

Writing the Triple Whammy

Canadian-Jewish-Québécois Identity, the Comedy of Self-Deprecation, and the Triumph of Duddy Kravitz

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a Jewish novelist must have a nice line in self-irony.¹ In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, Sigmund Freud defined “tendentious jokes” as those that frequently involve “rebellious criticism . . . directed against the subject himself, or . . . against someone in whom the subject has a share . . . (the subject’s own nation, for instance)” and went on to speculate that this “occurrence of self-criticism . . . may explain how it is that a number of the most apt jokes . . . have grown up on the soil of Jewish popular life,” finally expressing doubt over “whether there are many other instances of a people making fun to such a degree of its own character” (156-57). Had he spent any time in Canada, however, Freud would soon have become familiar with self-deprecating jokes that make Canada and Canadians the butt of their humour. Likewise, you don’t have to read too far into the history of Quebec before you become aware of what Callaghan in *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (1989) provocatively describes as the propensity of French Canadians to be “consumed by self-pity” (298), a manifestation of the inferiority complex, or “cultural cringe”²—often masquerading as fierce nationalist pride, as inferiority complexes are wont to do among disenfranchised minority cultures—that arguably lies at the heart of Quebec’s view of itself. Mordecai Richler, the person, then, was thrice cursed: he was a member of a despised minority, living in a province alienated from and marginalized by dominant national culture, in a country forever looking enviously, anxiously over its shoulder at its more illustrious, more powerful neighbour. For Mordecai

Richler, the writer and satirist, however, this triple whammy was not a curse but rather a blessing. This article will explore some of the ways in which Richler's status as a member of three different stigmatized groups provided material for the self-deprecating humour that characterizes his work. Whereas Michael Greenstein has argued that in Richler's work "the doubly displaced Jewish Canadian" hero "uses humour to challenge the authority" of the cultural centres of New York and London, "aveng[ing] [himself] on other interlopers through a series of practical jokes" (197, 198), I will argue that Richler's trebly-displaced protagonists, exemplified by Jake Hersh, tend to turn their comedy inward, punishing themselves for their perceived inferiority both to "other interlopers" and to the (non-Canadian) arbiters of culture. In contrast, I will suggest that Duddy Kravitz is Richler's greatest creation because he both embodies and transcends the comic stereotype of the Jew on the make, exploiting but finally rejecting the masochism and internalized anti-Semitism of his relatives and his peers.

In *Home Sweet Home: My Canadian Album* (1984), Richler describes Montreal as "a sequence of ghettos" (37), a divided city in which there was much mutual distrust and suspicion between the Quebecers and the Jews, reinforced by segregated education:

Under the confessional system, we went to one set of schools and the French Canadians to another. I'm sure many of them believed that there was such an order as the Elders of Zion and that the St Urbain Street Jews were secretly rich. On my side, I was convinced all French Canadians were abysmally stupid. (38)

Richler's candid, self-satirical confession of his own ignorant prejudice here balances his indictment of the superstitious anti-Semitism of the French Canadian "other" and hints at a certain synchronicity underlying the uneasy relations between the two groups. Indeed, although Richler remained throughout his life a fierce critic of the French separatist movement in Quebec, in particular what he saw as the absurd excesses of the *Parti Québécois* (PQ), he also recognized, and even identified with, many of the grievances of francophone Quebecers. Richler's greatest bugbear in his later work was the PQ's language legislation, Bill 101, which, among other things, called for the "francization" of all businesses, yet he acknowledged that its advent was the product of "the infuriating refusal of so many in high and influential places to learn French" and of the complacent, institutionalized racism of the WASP establishment that such monolingualism symbolized:

Through all the years of my boyhood here, hardly a French Canadian (or a Jew, for that matter) could be seen in the exclusive WASP dining and country clubs.

