

Heroic Imaginings

Judaism, Masculinity, and Compensation
in Richler's *The Apprenticeship of
Duddy Kravitz*, *St. Urbain's Horseman*,
and *Solomon Gursky Was Here*

Over the course of his eleven novels, Richler returns again and again to the boys of St. Urbain Street, their youthful hijinks and their very adult angst; this is so much the case that critics charge him with repeating himself (Naves 139). If there is repetition, though, there is also development, particularly with regard to his protagonists' experiences of masculinity. *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959), *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1966), and *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (1989) feature increasingly ineffectual male protagonists who are preoccupied with the lives of very capable hero figures. In other words, the trajectory of these works follows an inverse equation: as Richler's protagonists fall further from the mark of ideal manliness, their fantasies about a paragon of masculinity become more vivid, ever-present, and all-consuming.

Richler criticism to date explores the pattern of hero worship in Richler's novels most fully as it relates to the Holocaust. Michael Greenstein's general study of Jewish Canadian literature explores the notion of "Almost Meeting," or *Vergegnung*, though his section on Richler's novels discusses the trope of running. In *Assimilation and Assertion*, Rachel Feldhay Brenner studies Richler's writing as a response to the Holocaust. She explores his earlier novels through a dichotomy of possible reactions to the post-Holocaust world: the impulse to assimilate the Jewish experience to the rest of humanity, or the desire to assert its uniqueness. Richler's heroes and their increasing presence in his novels, for Brenner, constitute a marked shift toward the latter.

Yet, Richler's protagonists are not only haunted by the ghosts of the past, but are also stalked by the new expectations of the present. Duddy, Jake, and Moses are contemporaries to the founding of the state of Israel, its remarkable success as a military power, and the change in the perception of Jewish men that these events brought about. In response, the protagonists of Richler's works imagine and revere heroes that embody these new expectations. A child of Montreal's immigrant Jewish neighbourhood, Duddy Kravitz idolizes the fabulously rich and powerful "Boy Wonder," Jerry Dingleman, the neighbourhood gangster. Living in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and more overtly touched by it than Richler's other protagonists, Jake Hersh casts his cousin Joey Hersh as the legendary Horseman of St. Urbain and imagines his Nazi-hunting escapades around the globe. In the midst of Watergate, Moses Berger dreams a family acquaintance, Solomon Gursky, into a hero of the North, a no-nonsense man of action in direct contrast to the big-government world of the novel's present. For all their grandeur, ferocity, and attraction, though, these heroes fail to compensate Richler's protagonists in any meaningful way. Indeed, while filling the role of mere acolytes, the three men are prevented from being the heroes of their own lives and for their own worlds.

The earliest example of this pattern in Richler's work appears in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, where Duddy inherits, but later rejects, a larger-than-life hero. According to Grant McGregor's assessment, Richler's 1959 novel is one in which "the urban myth is delineated and lived out," and Duddy's father plays an important role in perpetuating it (132). In his paying profession as a cabbie, Duddy's father Max taxis myths through the streets of Richler's imagined urban ghetto. In his repertoire, Max's favourite tales involve the Boy Wonder, the proverbial neighbourhood boy made good. With young Duddy listening in, Max waxes poetic about the ingenuity and gumption of Jerry Dingleman to the slightly incredulous crowd that gathers daily at the local cigar and soda shop (Richler, *Duddy* 21). Star-struck by the wealth, seeming success, and virility of a St. Urbain Street boy who went from rags to riches, Max inadvertently positions the Boy Wonder as a hero for Duddy, who earnestly "wanted to be a somebody. Another Boy Wonder maybe. Not a loser, certainly" (Richler, *Duddy* 65).

