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JEWISH WRITERS OF MONTREAL AS INNOVATORS IN THE CANADIAN SATIRICAL TRADITION: A STUDY OF A SELECTION OF NOVELS BY MORDECAI RICHLER AND WILLIAM WEINTRAUB

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RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire explore le rôle de la satire dans les quatre romans canadiens suivants : *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959) et *Barney's Version* (1997) de Mordecai Richler ainsi que *Why Rock the Boat* (1961) et *The Underdogs* (1979) de William Weintraub. Ayant pour objectif de démontrer que ces deux auteurs, qui se servent des approches satiriques contrastantes, sont des innovateurs dans la tradition satirique canadienne à cause de leur regard sur des préoccupations urbaines et minoritaires, cette étude examine dans un premier temps les aspects de la société montréalaise qui sont des objets de satire dans *Why Rock the Boat* et *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Ensuite, ce mémoire étudie la façon dont ces auteurs mitigent leurs réponses au nationalisme québécois dans *The Underdogs* et *Barney's Version* afin de produire une vision satirique qui critique le mouvement souverainiste, mais s'avère sympathique à la langue et la culture des Franco-québécois.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of satire in four Canadian novels: *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959) and *Barney's Version* (1997) by Mordecai Richler along with *Why Rock the Boat* (1961) and *The Underdogs* (1979) by William Weintraub. In order to argue that these two authors, using differing satirical approaches, are innovators in the Canadian satirical tradition for their focus on urban and minority concerns, this study first looks at the various aspects of Montreal society that *Why Rock the Boat* and *Duddy Kravitz* satirize. This thesis then examines how these authors carefully modulate their responses to Quebec nationalism in *The Underdogs* and *Barney's Version*. Richler and Weintraub produce a satirical vision in these latter novels that sharply censures the Quebec sovereignty movement but proves to be sympathetic toward French-speaking Quebecers' language and culture.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

This thesis will study individually and comparatively the satire of Mordecai Richler and William Weintraub as manifested in a selection of their novels. In particular, I will examine Weintraub's *Why Rock the Boat* (1961) and *The Underdogs* (1979) as well as Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959) and *Barney's Version* (1997). By placing Richler's work alongside the much less studied Weintraub to uncover common threads, my thesis will demonstrate that these authors are innovators within the Canadian tradition of satire. In the first place, these novels all deal largely with urban concerns, in contrast to the generally rural and small-town environments of previous Canadian satirists. Richler and Weintraub diverge from the Canadian satirical tradition in their portrait of the institutions and inhabitants of Montreal, following only Leacock's *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich.* Their satirical portraits of the Jewish community are also the first Canadian satirical forays into non-majority territory. As minority writers, both as Jews and Anglophones within Quebec, they use satire to censure aspects of their own communities as well as to attack perceived injustices from the majority communities around them.

Previous studies of Richler have focused on how his satire fits within the ambivalent nature of the Canadian satirical tradition. This thesis will show that while Richler and Weintraub follow in this tradition by mitigating their satirical barbs, they employ notably different means to temper their satire. Richler softens the overall tenor of his satire by portraying his protagonists sympathetically in

contrast to Weintraub's frequent use of farce to moderate his often trenchant satire. This thesis will also demonstrate that Richler's novels utilize satire primarily as an ancillary tone; his primary focus is on character exploration rather than sustained satirical visions. Weintraub, however, permeates his narratives with satire so that the characters and plots organically work together to make satire the overriding concern of his novels. This difference in satirical approaches will be shown to spring from their different family backgrounds and career orientations. Together, these two authors have taken the Canadian satirical tradition into new territory and served as forerunners for Canadian satirists who were to follow their lead.

The four novels in this study were chosen from Richler's and Weintraub's oeuvres for a number of reasons. Most importantly, they all take place primarily in Montreal and satirize many similar targets in that city, including the Jewish community, the realms of business and industry, and the Quebec sovereignty movement. Additionally, *Why Rock the Boat* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the first two works to be compared, are coming-of-age novels that portray ambitious young men who must overcome obstacles and setbacks as they pursue their professional plans. A juxtaposition of these two novels reveals the different satirical approaches Richler and Weintraub adopt in dealing with similar narratives. It needs to be acknowledged that Richler wrote other more fully satirical novels, namely *The Incomparable Atuk* and *Cocksure*, but their respective settings of Toronto and London naturally exclude any satire of targets in

Montreal. Richler does set other novels partially in Montreal, but none satirize such a broad range of that city's society as *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and *Barney's Version*. Furthermore, *The Underdogs* and *Barney's Version* were written during similar political eras in Quebec. *The Underdogs* was published a year prior to the 1980 sovereignty referendum following the rise to power of the Parti Québécois in 1976.[1] *Barney's Version* came just after the second such referendum in 1995, allowing for a comparison of Richler's and Weintraub's satirical treatments of similar political contexts and periods of linguistic tensions.

Richler's and Weintraub's backgrounds undoubtedly account for the similarities of their satirical targets. They were both born between the world wars (Weintraub in 1926 and Richler in 1931) and raised in Jewish families in Montreal. They met as young men while travelling in Europe, becoming life-long friends who would often discuss their writing with each other (Weintraub, *Getting Started* 237). Despite their proclivities for satirizing the same targets, however, Richler and Weintraub differ somewhat in their satirical approaches beyond what I previously noted. In fact, Weintraub's satire is significantly more sustained than Richler's. Weintraub's primary focus on one particular target in each novel provides a clear and unequivocal satirical vision; *Why Rock the Boat* takes aim at Montreal newspapers while *The Underdogs* deals mainly with Quebec nationalism. Although Richler employs considerable satire in both *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and *Barney's Version*, his overarching concern in these novels is character

[1] Weintraub has written one other novel, *Crazy About Lili* (2005), which is less focused on satirizing one particular target, and in which he mixes comedy and farce with satire more than he does in his first two novels.

exploration rather than developing a sustained satirical vision. However, when the satire of both authors is observed together, one can see a clear change in the direction of the traditional Canadian satirical approach, namely the adoption of a trenchantly satirical vision of a particular city and its inhabitants. As mentioned, Leacock also sets his satirical *Arcadian Adventures* in Montreal, but Richler's and Weintraub's satirical look at that city differs from Leacock's in that he never explicitly identifies his setting as Montreal. Leacock names his city Plutoria, and although it is clearly a portrayal of his adopted home, the effect of the alias is to emphasize the more universal aspects of the satire rather than specific targets in Montreal. Before beginning the critical examination of the novels in chapters 1-4 of this thesis, I will offer reasons for the variations in Richler's and Weintraub's satirical approaches, followed by a brief survey of the Canadian satirical tradition that came before their writing careers began, critical responses to Richler and Weintraub, and finally a critical framework for the study of satire along with the methodology my study will employ.

Differing Satirical Approaches

Two factors stand out as explanations for the differences in Richler's and Weintraub's satirical approaches. The first is that although both Richler and Weintraub were raised in Jewish families in Montreal, their markedly dissimilar Jewish upbringings were to shape their attitudes toward the Jewish community later in their lives. Richler grew up in the Montreal Jewish ghetto centred around

St. Urbain Street, a highly orthodox and circumscribed community that he began to chafe at in his adolescence. Reinhold Kramer mentions that Richler's grandfather, a rabbi, reacted harshly to his grandson's rebellious attitude which in turn increased Richler's resolve to escape from his restrictive environment (40). Adding to his resentment was an unhappy family life; his mother left his father while Richler was a child despite the rarity of marriage break-ups in the Jewish community of that era (43). Richler moved to Europe at the age of nineteen, describing himself as a "damned unhappy kid" when he left (Gibson 280). Despite such negative early experiences within the Jewish community, the subsequent equivocal treatment that he shows for his Jewish roots, particularly in his portrayal of Duddy, is a product of an established phenomenon identified by Terry Goldie. He contends that Richler, like other writers from immigrant communities that originated in the old world, are prone to showing a certain ambivalence toward their "racial tradition" (19). The satire of such authors, Goldie argues, is inevitably more ambivalent toward their own communities than one finds in writers from majority communities. Such authors, including Richler, reject "the absurdity of the old world replica," yet are unable to overcome the influence of its profound impression on their formative years (17). According to Goldie, the satire "fights with respect and even admiration" (19). It will be shown that while Richler's satire can be biting when focused on the Jewish community, he ultimately follows the pattern identified by Goldie of refusing to categorically condemn his parochial education.