McGill University, an anglophone citadel, was insultingly indifferent to the French Canadian society that surrounded it, and maintained a quota on Jewish students. (Richler, *Sweet Home* 208)

This passage clearly implies that Jews and French Canadians had a common cause: Richler conflates the cultural exclusion of the two groups through the parenthesis in the first sentence, and the discrimination they suffered with the conjunction “and” in the second. Even at his most polemical, in *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!: Requiem for a Divided Country* (1992), Richler’s self-identification as a Quebecer is unequivocal, as evidenced by his use of the first-person plural as follows: “The truth is, we have always done things differently in Quebec, our laws seldom being quite what they appear to be” (2).

To judge by two anecdotes from Richler’s work, one of the things that made Richler feel at home in Quebec is its tradition of self-satire, a tradition that unites the Francophone majority and the Anglophone minority in the province. On the dust-jacket of *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!*, Richler recounts how “a popular French-Canadian singer explained to a TV interviewer, ‘We were raised in French and I want my children to suffer the same fate’” (n.p.). In *Home Sweet Home*, Richler tells the story of how his fellow Quebecer, the film director Ted Kotcheff, “who was driving a Peugeot in those days, was warned, just before he set off to meet a producer in Palm Springs: ‘What! Are you crazy? You can’t pull up in front of the Racquets Club in a little Peugeot. With a Quebec license plate! They’ll think you’re nobody’” (121). Although these are both examples of Québécois self-deprecation, the punchlines of these jokes depend for their impact on the audience’s familiarity with an inferiority complex that is national as well as regional.

Richler’s work is full of one-liners whose *donné* is that Canada is a backwater, characterized above all by caution and conservatism. Recalling his half-hearted adoption of the Bohemian lifestyle as a young man in France, Jake Hersh, the protagonist of *St. Urbain’s Horseman* (1971), anticipates Bill Clinton’s notorious defence of his youthful indulgence in narcotics: “Even in Paris, I remained a Canadian. I puffed hashish, but I didn’t inhale” (19). In *Home Sweet Home*, Richler subverts conventional ideas of teenage ambition, suggesting tongue-in-cheek that “[t]he Canadian kid who wanted to be a prime minister wasn’t thinking big, he was setting a limit to his ambitions rather early” (126) and he plays a variation on this theme in *This Year in Jerusalem* (1994), remarking that “[i]f the pre-World War I American boy, at the age of sixteen, was dreaming of how to conquer and market the rest of the globe, his Canadian equivalent . . . was already seeking

a position with an unrivaled pension scheme” (152). In this latter example, the prematurely middle-aged aspirations of the Canadian adolescent are thrown into relief by the grand scope of his American counterpart’s dreams, and of course it is always by the yardstick of their close neighbours that Canadians find themselves coming up short. Another anecdote of which Richler is very fond (in fact it crops up twice in his work, once in *St. Urbain’s Horseman* and once in *Home Sweet Home*) is that of the New York editor whose “list of twelve books with which to start a new publishing firm that was bound to fail” is headed by “a book titled *Canada, Our Good Neighbor to the North*” (Richler, *St. Urbain* 23; *Sweet Home* 30).

This American disdain for all things Canadian is a leitmotif running through all of Richler’s fiction. For example, the protagonist of *Barney’s Version* (1997), Barney Panofsky, remarks wryly that “Scribner’s had just sent back the first three chapters of my novel-in-progress with a flattering letter and a caveat. Alas, there was negligible interest in matters Canadian. Would you consider resetting your novel in Chicago?”³ (Richler, *Barney’s* 283).