Enter the Boy Wonder of reality, rather than legend. Indeed, in sharp contrast with the pattern of hero worship that Richler develops later in his career, the Boy Wonder inhabits the same physical and temporal setting as the protagonist in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. As a result, Duddy is unable to maintain the sustained idolization that later protagonists do

for their heroes. For the reader too, doubt is quickly cast upon Dingleman's gleaming figure. "And what is he now?" asks a fellow soda and cigar store patron and replies, "The gangster" (Richler, *Duddy* 21). The myth of the Boy Wonder has two faces. Like the other Richler heroes that follow him, the Boy Wonder excites extreme adoration on one hand, and extreme disdain and disparagement on the other. Unlike in the cases of Jake's relationship to Joey and Moses' relationship to Solomon, however, the aura around the Boy Wonder is quickly dispelled for Duddy, who abandons him as a hero, only to take him on as an adversary.

Just two years before the release of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Richler professed in an interview to be "looking for . . . the values with which a man can live with honour" (Cohen 38). This search seems almost to end before it begins, with the supremely intelligent and self-governing Noah in Richler's earlier novel, *Son of a Smaller Hero*. With honour already fully realized in Noah, Richler leaves himself no room for exploration, development, or objectivity in his chosen theme. The author's solution in his next novel comes in the decidedly unattractive form of Duddy Kravitz. With the reprehensible, though at times oddly lovable, hoodlum at the center of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Richler can freely explore how one conceives, and misconceives, of ideas of manhood without being restricted to a model of unencumbered manhood, as Noah at times appears to be. Yet, Duddy's reprehensibility causes problems of its own. The young man's lack of self-reflectiveness means that Richler is unable to show any of the overwhelming self-doubt and derision that so torments his older protagonists, nor the heavy reliance of these more complex men upon the half-imagined and half-real hero figures in their lives.

In subsequent novels, Richler divides the traits of Duddy and Noah between a protagonist and an idealized hero with whom the protagonist finds himself infatuated. Thus in *St. Urbain's Horseman* and *Solomon Gursky was Here* (both novels named for their heroes rather than their protagonists), protagonists are self-aware, conscious of themselves as world citizens, ethically paralyzed, and class-bound; they have strained relationships with their families, and share an encyclopedic urge. The compensatory heroes they imagine, by contrast, are not bound by class, geography, or history as most people are. They communicate through action rather than speech, they exhibit an insatiable sexual appetite, they shrug off their origins and traverse the globe. These heroes, at least so far as the protagonists are concerned, represent the epitome of male honour.

That the first novel to feature a sustained and embodied form of compensation takes place in 1967 is no coincidence. The year marked an unprecedented shift in both Jewish self-perception, and the world's perception of Jews. Just as our present-day knowledge of the Holocaust clouds our ability to imagine a time when that genocide went nameless, so too does the contemporary news media's continual coverage of the Israeli armed forces render it difficult to imagine a time when Judaism and machismo were thought irreconcilable. Unlike our contemporary consciousness of the Holocaust, however, perceptions of Jewish masculinity did not change gradually, but in a single year: 1967. That summer Israel launched a pre-emptive attack against Egypt. Israel's Arab neighbours, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, responded with an all-out attack on the fledgling country, together with the support of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Algeria. In what many have dubbed "Israel's military miracle," the young state emerged victorious a mere six days later.

Paul Breines, in *Tough Jews*, argues that the 1967 Israeli war and victory ushered in a new conception of Jewish masculinity that broke from all its earlier forms. The Six Day War, as it was later called, demonstrated beyond a doubt that though "they [Jews] can be pretty good with a fountain pen and a briefcase, they can also if necessary be pretty good with a rifle and tank" (5). By dint of the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, Jews could now be tough and, according to Breines, the makeover came at just the right time. In the wake of the Holocaust, the expulsion of Jews from Arab lands, the Soviet murders of prominent Jewish intellectuals, and reports of Arab assaults on Israelis, victimhood weighed more and more heavily on the shoulders of American Jews in the mid-1960s. According to Breines, North American Jewry easily read Israel's victory over a coalition of Arab forces bent on their destruction as a reversal of recent Jewish history (71). "The Holocaust could now be replayed in the Middle East," Breines states provocatively: "Only this time, and in merely six days, the eradication of Jews had been averted by the decisive military action of a wonderfully new sort of Jew" (71). Suntanned, battle-hardened, muscular, and tall, the new Jew is nearly unrecognizable to his Eastern European forefathers. Over the course of his quick victory, the new Jewish soldier and man is able to redeem Jewish history to the extreme satisfaction of his diaspora counterparts.