In contrast to Richler's formative years, Weintraub did not grow up in the Jewish ghetto (Kramer 69). His upbringing, described as happening in "liberal circles," was free of the restrictive orthodoxy of Richler's childhood (95). As a young man, Weintraub had friends who were mostly from outside the Jewish community; Richler was almost his only Jewish companion (69). Thus, although Weintraub's family was Jewish, he grew up in a less rigid environment than Richler and consequently satirizes the Jewish community in a way that is more typical of a detached outsider.

In addition to the differing influences of their family backgrounds, Richler's and Weintraub's career paths also help explain the divergence in their satirical approaches. This is partly revealed in a film for the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) entitled *First Novel* (1958) on which Richler and Weintraub collaborated. It portrays the fictional Harry Merton, a struggling young writer who must decide whether or not to leave his job as a newspaper reporter in order to write novels full-time. The film touches on various difficulties of Canadian writers in the 1950s, such as the trouble finding a broad Canadian audience and the meagre financial rewards that most Canadian authors obtained for their efforts. Although Weintraub was disappointed with this overly earnest and pedestrian film (*Getting Started* 209), it is noteworthy because of the ways Richler's and Weintraub's career directions mirror the very choices the protagonist Merton faced and grappled with. Richler chose novel-writing to be his focus and always considered journalism to be of secondary importance,

commenting in one essay that he belongs to the "last generation of novelists who could supplement their incomes . . . by scribbling for the mags" ("Writing" 1). He consistently used his novels to explore the depths of characters rather than concentrate solely on satirical writing that took the form of non-fiction.[2]

In contrast, Weintraub chose to focus on journalism quite early in his career and he has spent much of his life examining social and topical issues through documentary filmmaking. The ideas and satire in his novels spring from and can be seen as an extension of his work in journalism. Weintraub started his writing career as a reporter for the Montreal *Gazette*, going on to work closely with the NFB where he was involved in the production of more than 150 films. He was initially attracted to the NFB because of its exploration of social problems, such as unemployment and poverty (*Getting Started* 100). Weintraub's passion for delving into such topical issues is seen in much of his own film work. For example, *The Rise and Fall of English Montreal* (1993) is a documentary about the treatment of Anglophone Quebecers by the Francophone majority, the same underlying premise found in *The Underdogs*. Thus, his desire as a documentary filmmaker to reveal and condemn perceived social injustice engendered a more fully satirical vision in his novels.

As noted, despite Richler's reputation as a potent satirist, his novels are often more concerned with character development than a sustained satirical

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[2] Richler's two more wholly satirical novels, *The Incomparable Atuk* (1963) and *Cocksure* (1968), came early in his career; he spent the last thirty years of his life writing novels that are focused on character development.

vision. In an interview with Donald Cameron, he explains the particular challenges facing the satirist:

> Satire is a pretty difficult thing to write. . . . You forgo enlisting the reader's sympathy, and that's a pretty big thing to give up, because you're presenting somebody with the book and you're saying everyone in it is rotten in one way or another and so they don't engage, and it's difficult to keep the reader's attention. It's much more arduous and of course more cunning than if you were writing . . . *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, where the reader identifies . . . with the protagonist. You've got a lot more going for you, and it's not so difficult to keep the reader's attention when you have that. Now to write satire is a great discipline, because you're giving all that away, before you start. It's a different kind of thing. (119)

Such comments help reveal why Richler largely avoided writing wholly satirical novels, an attitude which is further underlined by his comments on *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*: "[it] does represent to me a return to the novel of character, which is really the novel which I guess interests me" (Gibson 293). Despite his preference for novels of character, this study will show the brief satirical episodes in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and *Barney's Version* are as biting as the satire in *Why Rock the Boat* and *The Underdogs*.

Although I am pairing Richler, a major author in the Canadian literary canon, with the relatively minor novelist Weintraub, I am not suggesting that

these authors have equally contributed to Canadian literature, nor am I comparing the novels for the purpose of ranking them according to their literary importance. Rather, a juxtaposition of these novels helps us to understand the new direction in Canadian satire these authors undertook, and thus further contextualizes and illuminates Richler's oeuvre while also giving a fuller understanding and appreciation of Weintraub's fiction.

The Canadian Satirical Tradition in English-language Prose

Victor Ramraj and Beverly Rasporich have both critically examined the early Canadian satirical tradition, although from quite different perspectives. Ramraj, in his doctoral thesis, looked at the trenchancy of various prominent Canadian satirists, concluding that the overriding tone is one of gentle mocking and mild censure. Rasporich studied the sources of early satirists' motivations, concluding that Canadian satirists used "the collision between old world and new world values as it affects their own country" as their inspiration for satire (233). She asserts that Canada or, before it, the British territory that was to become Canada in 1867, was often seen as a kind of "New Eden" to the genteel British seeking a similar society to their own, which conflicted with the more "vulgar spirit of American republicanism" that infected early Canadians (233). Her study stresses the "pastoral ideal" held by the early satirists, especially Thomas McCulloch and Thomas Chandler Haliburton, and their disappointment upon finding that the new world fell far short of such an ideal (234). Although satirical

tone is not the primary focus of her study, she often describes the same ambivalence in early Canadian satire that Ramraj contends is present.

The progenitors of Canadian satire are two novelists of the early nineteenth century, McCulloch and Haliburton. In *The Stepsure Letters* (1821-22), McCulloch's religious background and strict adherence to Presbyterianism form the basis of his condemnation of vices, such as drinking, gambling, music, and dancing. His concern was to reform the many wayward Nova Scotians he observed around him through a satirical portrait of their shortcomings and thus bring them back into the fold of his strict religion. Haliburton's *The Clockmaker* (1856) is set in Nova Scotia about ten years later than *The Stepsure Letters* but has a much broader scope. The collection of sketches follows Sam Slick, a Yankee salesman travelling through Nova Scotia while accompanied by the local Squire. Their adventures assume an episodic structure through which much of the satire is developed in the rivalry between the American Slick and the Nova Scotian Squire. Unlike McCulloch who assumes an overtly religious and moralistic focus, Haliburton addresses the economic and political questions of his time by satirizing not only Nova Scotians but the mismanagement of the colony by Britain.

Writing in the early twentieth century, Stephen Leacock became in the view of many Canada's foremost early writer of humour. Unlike McCulloch's defence of Presbyterianism or Haliburton's focus on topical issues, Leacock's satirical concern dwells more on the shortcomings found in the everyday lives of common people. Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) pokes fun at

the townspeople of the fictional Mariposa, but most critics agree that the satire is considerably tempered by what Robertson Davies calls Leacock's "indulgence for the folly of humankind" (112). Leacock's *Arcadian Adventures* maintains the narrow focus of satirically portraying the upper class of a disguised but identifiable Montreal, never venturing beyond wealthy English-speaking society. Leacock also wrote about thirty other humorous books, most of which are collections of unrelated anecdotes that do not maintain any coherent satirical vision.