Characteristically, Richler treats the plight of the Canadian author with a nice sense of self-irony, relating with relish the story of the final-year high school respondent to a “Canadian Awareness Survey” who, when asked to name any three Canadian authors, wrote: “Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence—never heard of them, so they must be Canadian” (Richler, *Jerusalem* 146). Far from being outraged, Richler congratulates the student for “redeeming himself with a quality distinctly Canadian— a self-deprecating sense of humor” (147). He also points out that the level of ignorance revealed by the test (sixty-one percent of respondents were unable to identify three Canadian writers) is in fact hardly a damning indictment of the thinness of Canadian culture or of its education system, since “I take it that less than five per cent of high school students in and around, say, Santa Barbara would know if Philip Roth was a delicatessen, Bernard Malamud a furrier, or Saul Bellow an orthodontist” (147). The fact that Richler identifies the three most eminent Jewish-American novelists of his generation to make his point that ignorance is a relative phenomenon, and that the gap between high culture and low is just as wide in the United States as it is in Canada, is of course not coincidental. For if Canadian authors have always tended to find themselves in the shadows of their American peers, Richler, as a Jewish-Canadian contemporary of Bellow, Roth, and Malamud, clearly felt himself to be in some sense in competition with this illustrious triumvirate from

across the border, situating himself in a tradition not just of Canadian and Quebec, but also, and perhaps most importantly, of Jewish fiction.

Diverse and wide-ranging as his *oeuvre* is, Richler's reputation is likely to rest principally on what might be termed his great Canadian-Jewish pentateuch—*The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959), *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1971), *Joshua Then and Now* (1980), *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (1989), and *Barney's Version* (1997). In these five novels—spanning four decades—Richler creates his own Yoknapatawpha in the old working-class Jewish quarter of Montreal. From the shabby streets of St. Urbain and St. Jeanne de Mance, to the smarter enclave of Outremont, to the exclusive suburbs of Westmount, Richler maps the geographical, social, and psychological terrain traversed by his Canadian-Jewish protagonists.⁴ The figure of Duddy Kravitz recurs a number of times in this sequence of novels and I will devote the second half of this article to a discussion of the ways in which Richler dramatizes, in his representation of Kravitz and Jake Hersh—the protagonist of *St. Urbain's Horseman*—two radically different responses to being a Quebecer-Canadian-Jewish underdog.

Jake Hersh is a Canadian Jew by accident rather than design. Like Barney Panofsky's father in *Barney's Version*, Jake's family had wanted to immigrate to America but could only raise enough money for the passage to Canada. This was a familiar scenario among Jews of this generation, and although the sense of having had to settle for second best sometimes faded with time, more often than not it continued to rankle. In *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, Richler describes the sense of frustration (so near and yet so far) felt by many of this generation of Canadian Jews: "For them Canada was not yet a country but the next-door place. They were still this side of Jordan, in the land of Moab, the political quarterlies as well as the Yiddish newspapers they devoured coming out of New York" (11).

Among many second-generation Canadian Jews, too, America—and New York in particular, as the centre of Diaspora Jewish cultural life—symbolized freedom: an escape from the parochialism, marginalization, and displacement of the Montreal Jewish ghetto. As Richler recalls in *Home Sweet Home*, "We endured Montreal . . . but New York, New York was our heart's desire. The real world, the big time" (161). For Jake Hersh, "America . . . was the liberating knowledge which struck him one day at the university that he was not necessarily a freak. There were others, many more, who read and thought as he did, and these others were mostly in New York" (92).

Like many Canadian artists of Richler's generation, Hersh longs to reinvent himself as a New York Jew. As Richler himself did for a time, he

ends up instead as a Canadian expatriate in London. If Canada represented to Hersh's grandparents a welcome refuge from the persecution they had suffered in Eastern Europe but at the same time enforced a continued exile from their promised land—the US—then London likewise represents a compromise for Jake. It is a more cosmopolitan city than Montreal but lacks the glamour of New York, as Jake's best friend and rival, Luke Scott, is fond of reminding him: "A week in New York, Jake, and you'll wonder what you're doing in this city. In the end, we're Americans you know. You wouldn't feel like a foreigner there" (Richler, *St. Urbain* 172). Luke's reasoning here is somewhat disingenuous in two senses: firstly, because he conveniently conflates Canadian and American identities ("we're Americans you know"), and secondly, because he ignores Jake's ethnicity, which complicates his identification with both North American states and his status as an expatriate Canadian in London.