Having emerged from the rubble of the Arab-Israeli War, the new Jew entered the contemporary North American literary scene through a fictional subgenre that Breines terms "the tough Jewish novel" (9). He gathers over forty of these novels, of which his book analyses a selection (9). Included

amongst his finds are spy-thrillers, family sagas, and novels of historical intrigue set anywhere from ancient Israel to New York in the 1970s, all of which feature idealized, competent, tough Jewish protagonists (9). After 1967, the new Jew takes centre stage, bronzed and buff, confident and capable.

This new Jewish character does not, however, take the leading role in Richler's fiction. Within *St. Urbain's Horseman* and *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, the powerful new Jewish characters are instead displaced into the realm of the imagination. From there, they serve as surrogate figures of masculinity for lesser men. Richler's novels include the new physically and mentally tough Jew, but, unlike the novels in Breines's study, relegate him to unsubstantiated fantasy.

In part, Richler's unwillingness to write unmitigated "tough Jewish novels" is owing to an accident of history. The novelist and his protagonists Jake and Moses—all born around the same year—were already in their late thirties by the time the new Jew was popularized on the world stage through the Arab-Israeli War. As has already been seen, men such as Jake and Moses were raised according to very different ideals of manhood, ones that venerated the meek, the kind, the accepting, and the passive. Thus, theirs is a generation on whom the tables are turned: the standards they were trained to meet are no longer the standards that apply. In *St. Urbain's Horseman* and *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, Richler's protagonists cope by imagining the complete fulfillment of the new masculine Jewish ideal within the lives and bodies of another, to whose life they grant themselves complete imaginative access and, occasionally, seek out literal access. In Jake's case, fancy leads to incredible visions of what his cousin Joey is up to on his world travels. He imagines the older man as a crusader against all those who have historically wronged the Jewish people. For Moses, compensation for his own masculine deficiencies comes in the form of eccentric millionaire Solomon Gursky. Solomon is the artist that Moses cannot be; that is, he lives his life as though it were his *chef-d'oeuvre*. Each protagonist knows his hero from real life, but, on the basis of even the briefest of encounters, concocts larger-than-life adventures and traits for him. Consequently, much of what is known by the reader about Joey and Solomon is filtered through the force of the need of Jake and Moses to lionize—to find examples of male effectuality, entitlement, and capacity.

Some of the details of Joey and Solomon's lives are verifiable, however, and these help to explain what attracted protagonist to hero in the first place. For example, one can be relatively certain that both Joey and Solomon had unique beginnings. Unlike Jake and Moses, who are forever marked

by their urban Jewish upbringing, Joey and Solomon both hail from places well outside the ghetto walls. Joey, for instance, “was born in a freezing miner’s shanty in Yellowknife, with the help, if you can call it that, of a drunken Polack midwife while his father was out boozing somewhere” (Richler, *St. Urbain* 128). From the moment of his birth onward, Joey was exposed to the harsh realities of life, while his counterparts from Montreal’s immigrant Jewish community had coddled childhoods. Solomon’s formative years were also unusual, though slightly tamer than Joey’s. He and his two brothers, Bernard and Morrie, grew up in Fort McEwan, a small rural town in Saskatchewan (Richler, *Gursky* 35). As distinct from the majority of their contemporaries within the Jewish community, the Gurskys arose from the prairies and the homestead rather than from the city street and the tenement home. The two heroes’ atypical origins render them particularly attractive to the likes of Jake and Moses because their personal histories represent what the two St. Urbain Street men can never aspire to themselves: an identity undetermined and unclaimed by and separate from their origins. Like the romantic conception of the genius, Joey and Solomon seem detached from the fate and limitations of their communities, or of any of the communities they later enter into. The heroes are able to fulfill Noah Adler’s wish in *Son of a Smaller Hero*: that is, Joey and Solomon appear to have “the right to begin with [their] birth” (Richler, *Smaller Hero* 62), unburdened by the legacies of historical trauma or victimization.