Paul Hiebert's *Sarah Binks* (1947) follows in the tradition of most of his predecessors by focusing on small-town life. It features the hilariously bad poetry of the eponymous character in this mock academic survey of her work. Hiebert examines a rural setting and its inhabitants, although unlike Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches* the satire is not directed so much at small-town provincialism as it is at academic pretence and poorly written literature. Hiebert's novel also takes satirical aim at a variety of targets including politicians, the press, the financial world, and the judiciary.

Earle Birney's *Turvey* (1948) is a mix of farce and satire about the absurdities of military life during the Second World War. Written with an episodic structure that follows the misadventures of a naïve and simple-minded Canadian army recruit, *Turvey* is more concerned with the impersonal military establishment during the war than with specifically Canadian problems.

Again in the general Leacockian tradition, a number of Robertson Davies' novels take place in small-town Canada, providing him with numerous satirical targets in the provincialism found there. For example, *Leaven of Malice* (1954) is set in the fictional Ontario town of Salterton, where three of his early comedies of manners unfold, and it satirizes domineering parents, pretentious academics and lawyers, and the typical bickering and busybodies found in such environments.

Margaret Atwood is a more recent notable Canadian author whose initial satirical prose came a decade after Richler's first important novel, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. In Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969), her satire explores the themes of the rejection of gender roles, loss of identity, and alienation. Her most widely studied satirical work, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), is set in a dystopian future in which women are controlled and valued by men primarily for their reproductive capacity. With these and other similar themes, Atwood's satirical prose has also taken the Canadian satirical tradition in a new direction, albeit one that diverges from the ground broken by Richler's or Weintraub's oeuvres.

This brief survey helps to show that Richler's and Weintraub's satirical precursors mostly stayed within Canadian rural and small-town settings, with the early satirists especially focusing on the disparity between the idealized pastoral vision in the new world and its fallen reality. This study will show how Richler and Weintraub diverged from this tradition to concentrate on ethnic, minority, and urban concerns.

Critical Responses to Richler and Weintraub

Richler has engendered a fair amount of critical study, but not as much as one would expect for a major Canadian author. Victor Ramraj's doctoral thesis and later book on Richler argue that Richler's fiction contains an ambivalent satirical vision. Ramraj contends that Richler's oeuvre follows in the above noted Canadian satirical tradition of refusing to outright condemn its satirical targets, often by resorting to farce or by showing the extenuating circumstances behind a character's actions.

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz has entered the established canon of Canadian literature, and thus has been the focus of a significant amount of critical study. Critics tend to fall into two opposing camps about the satire in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Some agree with Ramraj that the satire is quite ambivalent and contains many mitigating factors. Aligning with Ramraj is David Myers, for whom Richler's satire is "light-hearted and farcical in tone" (52). On the other hand, John Ower contends that in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* Richler offers "a jaundiced view of human nature and little faith in its improvability" (426). Ower and Kerry McSweeney both argue that Richler goes beyond satire to display such a dark vision of humanity that it threatens to undermine Richler's focus as a moralist. They see in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* a portrayal of ruthlessness as the only means of survival in a world where weak characters suffer because of their naivety about human nature.

Michael Greenstein sees the portrayal of Jews in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* as part of Richler's larger attempt to have the Jewish characters in his novels "take revenge on a society . . . that confines them to a double marginality" as Jews on the margins of Canadian society and as Canadians who are "denied acceptance into a Jewish-American alliance that has achieved mainstream status" (196). My study will instead look at how Richler satirically handles the shortcomings and vices he finds within a local urban Jewish community.

Very little critical work has been published on *Barney's Version* despite its glowing reviews and commercial success both in Canada and abroad. In one of those few studies, Fabienne Quennet argues that much of the humour in this novel is of a typically Jewish flavour and provides detailed examples from the jokes and wordplay in the text that illustrate this point. Yan Hamel looked at the portrayal of Franco-Quebec women in Richler's novels, including *Barney's Version,* concluding that Richler's attitude toward Franco-Quebecers is more nuanced and positive than many critics argue.

My thesis will seek to fill in several gaps in the scholarship on Richler. Firstly, I will argue that while the portrayal of Duddy is quite sympathetic, Richler's periodic excursions into satire are biting and lack any of the sympathetic qualities given to Duddy. *Barney's Version* again shows the same pattern of sharp satirical attacks as an ancillary to the essentially likeable portrait of the protagonist. While Richler's sympathetic protagonists help to modulate his

overall tone, the satirical excursions are a clear departure from the gentle prods that critics have argued typify the Canadian satirical precursors to Richler and Weintraub.

As far as can be determined, although numerous book reviews have appeared on Weintraub's novels, no critical studies have been done on them apart from one by Mark Lajoie and Kathryn Allen that looks at the alleged nostalgic tone of his works vis-à-vis the historical and cultural narratives of English-Montreal. Despite their stated intentions of an objective analysis of Weintraub's work, this study amounts to little more than a thinly-veiled and poorly constructed rebuttal of Weintraub's criticisms of Quebec nationalism.[3]

Satire: A Critical Framework

Because Richler's and Weintraub's satire is the focus of this study, a brief overview of the theory of satire will provide a framework for the study of the works under consideration. Several comprehensive and seminal studies in the 1950s and 1960s of satire in English literature have often been cited since they were published and remain relevant. Foremost are the works of Northrop Frye (1957), Gilbert Highet (1962), and James Sutherland (1967). Scholarship on the theory of satire was relatively inactive for a period following these studies, but more recent critics include Sophie Duval and Marc Martinez (2000), Jane Ogborn

[3] For example, Lajoie and Allen claim that the massive Anglophone exodus out of Montreal in the late 1970s had little to do with the political climate in Quebec at the time (60) – an argument that is unfounded.

and Peter Buckroyd (2001), and Charles Knight (2004). For the purpose of this thesis, I will review salient points from these and others.

The Roman poets Horace and Juvenal were important progenitors of the satirical genre to the extent that satire is now commonly referred to as "Horatian" if it is of a gentler tone, or "Juvenalian" if it is especially harsh and condemnatory. Victor Ramraj points out that modern satire is no longer defined by the strict formal requirements set down by Horace and Juvenal ("Ambivalent" 4). Nor does the term "satire" follow the fixed literary form it did in the earlier periods of the Renaissance or neo-Classicism, as exemplified by the heroic couplets of Alexander Pope. Rather, Peter Petro sees a dual use of the word satire, calling it both a "kind of literature" which was the formal verse satire of past literary periods, and a "spirit or tone which expresses itself in many literary genres" in modern literature (5).

The difference between comedy and satire is primarily based on an author's tone regarding the objects of the humour. James Sutherland explains that comedy invites a reaction ranging from an "amused tolerance to a cheerful or even delightful acceptance" (3) of the human shortcomings being portrayed. Sutherland points out that comedy, unlike satire, is not "troubled by moral issues" (2). Indeed, it is the moral underpinning of satire that sets it apart from purely comic ends. Northrop Frye observes that the "moral norms" of satire are clear, against which human shortcomings are measured (208). He states that there are two essential ingredients in satire, namely "wit or humour founded on

fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack" (209). Ramraj describes the characterizing tone of satire as "one of annoyance, indignation, or disgust with human absurdity, folly, inefficiency or wickedness, mixed with a recognizable element of humour, be this in the form of wit, fantasy, incongruity, or otherwise" ("Ambivalent" 5). The satirist seeks to "expose, deride, or condemn" (7) folly and vice rather than just point out the humour in them. Gilbert Highet contends that the ultimate test for determining the presence of satire in a text is whether the author succeeds in evoking in readers a "blend of amusement and contempt" vis-à-vis the satirical target (21).