Early on in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, Jake reflects on the irony of his situation as a working-class Montreal-born Canadian Jew living in the genteel world of literary London: "As a St. Urbain Street boy he had, God forgive him, been ashamed of his parents' Yiddish accent. Now that he lived in Hampstead, Sammy [his son] . . . mocked his immigrant's twang" (13). Instead of finding a spiritual home, Jake has simply swapped one form of exile for another. Wishing to escape the stigma of his parents' Jewishness, he finds that in London his Canadianness continues to mark him out as conspicuously other. Moreover, Jake is tormented by a sense that his predicament is fundamentally inconsequential and mundane: a pale, stale imitation of those documented on innumerable occasions in the books and films written and produced by the Jews on the other side of the border:

Jake craved answers, a revelation, something out there, a certitude, like the Bomb before it was discovered. Meanwhile, he was choked with self-disgust. Given his *curriculum vitae*, orthodox Jewish background, emergent working class, urban Canadian, his life until now read to him like any Jewish intellectual journeyman's history. To begin with, his *zeyda* was a cliché. A gentle Jew. A chess player. His childhood street fights, the stuff of everybody's protest novel, lacked only one trite detail. Nobody had ever said to him, 'You killed Christ'. On the other hand, his mother actually said, 'Eat, eat.' . . . At fifteen he had been sufficiently puerile to tell his father 'The synagogue is full of hypocrites,' and two years later he had the originality to describe himself as . . . ghetto-liberated. (Richler, *St. Urbain* 251)

The amorphousness of Jake's desires here is reflected in the vague nature of the formulations Richler uses to describe them (Answers to which questions? What kind of revelation?) and the simile "like the Bomb before

it was discovered” obscures rather than clarifies the nature of his dilemma. As the passage proceeds, however, it becomes clear that the origin of Jake’s existential anxiety is in fact quite specific: it arises from his Jewishness, particularly from the fact that his Jewish experience seems to conform so closely to the experiences of other Jewish intellectual journeymen.

Jake’s frustration at his own lack of originality—at the familiar banality of his plight—might be read as an allegory for Richler’s own predicament as a Canadian-Jewish novelist perpetually in the shadow of his more renowned Jewish-American peers, Malamud, Roth, and Bellow. Bellow, in particular, is a constant and palpable presence in Richler’s fiction, from the allusions to Augie March in *Son of a Smaller Hero* (1955) to the moment near the end of *Barney’s Version* when Barney Panofsky hurls a copy of Bellow’s novel *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) at his fallen hero, Boogie, saying “Here, you want to read a real writer” (Richler, *Barney’s* 383). Beyond his aesthetic admiration for, and professional rivalry with Bellow, there lurks the fact that the Nobel Prize-winning novelist was born in Quebec before moving to the US, and therefore is, by birth, a Canadian-Jewish-Quebecer like Richler himself.

Characteristically, Richler turns his reverence for Bellow into a self-deprecating joke in *This Year in Jerusalem* (1994). Before setting off for Israel, Richler arranges to meet an old friend at Moishe’s, a Jewish steakhouse that he describes as “a Montreal institution” (67). Waiting for his friend to arrive, a waiter comes over “to chat about the old days when we all lived in the neighborhood” (67). The waiter reels off a list of “names recalled from the good old days,” finishing with “William Shatner, Captain Kirk of *Star Trek*” (68). Richler continues the anecdote:

Foolishly, I tried to trump that one. “Do you know who used to live right around the corner from here on Napoleon Street?”

“Sure. The Kushners. They were in footwear. Retail.”

“Saul Bellow,” I said, “right around the corner. When he was a boy.”

“Bellow?” the waiter asked, puzzled. “Now you’ve got me. What was his father in?” (68)

The punchline to this joke manages at once to belittle the parochialism of the waiter, cut Bellow down to size, and puncture the pretensions of Richler himself. As such, it is a fine example of the Freudian “tendentious” joke—that is, a joke that is not simply an end in itself but that serves a particular purpose. Here the purpose of the joke is to satirize both the cultural ignorance of the working-class Montreal Jewish neighborhood that Richler grew up in and the extent to which Richler has detached himself from his roots: a St. Urbain Street boy really ought to have known better than to try

to impress one of his peers with his knowledge of the biography of a writer whose fame is largely restricted to the literati.