The two heroes are also, according to the combination of the verifiable facts and embellished narratives of their family histories, unburdened by inadequate male role models. In fleshing out the details of their respective heroes’ lives, the protagonists are sure to endow Joey and Solomon with uncompromisingly strong father figures as a means of compensating for their own lack of strong male role models. Indeed, the desirability of their lineages lies precisely in the unwillingness of Joey’s father and Solomon’s grandfather to bow to the will of the majority, the complacent, or the placating. Generally, Richler places a high premium on dissent within his fictional universe, and nowhere is this more evident than in the tone of veneration that Jake and Moses adopt as they recount the sordid and defiant histories of Joey’s father, Baruch Hersh, and Solomon’s grandfather, Ephraim Gursky. Jake, for one, cannot conceal his admiration as he tells of Baruch’s refusal to take the easy, well-trodden route of the majority in favour of the loner’s path when he first arrived in Montreal. Baruch, Jake explains to his friend Luke one night, was only a week off the boat from Lodz, when he “cut loose,

he was transmogrified. He proclaimed himself a *shoimar-shabus* [one who keeps the laws of the Sabbath] no longer. Defiantly he ate non-Kosher food . . . His elder brothers disowned him” (Richler, *St. Urbain* 163). After shaking off his Old Country atavism, Jake continues, Baruch worked and lived in such far-flung places as Australia, the Cape, Japan, China, Tahiti, and the Yukon, before he worked as a whiskey runner and was shot in a gun battle near the Montana border (Richler, *St. Urbain* 163). Baruch’s wife, Hanna, tells Jake that when her husband returned to Montreal he would unabashedly heckle the Jewish neighbourhood from the streets; he would holler, “I’m here! Jews, it’s Baruch, your brother is home!” (Richler, *St. Urbain* 161). Baruch’s blatant individualism renders him an enviable male role model in Jake’s eyes. In opposition to Jake’s own father, who resignedly accepts his inconsequential role in society, as well as the derision of his family, Baruch is fiercely his own man and makes no concessions to community. This is not to say that Jake takes Baruch for a pillar of morality: Joey’s father, by all accounts, is an inveterate drunk with an incurable wanderlust and a frighteningly violent nature. Yet, while there is no denying Baruch’s waywardness, his rejection of the unreasoned acceptance of Old World conventions renders him admirable from Jake’s perspective.

In *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, Solomon’s grandfather Ephraim receives a much more intimate treatment from Richler than Baruch does in *St. Urbain’s Horseman*. Indeed, by dint of Moses’ uncontainable curiosity and imagination, the eldest Gursky threatens to overshadow his grandson, the title character, during the first half of the novel. As with Baruch, Moses is intrigued by Ephraim’s charisma and staunch non-conformity. At thirteen he ran away from his family’s traditional home in Liverpool, where his father was the cantor, and began work in a coal mine in Durham (Richler, *Gursky* 221). From this moment onward, Ephraim’s life constitutes a series of fantastic escapes and participation in some of the most boldly adventurous moments in history. He provides the Blackfoot Indians with alcohol and thereby inadvertently necessitates the formation of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; he escapes from Newgate prison, then from Van Diemen’s Land, and finally from the terrible fate of the Franklin expedition; afterwards, he runs guns to New Orleans during the American Civil War, scales the Chilkoot pass into the Klondike, and works as a piano player in Dawson City (Richler, *Gursky* 143-46). As if to make up for the disappointingly small contribution of his own father, L.B. Berger, Moses revels in imagining Ephraim at every important historical moment in the

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As opposed to Moses' father, Ephraim displays the lusty determination and spirit of the new, tough Jew. The idealization at play in Jake and Moses' reconstruction of Joey's and Solomon's family histories justifies the two protagonists' apathy. Heroes, their imaginings suggest, are men who come from and inherit greatness, rather than ordinary men who make their own greatness. Therefore, Jake and Moses, as the most ordinary of men, are justified in their inaction.