Satirists thus show themselves to be moralists at heart in their efforts to reveal and disparage human failings. Sutherland describes a satirist as one "who is abnormally sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is" (4) and who consequently feels the need to point out and condemn this disparity. Ramraj also refers to the moralistic motivation of the satirist as the desire "to correct and reform the ills of society" ("Ambivalent" 7). Highet states that the ultimate goal of satire "is the amendment of vices by correction" (241). In short, satirists use a moral standard as a kind of template against which they compare human behaviour. When satirists consider that the behaviour falls short of that standard, they seek to expose the shortcoming to their readers in an effort to effect moral reform in their targets. Even if the offenders do not undergo any improvement as a result of the satire directed at them, they are at least brought to censure and shame.

Satirical authors address their own contemporary concerns. Morris states that for the satire to be effective, it must be "topical and timely" (377). This opinion is shared by Highet who states that satire is "always concrete, usually topical, often personal" and often deals with "actual cases" that clearly identify real individuals (16). Because satire is so grounded in the context of an author's life, Ogborn and Buckroyd observe that it is advantageous to know the "specific details of when a satirical text was produced, and what the social, political or personal circumstances were which gave rise to it" (17). Duval and Martinez state that unlike other forms of comedy, like parody, that are inter-textual, satire is extra-textual in its attack on real targets outside of the literary world (185). Both Richler and Weintraub are not only topical, but at times personal in their satirical attacks, with specific people readily identifiable as the satiric butts in their portrayals of character.

Satire is used to varying extents according to what a particular author is trying to achieve. Valentine Cunningham notes that many authors use satire "patchily and temporarily, as a minor strain or occasional excursion" (401). As Ramraj puts it, satire is often "one of the many stops [of the] organ" that an author uses in a novel in conjunction with other tones and purposes ("Ambivalent" 11). As will be shown, Richler's novels in this study incorporate satire as an ancillary tone. Ramraj goes on to distinguish this occasional use of satire from a more wholly satirical novel in which satire may control "the vision of the author, and the characterization, plot, structure, and style of the novel"

(11). Cunningham observes that there are few such wholetime satirists, such as the British authors Huxley, Waugh, and Orwell, whose novels tend to serve overriding satirical purposes (401). Linda Morris describes such wholly satirical novels as offering "sustained critiques of contemporary society" (377). Weintraub's novels clearly follow this model as novels whose purpose is entirely satirical, and this thesis will show them to more closely follow in the tradition of certain British satirists than Canadian ones.

Ramraj points out the potential difficulties in writing a novel with a predominantly satirical purpose, comments that mirror Richler's own observations noted above. Novels must have an "organic conception of character, and an element of probability in a dynamic plot," which the satiric vision weighs heavily against ("Ambivalent" 11). Character development, so important in most novels, becomes subservient to exposing the "moment of folly or vice," and any changes in satirical characters are "abrupt and poorly motivated" (12). The structure of satirical novels tends to be loosely organized, to the point that they "have virtually no plot," as Ramraj observes ("Ambivalent" 12). Satirical novels benefit from the picaresque form as it provides the satirist with ample targets in its broad view of society (12). He explains that a satirical novel often strings together "episodic sketches" with the help of a reappearing character. Highet notes that wholly satirical novels are less interested in plot than in "displaying different aspects of an idea" (206). The reader is called upon to "suspend belief" for a narrative that is often unrealistic (206). Morris adds that satirists often

follow a tradition of creating a "naïve persona who inadvertently, and in an understated manner, reveals social truths" (377), a technique used by Weintraub in his use of an ingénu in both novels in this study. In short, authors who attempt to produce wholly satirical novels face the arduous task of having to neglect both realistic character development and a believable plot in order to communicate their satiric visions.

Highet argues that satirists often draw their motivation from their "exclusion from a privileged group" (240). He points out that many ancient and modern satirists belonged to minority groups, giving them a feeling of social injustice arising from this minority status. He lists satirists ranging from Horace (whose father was a slave) to the physically deformed Alexander Pope to illustrate how a sense of "personal inferiority" can give rise to the desire for retribution that takes the form of satire (240). Although satirists frequently claim to be writing for the benefit of society and free of all personal motivation, Highet claims that, in fact, they are always "moved by personal hatred, scorn, or condescending amusement" (238). Clearly, Richler and Weintraub, who are double minorities as both Jews and Anglophones in Quebec, draw from their experiences as minorities for motivation in their satire, although unlike many previous satirists their personal response to their social situations does not extend to hatred.

This brief survey of scholars of satire shows that although satire always stems from an author's attempt to expose human folly or vice through the use of

humour, it is employed in different ways and to varying degrees of forcefulness according to a particular author's intentions. This thesis seeks to study the satirical tones of Richler and Weintraub, and to that end the work of the aforementioned theorists of satire will be drawn from to guide an analysis of Richler's and Weintraub's satirical techniques to determine how their satire is created, how forceful their attacks are, and what means they use to mitigate the trenchancy of their satire.

Methodology

The theory outlined in the previous section will be employed throughout this thesis to show how Richler and Weintraub use satirical techniques in the novels under study. These authors display, to varying extents, the characteristics of satirists identified by the theorists. Both authors display a moral underpinning in their censure of various ills within contemporary society. Most importantly, their own minority status, as noted above, heavily influences their satirical portrayals of both their own communities and the majority community in which they live.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will demonstrate that Weintraub's *Why Rock the Boat* constitutes a wholly satirical novel in its sustained criticism of the Montreal newspaper industry of the 1940s. Two other significant thematic concerns will also be examined, the first of which is English-French relations of that era. A study of Weintraub's treatment reveals sensitivity to the plight of

French-Canadians, an observation that will prove to be useful background information when dealing later with *The Underdogs*. Weintraub's satire of the Jewish community will show a remarkable similarity to Richler's in its treatment of the tension between orthodox and reform-minded Jews.

The second chapter will show that Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* contains a great deal of biting satire, despite its reluctance to fully condemn Duddy. While Richler portrays Duddy in alternatively positive and negative ways that have the effect of creating a certain amount of sympathy for him, Richler's excursions into satirical episodes, sometimes only loosely connected with the main action, are examples of censorious, non-compromising satire at its sharpest. Various critics have pointed out that the content of these set pieces is largely satirical and not related to advancing the narrative, but no detailed examination has been made that establishes the use of these excursions to satirize the Jewish community in particular, something this thesis will demonstrate. This chapter also examines Richler's implicit satire of Zionism that is achieved through Duddy's ruthless quest for land, again revealing Richler's propensity to satirize his own people.

The third chapter examines Weintraub's *The Underdogs*, a novel set in the post-separation Republic of Quebec. This novel will be examined within a framework of dystopian fiction, a genre commonly employed for satirical ends. Although set in the future, the satire of this novel is firmly centred on the contemporary concerns of Quebec in the late 1970s, a time of nationalistic fervour

when many Quebec Anglophones were feeling oppressed. While Weintraub seeks to show the potential dangers of Quebec independence by showing the futuristic state in utter economic ruin, his central concern is to reveal the xenophobic tendencies inherent in nationalism and the resulting injustices. Although the novel does pause along the way to satirize a variety of targets, such an overriding focus in the novel creates a trenchant satirical attack of Quebec nationalism of that era. This chapter will also demonstrate that Weintraub modulates his satire of Quebec nationalism by satirizing the Anglophone and Jewish communities, and by maintaining the distinction between separatist politicians and intellectuals and ordinary Francophone citizens.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will study Richler's final novel, *Barney's Version*. The narrative's focus remains on the protagonist Barney, giving an ultimately sympathetic rendering of a deeply flawed character. Again, although Richler produced a novel of character rather than anything approaching a classical satire, he makes frequent mention of the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum and takes satirical aim at the Quebec nationalist movement in particular. Like Weintraub, Richler takes care to balance the biting satire directed at sovereigntist political leaders. He portrays two of Barney's close Francophone friends in a particularly positive way, especially when they are contrasted to Barney and his many shortcomings. Additionally, Richler once again satirizes the Jewish community, and in particular the Zionist movement. Finally, Barney's love of the Montreal Canadiens, a potent symbol of French-Quebecers, helps to

establish Richler's distinction between his disdain for the Quebec sovereigntist political élite and Franco-Quebecers, whom he holds in high regard.