Jake Hersh's attempts to become "ghetto-liberated" are themselves often made into the kinds of self-satirical jokes that Freud identifies as typically Jewish. Stepping out onto the terrace of a friend's villa in Ibiza after an unsuccessful attempt to participate in the orgy going on inside, Jake quickly shrugs off his humiliation and drinks in the scene in a spirit of self-satisfaction:

The Mediterranean sun. Spain. Grubby fishing boats were beginning to chug into the harbor. Gulls swooped hungrily overhead or bobbed on the shimmering green water alongside. Remember this, Jake thought, cherish it, and he felt very ghetto-liberated, very Hemingway, as he raised a bottle to his lips, drained it, and flung it into the sea. A moment later he was sick to his stomach. (Richler, *St. Urbain* 19)

In this passage, Richler evokes an idyllic picture-postcard panorama, before abruptly bringing the reader—and Jake—back to reality. Just as he had tried to persuade himself inside the villa that he was enjoying himself at the orgy ("This is living, Yankel", he thinks to himself) only to find himself nauseated as he becomes entangled in a ruck of sweaty bodies, so out on the terrace his attempt to impersonate the gestures of the hard-boiled, hard-living Hemingwayesque artist is pathetically short-lived (18). In both cases, Jake's failure to inhabit this role is implicitly traced back to his Jewishness, as is suggested the fact that he addresses himself at the orgy by a Yiddish pet-name ("Yankel"), that he empties a champagne bottle in a self-conscious attempt to prove to himself how far he has freed himself from the values of the "ghetto," and that he associates this act of self-liberation with a man with notoriously anti-Semitic views.⁵ In spite of the fact that the horseman of the novel's title is Jake's fictional avenging Jewish hero, the nemesis of the notorious Nazi doctor, Josef Mengele, Jake has clearly internalized some anti-Semitic attitudes himself.

Like Bellow and Roth, Richler tends to treat the subject of Jewish self-hatred comically, as an opportunity for satire: hence Jake's repressed Jewishness returns, causing him to vomit just at the moment when he is celebrating his escape from its confines. Canadian anti-Semitism, particularly virulent in Quebec, where the French nationalists identified the cosmopolitan, anglophone Jews early on as a threat to their ideal of a separatist francophone state, features in many of the novels, including *St. Urbain's Horseman*,⁶ and is scrupulously documented in *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!*, but, as in the work of Bellow and Roth, the threat to Jewish identity in Richler typically comes not from without, but from within. Whereas Roth repeatedly invokes his

fictional alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman—who is, like Roth himself, a secular Jewish writer battling with accusations of betrayal and self-hatred from the Jewish community and even from within his own family—to explore this phenomenon, Richler returned to Duddy Kravitz: a self-serving, aggressively amoral Jewish businessman.

Duddy first appears as the eponymous hero of the novel that made Richler's name, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Published in 1959, the same year as Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus*, Richler's book, like Roth's, was accused by some Jewish critics of perpetuating anti-Semitic stereotypes. Whereas in the title novella of his collection Roth satirized the values of the Patimkins, assimilated *nouveau riche* Jews, in *Duddy Kravitz* Richler focused his attention on a working-class, uneducated Jewish boy determined to make his fortune. Like a Canadian version of Sammy Glick (the hero of Budd Schulberg's 1941 novel, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, to whom Duddy is explicitly compared by his arch-enemy in the novel, Irwin Shubert), Kravitz is driven, relentless, restless.⁷ Duddy's French Canadian girlfriend, Yvette, observes, with a mixture of awe and irritation, that he is "always running or jumping or scratching" (Richler, *Duddy* 92). Even when unconscious, he is in a perpetual state of orange alert:

