe of racial difference. Omi and Winant's assertion that "[r]acial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete

expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded" (59) is useful here to understand Duddy's pursuit of "whiteness," or at least the social power that comes with being seen as white.

Dionne Brand argues that "[b]uilt around the obvious and easy distinction of colour, "whiteness" became more and more the way to differentiate the coloniser from the colonised . . . [i]nclusion in or access to Canadian identity, nationality and citizenship (de facto) depended and depends on one's relationship to this 'whiteness'" (187). Brand, echoing Fanon, goes on to argue that Canadian ideas of "whiteness" have a "certain elasticity" (187) to "contain inter-ethnic squabbles, like that between the English and the French" as well as to "swallow" (188) other white Europeans—albeit once assimilation has been realized. Although her characterization describes Duddy's relationship to Anglo-Canadian culture, Brand ultimately understands the racialized body as being excluded from the colonial nation-state's sense of belonging: you are either white and a Canadian or non-white and an outsider.

Non-white immigration has also played a role in the whitening of Jewishness, and contributed to the downplaying of deployment of "Semitic" (Middle-Eastern descent) as a misnomer for non-white. Jews can drop their "colour" and become white, but only because there are new minority groups who are compelled to take up the lower social positions, once held by the likes of Duddy's father, who works as a taxi-driver and small-time pimp. The cycle continues: Canada depends on a cheap labour force of racialized peoples (who work as nannies, maids, and labourers, for example) whom "white" Canadians can feel to be *other* to themselves. The neoliberal narrative assures both groups the acceptability of low wages and lack of security, necessary "contracts" towards the achievement of a better life and a Canadian identity.

In spite of the whitening of Jewishness in Canada, the recent rephrasing of what seems like an archaic opposition (Canadian versus Jewish) begs the question of where to find the discursive language to study the complexities of Jewishness in Canada. One would assume that diaspora studies would be one such logical place. Although it remains a term taken for granted in Jewish Studies, *diaspora* is being actively rethought in the broader field of comparative diaspora studies. Internationally recognized scholars in the field (including Avtar Brah, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Stuart Hall) recognize the Jewish experience as historically important, but its relevance has been delinked from the category and has faded in importance. The irony, of

course, is that diaspora historically characterizes the Jewish experience of exile, community, and relationship to homeland and embodies the tension within the push-pull of place and memory for diasporic communities. But on a number of levels, Richler's text, as well as Jewish Canadian literature, fits uneasily in this new field of inquiry.

At a public lecture at the University of Western Ontario in 2004, Rinaldo Walcott made a distinction between globalization studies and diaspora studies, which helps us examine the contradictory context within which Jewishness is understood in Canada today. He asserted that the former is a "white" area of study and the latter is a "non-white" area of study. In light of this binary, Jews would be discussed in relation to globalization and assumptions relating to privilege, mobility, and most significantly, "whiteness." This raises the point that Jews in Canada are not all "white"—Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews have long histories in countries such as Palestine, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen, India, Ethiopia, and Morocco as well as histories of habitation within Europe—nor are all middle or upper-middle class. In reference to Jews of European descent, it is also impossible to totalize such a broad community as necessarily "white," since such Jews form, historically and currently, a range of "racial" communities.

In recent Canadian criticism, diaspora has become mobilized to talk about peoples and experiences on the underbelly of Empire, globalization, and transnational capitalism. David Chariandy summarizes the desires of what he describes as "postcolonial diaspora studies" this way:

diaspora studies will help foreground the cultural practices of both forcefully exiled and voluntarily migrant peoples; diaspora studies will help challenge certain calcified assumptions about ethnic, racial, and, above all, national belonging; . . . diaspora studies will help forge new links between emergent critical methodologies and contemporary social justice movements. (n.p.)

Chariandy focuses on the urgent need to address inequities. These inequities, he goes on to say, face "specific racialized collectivities within the modern West" (n.p.). Tightening the focus further, Lily Cho stresses the experience of racialization as the cause for diasporic belonging. She writes, "Minority marks a relation defined by racialization and experienced as diaspora" ("Citizenship" 98). Implicitly connecting to her point about minority communities, Cho contends, in another paper, "I want to reserve diaspora for the underclass, for those who must move through the world in, or are haunted by, the shadowy uncertainties of dispossession" ("Turn" 19). Although each writer touches on aspects of the "classical" experience of Jewish diaspora,

Chariandy and Cho emphasize the need to rethink the term in a contemporary sense, in light of current injustices that directly centre on the psyche of racialization, as well as its social and political effects.

The emphasis on the present has consequences for questions relating to Jewishness and Jewish experience, isolating criticism relating to Jews in a separate, and perhaps historical, field of study, rather than creating a location where a text like *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* can be included in a comparative dialogue about colonial racialization and its intersection with religion and class in Canada. This new direction in diaspora studies implicitly characterizes Jews as having *arrived* and as having successfully transcended the type of racialized otherness I traced in Richler's text. Providing they are able to shed traditional and visible markers of identity and earn financial, educational, or social rewards, Jews have the opportunity to move up the very same hierarchy that was once a hindrance to upward mobility. For in terms of mainstream power and access to political and cultural discourse, Jews for all intents and purposes are understood as "white." This perspective situates Richler's text, then, as a relic from the past, one whose depictions of injustices towards Jews are now out-dated, because the injustices are presumed no longer to occur.

The focus on contemporary urgencies, specifically, does not take into account what Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin describe as "rediasporification" (11) and its significant transgenerational effects. Since the first dispersion, there has been a long history of Jewish settlement, migration, and exile from every area of the globe.² Migration, forced or voluntary, contributed to the multi-racial formation of Jewishness. (I clearly remember the surprise I felt when I encountered a large group of Indian Jewish women, all wearing saris, speaking perfect Hebrew in a synagogue in Vienna. When I spoke to one woman, she explained they were Cochin Jews. I also have had many conversations with academics who feel equally surprised to learn that my partner's family are Turkish Jews. Many have expressed surprise and disbelief that Jews do not only hail from Europe.)

The ancient territory pertaining to modern-day Israel plays a significant role in this history, but so do Vienna, Berlin, Budapest, Odessa, Istanbul, Damascus, Baghdad, Fez, Adis Ababa, and Cochin, not to mention, Lodz, the Polish birthplace of Duddy's grandfather. Richler does not write about whether Duddy's family had long or short histories in Lodz. Nevertheless, these cities are but a few Jewish homelands, homelands that may continue to be viable or perhaps exist only as unsettling presences, structuring

the dreams and imaginations of their former inhabitants as well as their descendents, and thus play a role in expanding the understanding of the complexities of the constitution of Jewish diasporic belonging.

Although the contemporary study of diaspora reads race in visible and political terms, I read the representation of Jewishness in Richler's work idiosyncratically for its challenge to the assumed clarity of the white-non-white divide. In Canada, Jewishness, on a superficial level, may seem to have lost its racialized construction, but I believe the two questions as well as the lack of attention to understanding their assumptions and implications suggest that there is still a great deal more thinking to be done about Jews and Jewishness, or more broadly about race, religion, and national identity formation—conversations to which I believe texts like Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* can contribute. It is exactly the paradoxical and *scandalous* nature of Jewishness that I seek to hang on to, an internally heterogenous understanding of diasporic difference.

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NOTES

- 1 In the absence of reference to the national origins of Jewish immigrants, Howells and Noble's comment seems to unify such communities under “Jewish.”
- 2 597 is the year when Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians, leading to the exile of the Jews.

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