Chapter One: Newspapers, Rabbis, and the Linguistic Debate: Weintraub's Satire of Montreal Society in *Why Rock the Boat*

Weintraub takes aim at various aspects of Montreal society in *Why Rock the Boat*, foremost of which is the newspaper industry of the 1940s. His satirical portrayal of the newspaper world springs from the inside knowledge of its inner workings he gained as a young reporter for the Montreal *Gazette* in that period. In his historical account of Montreal in *City Unique*, Weintraub describes the climate among employees of that era, relating how one former reporter for the *Gazette* found newspaper work "intellectually stultifying, morally degrading and financially unrewarding" (277). The *Gazette*, along with the other English-language newspapers, pandered to the interests of the Anglophone business élite of the city, never printing any story that might have cast them in a bad light (*City Unique* 277). This self-censorship included omitting any negative news that happened in a hotel or business belonging to their advertisers (277). *Why Rock the Boat* follows the misadventures of Harry, a newly hired junior reporter for the exceedingly dull *Daily Witness*, a thinly veiled parody of the Montreal *Gazette* of that era. Harry has ambitions as a journalist, but he quickly adapts to his paper's philosophy of being as dry and uninteresting as possible. Harry's work includes reporting the names of people who attend funerals, covering service club luncheons with bromide-filled speeches, and interviewing foreign businessmen who speak in endless platitudes.

This chapter will demonstrate that *Why Rock the Boat* satirizes Montreal newspapers by deriding the ineptitude of their editors and reporters. Weintraub's purpose is to expose the danger such a dysfunctional press poses to a democratic society. Weintraub's satire is not limited to newspapers, for as noted earlier, the structure of satiric novels tends to be episodic, allowing for a broad range of satirical attacks. Following this satiric structure, the plot of *Why Rock the Boat* tends to be episodic, allowing Weintraub to develop the targets of his satire on various fronts. In addition to the focus on satirizing newspapers, the relationship between the English and French communities appears in *Why Rock the Boat*. Weintraub satirizes the cultural insensitivities that certain Anglophones had toward Francophone culture. His early treatment of the linguistic question shows sensitivity to the state of the French language in Quebec and helps to put his later work into perspective when English-French relations would come to the forefront of his thematic treatment. This chapter will also explore Weintraub's satire of reform-minded rabbis who began appearing in that era. Through the caricature of a particularly sports-loving rabbi, Weintraub pokes fun at those in the Jewish community who were more concerned with blending in with the ambient culture than maintaining Orthodox traditions.

Although Weintraub's satire portrays newspapers as incompetent, the ironic tone allows for a measured distance to be created between the author and his target. The attacks, more in the gentler Horatian satirical tradition than the Juvenalian, never descend into diatribe. There are no newspaper scandals that

have a dark edge to them, and even Harry's adulterous liaison with his colleague's wife is never allowed to threaten a marriage or ruin a friendship. The light tone and humour help the novel to retain its readability despite its focus on a context that has long since changed. Indeed, Robert Fulford wrote in 2001 that *Why Rock the Boat* "reads well today. Seldom, before or since, has boredom been made so funny" ("William Weintraub").

Lampooning the Press

Weintraub follows a tradition of satirizing newspapers that was made famous by Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* (1938). Like Weintraub, Waugh had experience as a journalist, having worked as a foreign correspondent in Abyssinia (the setting of much of *Scoop*) for a Fleet Street newspaper. Weintraub, a great admirer of Waugh's work, drew inspiration from the satirical possibilities he saw in *Scoop*, which can be deduced in similarities in plot and tone. For example, Waugh describes newsrooms that are lackadaisical in the accuracy of the content they produce: "sub-editors busied themselves with . . . reducing to blank nonsense the sheaves of misinformation . . . piled before them" (207), a description that I will show resurfaces in Weintraub's novel. Weintraub's naïve and inexperienced Harry resembles Waugh's protagonist Booth in the manner he bungles his way through a series of misadventures that serve primarily to highlight the ineptitude of the newspaper he works for. Both protagonists eventually emerge as accidental heroes in spite of their shortcomings. Although Waugh describes his

novel as "a light-hearted tale" in the preface to a later edition (*Scoop* 9), the frequent farce is often accompanied by a sharp satirical edge, something Weintraub imitates.

Weintraub's portrayal of newspapers also resembles Brian Moore's treatment of the print media in *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1960), published just one year before *Why Rock the Boat*. Moore's novel features an Irish immigrant who is hired as a proofreader by the fictional Montreal *Tribune*, a newspaper that also closely resembles the *Gazette*. The similarities of the satirical attacks in these two novels are striking: both contain draconian editors that are inspired by H. J. Larkin, the legendary *Gazette* editor for whom both authors had once worked as reporters. In fact, the fictional editors so closely resemble Larkin that Weintraub claims his former editor took considerable pride in appearing in both novels (*Getting Started* 8). Both novels also satirize the way English-language Montreal newspapers were so obsequious toward their advertisers. Although Moore is less satirical in his scope than Weintraub and Waugh, the three novels contribute to a satirical tradition in their treatment of newspapers of the mid-twentieth century. When viewed together, the novels form a picture of a frequently dysfunctional newspaper industry that invites a satirical portrayal of its shortcomings.

The characterization of Harry contributes to the satirical portrayal of the ineptitude of newspaper journalists. Although *Why Rock the Boat* is ostensibly a coming-of-age story about a nineteen-year old reporter, Harry shows no real personal growth throughout the novel despite having experiences that would

normally help a person to mature. For example, after being seduced by a colleague's wife, his only regret seems to be that Miss Kimble, the society pages editor, stumbled in on them and then later reported it to Julia, the young lady from a rival newspaper whom Harry is pursuing romantically. Other than thinking of the "complications" his tryst has caused him, he does not reflect any further on it (161). At the end of the novel Harry has become only marginally wiser and more mature through his experiences. Harry's lack of growth satirically suggests that Montreal newspaper reporters in that era lacked depth of character and the ability to self-reflect on the seriousness of their work.

Harry is thus portrayed as not particularly bright or talented, as seen when a colleague calls him "pretty ordinary, physically and mentally" (88). His professional ineptitude is particularly laid bare during his interview with a Brazilian diplomat when all he can muster is two banal questions about Canada-Brazil relations that provoke little response. Having nothing else to say, he looks "blankly" at the diplomat with "an embarrassed silence" (72). In fact, many of Harry's actions spring from his desire to impress Julia. After briefly making her acquaintance, he is motivated to clean up his "pigsty" of a room, in case she "ever agreed to drop in for a visit," although it seems highly unlikely that would ever happen (43). As such, he is never a very complex or richly developed character; much of his interior voice is dedicated to fantasizing about Julia or women in general. His typical reading choices are titillating books such as *Marriage Can Be Fun!* (179). He weighs professional decisions in light of the impression it will

make on Julia, even letting her use his notes to an important story despite his editor's strict injunctions against sharing information with rival reporters. The ease with which Harry is manipulated by Julia again satirizes the unprofessionalism and naivety of reporters of that era.