At ten the next morning Duddy came charging out of a bottomless sleep, unsure of his surroundings but prepared for instant struggle, the alibi for a crime unremembered already half-born, panting, scratching, and ready to bolt if necessary. (176)

Duddy's edginess—his readiness to react combatively or defensively at a moment's notice—reflects not only his temperament but also the way he lives his life. Forever scrambling to get ahead, lurching from one dubious enterprise to another, always with an eye on the main chance, Duddy does indeed conform in many ways to the anti-Semitic stereotype of the unscrupulous, exploitative, acquisitive Jewish businessman. Certainly, Duddy is guilty not just of phantom crimes that haunt his sleep but also of real ones that plague his waking conscience. When he discovers that the secret ingredient of the apparently miraculous dieting pills that he has been peddling is tapeworm, he hurriedly offloads his share of the business onto his unsuspecting partners. Later in the novel, his friend, the epileptic Virgil, is badly injured after succumbing to a fit while driving a truck for Kravitz, even though Duddy is aware of the risks involved.

Kravitz is accused by Jews and non-Jews alike of generating anti-Semitism. Of Duddy Kravitz, Irwin Shubert observes that "It's the cretinous little money-grubbers like Kravitz that cause anti-semitism" (68) and in *St. Urbain's*

Horseman, in which Duddy makes his second appearance in Richler's *oeuvre*, Jake Hersh's best friend, Luke Scott, "castigated Duddy because he felt that it was just this manner of unprincipled operator who undermined his passionate defense of Jews to his father and his bemused cronies at the Granite Club" (136). Yet these comments reveal more about the self-hatred of Irwin and the hypocrisy of Luke's liberalism than they do about Kravitz himself. Coarse and unprincipled he might be, but Duddy is also capable of great selflessness and generosity. He acts as the saviour of his family on more than one occasion in *Duddy Kravitz*: it is he, for example, who rescues his brother, Lennie, when he is persuaded by his WASP college friends to perform an illegal abortion and has to flee from college. In *St. Urbain's Horseman*, when Jake Hersh is at his lowest ebb (having been convicted of indecently assaulting a German au pair), it is Duddy who comes to his aid, impulsively writing him a cheque for ten thousand dollars.

Whatever else Duddy may be, he is completely unselfconscious and unashamed, and this makes him something of a rarity in the pantheon of tortured, compulsively self-analyzing post-war Jewish fictional protagonists. One of his more successful entrepreneurial schemes—a Canadian Jewish *Who's Who*—is born as much out of sincere pride in his identity as a Canadian Jew as out of an opportunistic desire to exploit the sentimental patriotism and vanity of others (Richler, *St. Urbain* 131-38). On one level, this venture is of course another one of those self-deprecating jokes about the paucity of Canadian culture and the parochialism of its Jews, but Duddy's part in it is treated only semi-ironically. At one point in *Duddy Kravitz*, Duddy asks his Uncle Benjy, a *Partisan Review*-reading, left-wing, assimilated Jewish intellectual, why he's never had any time for him: "Because you're a *pusherke*. A little Jew-boy on the make. Guys like you make me sick and ashamed" (Richler, *Duddy* 242). Duddy's response is the most impassioned speech he makes in the novel:

You lousy, intelligent people! You lying sons-of-bitches with your books and your socialism and your sneers. You give me one long pain in the ass. You think I never read a book? I've read books. I've got friends now who read them by the ton. A big deal. What's so special in them? They all make fun of guys like me. (242)

Duddy's scorn for books is hardly to his credit, and of course there is particular irony in his allegation that books by Jewish intellectuals "make fun of guys like me," since this was an accusation levelled at Richler himself on more than one occasion.⁸ Nonetheless, his identification of a strain of hypocrisy and complacency in men like Benjy is entirely accurate.