If their relative dearth of adequate male role models were not enough to keep Jake and Moses from being heroes themselves, then the apparent innateness of Joey and Solomon's heroism certainly would. Almost every character to come into contact with the two heroes is struck by their nearly superhuman disposition; in short, they walk a hero's walk. Solomon, at seventeen, "a squirt, a Jew, strode through the streets of the town as if he were a prince-in-waiting, destined for great things" (Richler, *Gursky* 346). Even Bernard, who dismisses Solomon's trek to the North Sea as exaggeration if not fabrication, is forced to concede that, regardless of what really happened, "Solomon had returned blessed with a certain grace, an inner stillness" (Richler, *Gursky* 343). The eldest of the Gursky brothers reveals in an instant of uncharacteristic self-awareness and insight that,

Watching him [Solomon] now, at ease with the wild mustangs, Bernard grasped that had he been the one to jump into the corral, probably stumbling in the dust, they would have smelled his fear and reared up their hind legs, snorting, looking to take a chomp out of him. Bernard understood for the first time that . . . he would have to scratch and bite and cheat to get what he wanted out of life . . . but that Solomon would sit, expecting the world to come to him, and he would be served. (Richler, *Gursky* 343)

Solomon is marked for greatness even before he does anything to earn it. He is destined for amazing things, and this can be read so clearly in his countenance that it is even legible to the envious, petty, and scornful Bernard. Scrawny though he may be, Solomon naturally exudes the entitlement of the new Jewish confidence and machismo that at once attracts and repels men such as Bernard, and even Moses. For, while they cannot help but be impressed by Solomon's strength of character, they must also sense its exclusivity: only once in a generation, Bernard and Moses must imagine, does a man of such charisma and unflinching confidence arise, and certainly neither of them is he.

Whereas Solomon exemplifies the tough Jewish attitude, Joey is the embodiment of the tough Jewish physique. When Joey runs away from home at the age of eighteen, he departs a sickly, pale, and frightfully thin boy with

a rasping cough (Richler, *St. Urbain* 125, 132). On his return six years later in 1943, though, Joey is a sight to behold. According to Jake, his older cousin's red MG "could have been a magnificent stallion and Cousin Joey a knight returned from a foreign crusade" (Richler, *St. Urbain* 132). Joey's new, tanned, and muscled figure sets him apart from his neighbours. What is more, his new-found heroism seems to come at the cost of his allegiance to the ghetto. Jake goes on to describe Joey as buff and cocky, "[s]triding down St. Urbain bronzed as a lifeguard, eyes concealed behind sunglasses, trousers buckled tight against a flat hard stomach, . . . he did not seem to be of St. Urbain any longer" (Richler, *St. Urbain* 132). Cousin Joey constitutes a brand of tough Jewish masculinity never before seen on Montreal's streets: he inspires—rather than feels—fear as he struts down the neighbourhood's major thoroughfare. Joey, the men of St. Urbain Street seem to intuit, will fight back. It is important to recall that both Joey's overt muscularity and Solomon's unflinching sense of entitlement appear to Jake and Moses as inherent. Thus, while Jake and Moses can and do admire these qualities, they feel they cannot aspire to them.

Nowhere is Jake and Moses' tendency to live vicariously through their heroes more evident than in the realm of sexual relations. With pride, the protagonists recount Joey and Solomon's sexual exploits. For instance, despite his Uncle Abe's charges that Joey was a gigolo, the young Jake is transfixed by the apparent sexual magnetism of his older cousin. For Jake, Joey is a man of bulging muscles and burgeoning sexuality; his physical strength is, ostensibly, matched by his sexual prowess. Women, even from Montreal society's upper echelons, congregate around the Horseman (Richler, *St. Urbain* 135). These are, to the pre-adolescent Jake's mind, "high-quality girls, who sipped martinis, their legs delicately crossed" (Richler, *St. Urbain* 135). Joey is irresistible and, according to Jake's naive and adoring perception of his most intriguing cousin, Joey seems a paragon of manhood.