Despite the numerous instances of satire directed at Harry, his limitations do not prevent the reader from sympathizing with him to some extent. Harry is simply striving to start his career and advance professionally. He shows a little self-awareness about his limited intelligence when he realizes "how empty the old brain-box" really is (48). Through such displays of self-deprecation and by casting Harry in the tradition of the unsuccessful suitor of an unattainable woman, Weintraub ensures that readers can identify to some degree with Harry's human failings. Consequently, we tolerate Harry's human foibles and laugh at his shortcomings rather than hold him in the full contempt that a harshly satirical portrayal would provoke. The effect of making Harry sympathetic keeps the overarching purpose of the novel squarely on the satirical portrayal of print media rather than the hapless reporter. In keeping with the tradition of newspaper satire, Weintraub ensures that it is the entire Montreal newspaper industry of that era that is satirically targeted rather than just the ineptitudes of one reporter.

As Robert Fulford points out, one significant aspect of Harry that is satirized is his posturing as a rebel against the establishment ("Reluctant Rebel"). Although a conformist by nature, Harry learns he has to appear as a rebel to

attract Julia's attention. He resorts to cribbing ideas from a book entitled *They Spoke Up: An Anthology of Protest by Men Who Dared to Differ* (121). At a cocktail party he holds court in front of Julia and the guests by expounding on an idea he overheard from a colleague about creating the Abolishment Party to dissolve Canada as a nation and divide up much of its territory among other countries (111). He succeeds in delighting Julia and thus becomes confident that he will "be a success as a rebel, if only he could get hold of enough foolish things to say" (111). His listeners' admiration is also a satirical barb at many pseudo-nonconformists in society who latch onto any idea that is perceived as anti-establishment, regardless of how ridiculous it may be. Weintraub's jab at conformism is part of a larger concern in the 1960s with the loss of identity in an industrialized society, as typified in the NFB's award-winning short animation *The House that Jack Built* (1967).

Harry's primary function, though, is to act as a kind of ingénu who innocently observes and comments on the follies around him. As such he follows in the tradition of satires such as Voltaire's *Candide* and *L'Ingénu* in which naïve characters' observations about the malefactions around them satirically deflate the misdeeds they see. The resulting incongruity between Harry's remarks and the reality of the situation creates an irony that intensifies the satire. For example, a funeral he is covering for his newspaper proves to be an occasion for the élite to parade their self-importance, as seen when one guest trumpets the fact that the lady accompanying her "has the O.B.E." (Order of the British Empire), a

prestigious title (7). Harry wonders at the cynicism of the other reporters while he himself is in awe of "the glamour of a big occasion like this" (4). Later, while attending the Bellringer's luncheon (a parody of a men's community service club), Harry describes his "excitement" at seeing the "leaders of the community . . . at play and at charity" (13). His enthusiasm ironically contrasts with the juvenile behaviour of men singing inane songs of patriotism and ringing bells in lieu of applauding (17). His alacrity in accepting the importance of these events serves to highlight the absurdity of a newspaper deeming them worthy of news in the first place.

The novel establishes the satirical tone at its outset by revealing the blatant disregard for accurate reporting at the *Daily Witness*. When Harry is handed a list of three business executives who want their names published as having attended an important event despite their absence, his scruples lead him to ask the Religious Editor about what he should do. The Religious Editor's sarcastic and ironically sacrilegious reply about whether he is "running a newspaper or a goddam journalism school," as well as his remark about "hiring children" like Harry reveal the newspaper's contempt for any questioning of its practice of falsified reporting (6). The satirical point is further driven home when Harry is later told that his list of names of funeral attendees is too short. To his bewilderment, he is told to make it longer by inventing names. His colleague suggests that he "smith out" his list by adding fictitious names that have to

"sound . . . like they have bank accounts" (24). The use of such a neologism[4] reinforces the idea that bogus reporting is a well-established institutional practice. The satirical jab is at newspapers that hold little regard for ensuring the veracity of their news.

The falsified reporting and inaccurate facts in newspapers are in addition to the vast amounts of content that have no real news value, such as the funeral scene and the service club luncheon that the newspaper recounts in detail. In a comment that is close to being a direct authorial intrusion, the narrator explains the fixation of the *Daily Witness* with reporting lists of names: "it knew that every name it printed would be read with interest by the person whose name it was" and that "the context was of little importance - funerals, charity campaigns, service clubs, anything" (25). The satire is of the newspaper's attempt to build their subscriber base by appealing to people's vainglorious desire of seeing their names in print. Rather than printing interesting and relevant news stories, newspapers filled their pages with tedious accounts of speeches filled with tired clichés and platitudes, such as "Canada had a great future as a nation . . . with boundless vision [and] a date with destiny" (27). The narrator further explains that such speeches were printed because "what people are most interested in reading is what they already know;" they "want to read the account of the speech [from] the day before, even though no one else in his right mind would" (25). The paper was filled with purple prose, as seen in the obituary of an important

[4] The phrase "smith out" plays on the common family name.

industrialist: "His generous contributions proved once again how selfless philanthropy can make the camel smaller and the eye of the needle bigger – much bigger" (8). The boredom that the newspaper produces is further empathized by a whip mounted in Larkin's office that serves as "a curious relic of the days when newspapers had been stimulating" (55). Presumably the whip was once used by the editor to tame overly thoughtful reporters or wake up overly bored ones.

The banal news stories are shown to be in contrast to the legitimately important news that is either ignored or given secondary importance. The narrator ironically points out that the paper was forced to print current events solely because "the first law of journalism is that something must always be found to fill the space between the advertisements" (26). Thus, the stories about service club speeches and vacations of the Royal Family are prominently placed, while the bottoms of pages contain "short paragraphs announcing uprisings, epidemics, alarums, politickings and wars in various parts of the world" (27). The prominence given to trite news over important world events creates the satire of the misplaced priorities of the newspaper.

Weintraub often makes a satirical point at the end of a farcical scene. One such scene that ends in satire is when Harry unwittingly stumbles upon a convention of nudists in a hotel who resort to civil disobedience to assert their right to parade their lifestyle. Adding to the farce is an RCMP officer dressed as a bellhop who is chasing a Russian spy in the middle of all the chaos created by the nudists, a brief satirical poke at the various cold war hi-jinks of that era. After the

police arrive to arrest the nudists the power goes off and a fire breaks out. Eventually both the nudists and the police have to jump from a window into blankets held below on a freezing night. The satirical point is made at the end of this highly farcical scene when an editor remarks that it "might have made a nice little story for the paper" if it had not happened at one of the important hotels in Montreal, thus necessitating its suppression to avoid any embarrassment for an advertiser (93).

Weintraub ends *Why Rock the Boat* by contrasting two possibilities concerning the future of newspapers. First, Harry is presented with a vision of newspapers as simple tools of public relations firms where "reporters would eventually become relics of the past," and stories would be "pre-written . . . and tailored to fit each paper's needs" (177). Perhaps "the press releases would go directly to the printers" (177), and the need for editors would even disappear. Although this is quite a foreboding and somewhat prescient vision of what may happen to the newspaper industry, the levity is again maintained because Harry fails to recognize anything nefarious about the public relations man's ideas. He thinks of the idea purely in practical terms for his own future. He envisions himself married to Julia, working for a "good, solid" public relations firm with "fringe benefits and free childbirth" for his wife (178). Such a dark vision of the future of newspapers, though, highlights the potential danger to society of losing its free-thinking and independent press.

In contrast to the bleak picture of what newspapers may become, *Why Rock the Boat* instead ends with optimism about reforms within the newspaper world. Still trying to appear as a rebel, Harry goes against his newspaper's convention of suppressing important news that may prove embarrassing to its advertising clients. He goads the local police into breaking up an illegal gambling operation in one of the important hotels, and threatens to print the names of the men arrested, despite their importance in the community. His actions lead to both him and his editor getting fired. Harry then finds a new job with a rival newspaper whose stockholders have decided on major reforms. His new editor's final words are that the newspaper is no longer "covering funerals. . . . This is the twentieth century!" (217). Clearly the end of the novel signals a new and optimistic direction for newspapers.