In a sense, Duddy is the absolute antithesis of his childhood friend, Jake Hersh, who is the epitome of the self-hating intellectual Jew. In *St. Urbain's Horseman*, Richler reveals Jake to be precisely the kind of writer who “make[s] fun of guys like [Duddy]” but who “shield[s] [himself] from ridicule by anticipating with derisive tales of [his] own,” all the while painfully aware that he “had emerged . . . from a place that had produced no art and had exalted self-deprecation above all” (Richler, *St. Urbain* 162). If Richler ruthlessly exposes Hersh's hypocrisy, he nonetheless never romanticizes or idealizes Duddy. When he makes his final appearance, as a multi-millionaire in *Barney's Version*, his riches have neither ennobled him morally (halfway through the novel we learn that he has been indicted on charges of insider trading), nor made him socially respectable (he confesses to Barney that “his millions notwithstanding, never mind his donations to the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the art museum, the Montreal General Hospital, McGill, and his whopper of an annual cheque to Centraid, he was still unable to crack Westmount society to his wife's satisfaction” (Richler, *Barney's* 200, 160). If Richler doesn't spare Duddy from criticism, he never patronizes him. Instead, he embodies him with an unapologetic, self-promoting dynamism, and a mischievous *chutzpah* that transcends the defensive self-critical humour that Freud saw as characteristic of Jewish culture and that is so ubiquitous in post-war Jewish fiction. Richler's triumph with Duddy is in fact to refuse the easy option of making fun of him but instead to take him seriously, to make a long-term artistic investment that reaps dividends not just in the vibrant presence of Duddy himself through a whole series of novels, but also in some of his other most memorable characters, such as Solomon Gursky and Barney Panofsky, both of whom are derived from the little *pusherke* from the wrong side of the tracks of a city in the wrong part of Canada, a country on the wrong side of the North American border.

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NOTES

- 1 For useful discussions of the tradition of self-deprecating Jewish humour, see Bleiweiss and Davies.
- 2 Originally coined by the Australian cultural critic, A.A. Phillips, to describe an

- “unthinking admiration for everything foreign (especially English) which precluded respect for any excellence that might be found at home” (vii), the phrase has in recent years gained wide currency in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies to indicate any internalized sense of inferiority, usually as the legacy of colonial experience.
- 3 The suggestion of Chicago may not be arbitrary, since Chicago is the adopted home of the Canadian-born novelist Saul Bellow.
 - 4 In *Home Sweet Home*, Richler comments that his childhood “world was largely composed of the five streets that ran between Park Avenue and the Main: Jeanne Mance, Esplanade, Waverly, St Urbain, and Clark”, and much of his adult fiction takes place within this small area of Montreal (96).
 - 5 There are echoes of Jake’s ineffectual attempts to shed the legacy of his Jewish background in the description in *Solomon Gursky Was Here* of a group of Russian-Jewish immigrants in Canada:
 In principle the group endorsed racial brotherhood, burning both ends of the candle, free love, an end to private property and all religious hocus pocus, et cetera. But in practice they feared or scorned gentiles, seldom touched anything but apricot brandy, dreamed of owning their own duplex, paid Kronitz fifty cents a week for insurance policies from the Pru, and were constant husbands and loving parents. (11-12)
 - 6 See *St. Urbain’s Horseman*, 113-14.
 - 7 Daniel Golden’s review of the film version of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* revived this comparison in its title: “What Makes Duddy Run?” To Michael Greenstein, Duddy’s perpetual motion suggests not Sammy Glick, but rather one of the archetypes of Judeo-Christian folklore: “Duddy, forever running, parodies the Wandering Jew” (198).
 - 8 In *This Year in Jerusalem*, for example, Richler tells of his meeting with members of the Jewish youth group Habonim (to which Richler himself belonged as a teenager), who accuse him of being “a Jewish anti-Semite” who “earn[s] big money writing novels that make fun of the Jews” (167). John Updike, in a favourable review of *Barney’s Version*, put it rather more delicately: “Not since the late Stanley Elkin and the early Philip Roth have I seen a writer take such uninhibited delight in caricaturing Jewish types, from ghetto Yiddish-speaker to superproper pseudo-Gentile, with all shapes of excessive energy in between” (333).

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