Moses, likewise, seems to delight in Solomon's sexual aptitude. He assures readers of his hero's sexual capacity through a selection of diary entries from ladies of high society, which are reproduced in *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. One of these is from the diary of Lady Margaret Thomas, who encounters Solomon under the alias Sir Hyman Kaplansky. Under the assumption that Sir Hyman is homosexual, Lady Margaret records that,

Hymie wished he were capable of loving a woman as ravishing and remarkably intelligent as I was, he said . . . Poor, dear boy. . . . There was nothing for it but to take him in my arms, my intention being to console. Soon we arrived at a state *deshabillé* . . . And then, eureka! (Richler, *Gursky* 498)

Not only is Solomon potent, the entry reveals that he is artfully so. Another society lady, who grades her lovers from delta-minus to alpha-plus in her diaries, scored Sir Hyman “ALPHA PLUS followed by four exclamation marks” (Richler, *Gursky* 499). In a novel where Moses’ impotence provides comic relief, Solomon’s strong libido and cunning give the protagonist reason for pride. Solomon, the rascal, seems to more than make up for Moses’ own inadequacies: he provides the younger man with a slew of sexual conquests through which to live vicariously.

The incredible artistic license that Moses and Joey take with the lives of their heroes is made possible by their absence. Indeed, Joey’s incredible geographic mobility and Solomon’s incredible social mobility always seem to leave both heroes somewhere just outside the frame. As a result, they are rarely present either to verify or contradict Jake and Moses’ hypotheses about their lives and personalities. Both heroes are incurable globetrotters and to be found in the most unlikely places. Purportedly Joey flits between Argentina, Israel, Germany, and England, among other countries. Solomon is spotted in such far-ranging locations as Berlin, Munich, Moscow, London, Entebbe, and Zurich. Richler further emphasizes Joey’s panache for travel by his animal avatar, the horse, and his usual means of transport, the red MG. The heroes’ incredible mobility means that the protagonists are free to project their dreams onto their heroes unchecked. Rather than develop real, meaningful, relationships with these older men, Jake and Moses use Joey and Solomon as blank slates upon which to write their own unfulfilled dreams and desires.

The other form of mobility evinced by the two heroes offers their protagonists imaginative and literal access to the sectors of society that they can enter only with much discomfort and insecurity. Joey and, especially, Solomon are able to move outside the class that has indelibly marked Jake and Moses. Joey, for instance, passes as a Sabra and a cowboy. He fully defies the stereotype that diaspora Jews are unfit for the harsh life of Israeli pioneers and soldiers, because their attachment to their “Momma” is too strong (Richler, *St. Urbain* 253). Solomon, however, is a true chameleon. Like the raven with whom Richler associates his later hero, he is a trickster able to shape-shift through the ranks of society. While musing about Lucy’s decision to become an actress, Morrie Gursky reveals that he is unsurprised by her choice, for

That’s what Solomon [Lucy’s father] really should have been. A stage actor. . . . When we were kids he was always dressing up, writing little plays for us to perform. He could do accents. It was amazing. . . . He did a Chinaman, even

walked like one. The German butcher. The blacksmith, a Polack. He could do anybody. (Richler, *Gursky* 297-8)

Solomon can be anyone, anywhere: an English aristocrat, a dealer in Kikuyu and Masai antiquities with a gallery on Rodeo Drive, the son of an early settler in Australia, a South African, a Swiss financier. Moses' hero moves freely throughout the world, unchained by the signifiers of class and ethnicity that hold ordinary men back.