Such a positive vision follows in the tradition of certain satires that are protreptic. As Highet observes, satirists not only denounce, they sometimes "give positive advice [and] set up an exemplar to copy" (243). Highet cites the example from Juvenal's fifth satire when a horrible dinner party is described in a nobleman's home and then is later contrasted with an account of a much more tasteful affair later on in his own house (243). Although there is criticism in the description of the first meal, the sharpest points of satire come when it is posited next to the ideal (243). Weintraub follows this satirical technique by showing not only the follies of newspapers, but by then offering a glimpse of what a newspaper should be: an institution that acts in the best interests of its readership

by printing timely and newsworthy stories. In showing the ideal, or at least a movement toward it, Weintraub employs this protreptic technique to further the effectiveness of his satirical attacks.

For all the emphasis on the vacuousness of the newspaper's content, it is ironically shown to have its advantages. The narrator explains that although other papers in the city "occasionally ran stories that were quite absorbing . . . the *Witness* was beyond that" (25). Only reporters "could fully appreciate" the "grandeur" of the "massive boredom" that their newspaper produced (25), with the satire created in the following passage by showing how reporters used this shortcoming to improve their social standing:

> It had to do with the fact that a newspaperman is a glamorous person only in proportion to the amount of news that he is able to withhold from the public; newspapermen really know what is going on, but once this knowledge is made public it becomes trite. When it came to what was happening behind the scenes in Montreal, nobody knew more than Witnessmen and, because of the paper's fortunate policy, they were allowed to keep most of it to themselves. This made them fascinating raconteurs, much sought after for conversation. (26)

The irony of the words "trite" to describe important news events and "fortunate" to describe the policy of self-censorship allows the satire to be presented in a measured and detached way without the biting invective that direct denunciation

would entail. As such, the reader is more accepting of the satirical reproach because of the humour that accompanies it.

Behind the light tone and abundant humour, however, is criticism of the English press's complicity in perpetuating one of Quebec's darkest political regimes. In *City Unique*, Weintraub expounds upon the English press during the Duplessis era. Despite Duplessis' gross abuses of democracy and flagrant suppression of free speech, the English newspapers consistently supported him and misled its readers about him (276). Hugh Doherty, a former reporter for the *Gazette*, denounces one such cover-up from the 1950s when "Duplessis cabinet ministers [were] getting rich through illegal insider trading of Quebec Natural Gas shares," but *Gazette* journalists were forbidden to do any investigative reporting on the story. André Laurandeau, the editor of *Le Devoir* in 1959, wrote that English-speakers in Quebec continued to support Duplessis to a surprising extent because "people know what they are told: they can't guess what their papers systematically hide" (*City Unique* 276). The newspapers claimed that they supported Duplessis because "they represented the English-speaking minority in Quebec," and so "it was not their place to be overly critical of a provincial government that represented the French-language majority" (Doherty). In reality, their motives were much more selfish. The newspapers often financially benefitted from government printing contracts, and Duplessis' frequent threats to the pulp-and-paper industry ensured low newsprint costs for them (*City Unique* 277). Duplessis also ensured that reporters received money when they favourably

covered government members' campaign speeches (277). Weintraub's satirical attacks take on an increased importance when seen in this historical light.

The reviews of *Why Rock the Boat* by the very Montreal newspapers Weintraub was parodying reveal the extent to which his satire hit close to home. Alan Rundel of the Montreal *Gazette* wrote that any similarities between *Why Rock the Boat* and "actual newspapering" are only "accidental" (11). He contends that its humorous moments are "few" and resemble "an extended version of the scripts the city room gang get together each year and record for their Christmas party" (11). He concludes by saying Weintraub has "left the way wide open for a book on the craft in our town" (11). Writing in the now-defunct Montreal *Star*, Walter O'Hearn states Weintraub "attacks conditions which never existed or which disappeared years ago," and dismisses the novel as nothing more than "The Office Boy's Revenge" (7). These two reviews stand in stark contrast to reviews from the rest of the country which praised the book. The Montreal reviews prompted rebuttals by not only the Toronto critic Fulford, but Peter Gzowski who interviewed Montreal newspapermen from that era and reported that they confirmed the accuracy of Weintraub's portrayal, including the "suppression of news that might affect advertisers" (80). Weintraub even received a letter from a former newspaperman for the *Gazette* that says that he had "to have worked on a Montreal newspaper . . . to realize how close to absolute reality [his] chronicle is" (80). The dismissive response Weintraub's satirical parody of Montreal newspapers provoked from its targets, in contrast to

reviews from the rest of Canada, is an indication of just how accurate his portrayal is.

Satire of the Linguistic Situation in Montreal

Although not his primary concern in this novel, Weintraub often hints in *Why Rock the Boat* at the difficulties of the linguistic situation in Quebec. Interestingly, his portrayal is characterized by sympathy for the Francophone majority who were often made to feel like second-class citizens in their own city by the wealthy and powerful Westmount Anglophones. Weintraub shows his sympathy by taking a satirical jab at corporations that act in total disregard for the French culture. As Weintraub explains in *City Unique*, during the 1950s the Canadian National Railway (CNR) decided to name its new landmark hotel in downtown Montreal after the reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth (180). Despite numerous protests by outraged Francophones, the CNR went ahead with this name instead of choosing one more representative of the French culture of the city, offering the dubious reason that the British sovereign was a symbol that unified English- and French-speakers in Canada. Weintraub uses parody to satirize the CNR's decision when an editor in *Why Rock the Boat* enumerates a list of hotels in Montreal: "the Royal Edward . . . the George the third . . . the Prince Consort . . . the Edward the Prince . . . the Imperial George" as well as "the Duke of York, the Henry the Eighth, the Royal Familial, the Victoria Regina, the Saxe-

Coburg-Gotha, the Duke of Kent" (68). Such satire reveals Weintraub's sympathy for the sensitivities of the Francophone culture of the city.

Weintraub touches upon the problem of living in a country with two predominant languages.[5] Julia, who shows a keen interest in learning French after moving to Montreal from Ontario, soon learns that most Anglophones she encounters do not share in her enthusiasm. She acts as a defender for the importance of becoming bilingual when she says that "everybody knows what's wrong with Canada . . . we just don't understand each other" (41). She goes on to deride the other journalists, accusing them of not making "the slightest effort" to learn French, despite living in Montreal (41). Weintraub adds a layer of satire to her criticisms when the chastised men heartily agree, but only because they see learning French as a means to romantically pursue her. Harry envisions a "language study group" that she proposes, and the possibility of seeing "a great deal of this delicious Julia before it finally became obvious just how preposterous the project really was" (42). By satirically revealing the men's motives, Weintraub disparages the many Montreal Anglophones who refuse to learn French.

Furthermore, Weintraub uses a farcical context to hint at the growing separatist movement within Quebec. One of the reporters goes on a long, rambling discourse about what ails Canada and concludes that the logical step is for Canada to abolish itself as the ultimate act of altruism. Various regions of Canada would be given to foreign countries but Quebec, because it is "the only

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[5] The setting of this novel predates the Official Languages Act of 1969, and so it would be inaccurate to refer to English and French as official languages of Canada at that time, although both were widely used in federal government documents of that era.

part of the country with any distinctive character" would become "an independent nation" (67). By introducing the idea of Quebec separating from Canada within a patently absurd speech, Weintraub satirizes those who would advocate it as a viable solution, while nevertheless acknowledging in a positive way Quebec's distinct culture.