The heroes that Jake and Moses revere evoke the Jewish Messiah, first, through their absence from the protagonists' lives, and, second, through the protagonists' expectations that their heroes are capable of doling out justice, in contrast to their own confoundedness within the modern, ethically convoluted world. The yearning for a time when true justice will be achieved indicates, however, at once a deep-seated dissatisfaction with one's present, and the inability to alter its conditions for oneself. The promise of a future redeemer is the cold comfort of the powerless. Likewise, the Golem, who resonates particularly strongly with Joey's role in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, is a figure of retribution for a people who are unable to exact revenge for themselves. Even the comic book hero, whose freedom of movement throughout the world and society, as well as whose superhuman capabilities, find their match in Jake and Moses' conceptions of Joey and Solomon, is also firmly tied to both Jewish history and forced paralysis when circumstances call for action. Indeed, the American comic book hero grew out of the frustrated desires of American Jews to aid their suffering European counterparts during the late 1930s and early 1940s when the United States was determined upon an isolationist policy (Gordon 137-39). In the face of powerlessness, young, and creative American Jewish men imagined supernaturally powerful heroes who were able to right all the world's wrongs single-handedly. Taken together, the forerunners of Jake and Moses' heroes reveal themselves and their ilk to be expressions of unrealized justice, thwarted vengeance, and the inability to act.

The irony of Richler's harkening back to these older heroic tropes, though, is that no actual barriers exist between Jake and Moses and the fight for justice. Thanks to the creation of the state of Israel and the appearance of a new post-1967 version of tough Jewish masculinity, Jake and Moses have options for how to be Jewish that were unimaginable in the time of their fathers and grandfathers. Nevertheless, the persistence of Old World values in the two men, coupled with apathy and self-pity, hold them back. They fail to take meaningful action in their own lives and fall into complex fantasies

about the lives of other men. Thus, instead of overcoming the disappointments of their fathers, Jake and Moses imagine the strength of Joey's father and Solomon's grandfather. Rather than cultivating their own sense of self-worth and physical health, the protagonists imagine the lives of men who are marked for greatness both in their attitudes and physical prowess. Jake and Moses avoid dealing with their own sexual dysfunction by living vicariously through the exciting and impressive sexual lives of their heroes. Finally, while the two ordinary men feel ensnared within a community and a community mindset they do not respect, Joey and Solomon, they imagine, are able to move beyond this community both in the actual terms of distance and mobility, and also in terms of their psychological autonomy. Jake and Moses are torn between two opposite ideals of Jewish manhood. Thus, while they can imagine the tough Jew, their generation is not yet ready to adopt his way of being in the world in their own lives. Instead, they take the intermediary step of venerating the new tough Jewish values, but not the subsequent one of enacting them.

The developing pattern of hero worship present in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, *St. Urbain's Horseman*, and *Solomon Gursky Was Here* reveals at once a preoccupation with honour and a deep-seated sense that it is inaccessible to the men of Richler's generation. Instead it appears, in the three novels under scrutiny, to be a burden—an unrealizable expectation, which fascinates but also belittles. On the one hand, Duddy eschews honour entirely in his quest to become "somebody," while Jake and Moses, on the other hand, displace their yearnings onto their mostly imagined counterparts. In all cases these Jewish men fail to live out the fantasies of masculine honour they harbour. This failure to act is exacerbated by the accidents of geography and history that place Richler's protagonists far from opportunities for honour. The struggle against Fascism in Spain, the Second World War, the Holocaust, the founding and subsequent successful defence of the state of Israel were all taking place during Richler's and his protagonists' lives. Yet, all these events took place well beyond Canadian borders, and even beyond the realm of the imaginable for most Canadian Jews. Thus, honour is never thrust upon Duddy, Jake, and Moses the way it might have been for their contemporaries elsewhere, and with their mettle untested, the men go through life uncertain of their own capability and handicapped by self-doubt.

Even as they portray it, Richler's novels speak out against this pattern of deflecting decisive action onto another. For example, escape into the adventures of Joey Hersh does not help Jake in either his work or his ongoing

trial. Likewise, Moses Berger's retreat into fantasies of Solomon Gursky does not improve, and in fact worsens, his hermit-like existence. Duddy Kravitz, the only effective protagonist, is also the only one to move past being merely the acolyte of another man. Richler the satirist serves up the tales of these men with irony, rather than approval. In so doing, he shows that contrary to the glory and grandeur, hero worship is a dysfunctional and personally stunting refuge of the cowardly.

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