The Satire of Modern Rabbis

Another satirical target is modern-minded rabbis who are more concerned with assimilating into upper class Gentile society than holding to the traditions and faith of Jewish culture. In a scene that is otherwise entirely tangential to the plot, Harry meets with a "handsome, beardless" rabbi at his synagogue to interview him about his upcoming speech at a conference. The satire is immediately signalled when Rabbi Cohen is "shining his riding boots" as Harry arrives (171). Further details revealing his love of fox hunting appear throughout the interview, including his status as "Master of Fox Hounds of the Disraeli Hunt, Montreal's first Jewish pack [that is] restricted to those of good character and extreme wealth" (170). The rabbi also plays "a daily eighteen at the golf club and [wields] an eager broom at the curling club" (170), sports predominantly played by the Gentile élite of that era.

In fact, the rabbi is far more preoccupied with sports than his religious duties. He has a long telephone conversation twice during Harry's interview, first to discuss "how often foxhounds should be fed" and then to haggle over the price

of horses (174-75). His upcoming speech entitled "Sport in the Old Testament" spends considerable time discussing the likelihood of the Montreal Canadiens winning the Stanley Cup that year (174-75). Cohen bemoans that the modern "clergyman is so beset by detail that he has no time left for policy matters (173)," but he is seemingly oblivious to the fact that his distractions arise wholly from his desire for social status. The interview ends with the rabbi taking off his skullcap and putting on "a hunting cap with an extravagantly long peak" (175), a fitting symbol of his exchange of a rabbi's work for Gentile pursuits. The incongruence of a rabbi obsessed with elitist sports is a satirical jab at Jewish reformers of that époque who sought assimilation and acceptance by the ambient Gentile culture over the traditional way of life and observances of their faith.

The satire of the rabbi is emphasized by the development of his unorthodox attitude toward the Jewish faith and culture. He dismissively refers to the Book of Deuteronomy as "curious old pages," (174) and irreverently speaks about the "old, bearded prophets" who wrote in "their squiggly old Hebrew letters" (175). The rabbi outrageously insists that the ancient prophets, in "their heart of hearts," must have said that they "play for the sake of the game. Play up, play up, and play the game!" (175). The rabbi's desire to distance himself from his own culture appears in his remark about "a colorful little congregation over in the Jewish part of town," (172) developing the satire by showing his condescension toward the Jewish ghetto. Rabbi Cohen is in fact a caricature of modern rabbis of the period, played up within the license satire allows for

exaggeration. Richler's similar concern about such reform-minded rabbis and Jews will be developed later.

Why Rock the Boat marks the debut of Weintraub's novelistic career that was to continue in the satirical tradition. Although his first novel focuses on the specific context of newspapers in the post-war era, the beginnings of other themes are present that he would develop in *The Underdogs,* notably the relations between the Anglophone and Francophone communities in Quebec. The moral judgement of his satire that gave rise to the unflinchingly honest appraisal of the newspaper world would turn to the more political sphere of Quebec language laws and the nationalism behind them.

Chapter Two: A View of the St. Urbain Street Ghetto: Richler's Satire of the Jewish Community in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*

Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* shares much in common with Weintraub's *Why Rock the Boat*. The youthful protagonists in both novels are alike in many ways; Duddy struggles to get his start in business just as Harry endeavours to establish himself in journalism. Both characters are used at times to facilitate satirical scenes by acting as ingénus whose naïve responses deflate the hypocrisy around them, although Duddy and Harry are only occasionally the objects of satire themselves. Like Weintraub, Richler broke with the existing Canadian satirical tradition in many ways with *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* which is also set in Montreal and thus eschews the typically rural settings of most previous Canadian satirists. Richler's and Weintraub's treatment of the Jewish community contrasts with the predominant focus on descendents of British immigrants of Canadian novelists before them. Indeed, the same tensions between reform and orthodox Jews that are touched upon in *Why Rock the Boat* are also present in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Thus, these two novels that were written around the late 1950s mark a new direction in Canadian satire, one that focuses on urban and ethnic concerns rather than the lives of British descendents generally living in small towns.

While Weintraub only briefly goes into the Jewish community in *Why Rock the Boat*, Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* is a much more distinctly Jewish novel with what John Ower calls a "pungent ethnic flavour" throughout

the narrative (413). Indeed, the reader is taken into the St. Urbain Street ghetto of Richler's childhood and exposed to the wide panoply of colourful characters that inhabited that place. Richler has spoken of his upbringing as follows: "that was my time, my place, and I have elected myself to get it right" (*Shovelling Trouble* 19). Richler is responsible for bringing that community into the broader Canadian consciousness through his novels.

However, his attempts to truthfully portray the world of his formative years provoked quite an angry reaction from his fellow Jews who as a minority community were particularly sensitive about how they were depicted to the majority population around them. The Montreal Jewish community of the 1930s and 1940s was largely made up of Eastern European immigrants who had fled anti-Semitic persecution in their homelands in search of better lives in Canada. They tended to be highly orthodox and conservative, as well as paradoxically both suspicious of and in search of acceptance from the surrounding culture. Richler was thus attacked because his portrayal of Jews was seen as hindering their efforts to gain approval from their Gentile neighbours, a criticism from within that several critics have observed is directed at minority writers who realistically portray their own cultures. Richler explains that writers from a majority community do not face such criticism:

> A Gentile, in my position, can ridicule the pretensions of the middle class and their clergy with a degree of impunity. He has, it's true, to face the tests of accuracy and artistic worth, but never will be called

> an anti-Gentile. My people, unfortunately, are still so insecure here that they want their artists to serve as publicists, not critics. (qtd. in Ramraj 178)

Richler refuses to conform to such expectations from his community and in fact says that "most Jewish writers annoy [him] because they write about the Jews in a honeyed way" (qtd. in Ramraj "Ambivalent" 178).

Accusations that *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* mocks Jews who are stereotyped do not hold up under an examination of how Duddy is portrayed. While Harry in Weintraub's novel was essentially flat and unchanging, existing primarily as a plot device to string satirical episodes together, Duddy is a richly developed character whose "apprenticeship" provides the thematic impetus of the narrative. He is neither utterly condemned for his many failings nor fully praised for his acts of generosity and kindness. The portrayal of Duddy helps to put Richler's acerbic satirical attacks on the Jewish community into perspective and deflect the charges of anti-Semitism against him by his community.

This chapter will show that Richler's sharp satire of the Jewish community is balanced by the largely sympathetic portrayal of Duddy. My focus will primarily be on Richler's most trenchant satire which tends to be found in and around the comic set pieces that periodically digress from the main narrative of the novel. A satirical prod of certain Jews and their belief in Zionism can also be seen in Duddy's quest for land and all the trouble it entails. Richler's portrayal of

French-Canadians[6] is also a focus of my chapter, for although Richler satirizes virtually every other community that appears in the novel, he conspicuously avoids mocking Francophone characters or their culture. The primary French-Canadian representative, Duddy's girlfriend Yvette, along with the other background French-Canadian characters reveal that Richler held a sympathetic view of their plight, even identifying with them in their status as second-class citizens in Quebec during that era.

Satire of the Jewish Community

As a number of critics have pointed out, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* has a loosely picaresque structure as it follows the twists and turns of Duddy's quest for land. This episodic structure includes a number of comic set pieces that are set apart from the text by subtitles. These sections are at best remotely connected to the development of the narrative and main characters. The first three set pieces primarily satirize aspects of the Jewish community and are decidedly biting in their tone. The last set piece takes aim at groups that feel they should be afforded special rights solely on the basis of their minority status and thus this scene is obliquely critical of Jews who do the same.

The first set piece is entitled "The March of the Fletcher's Cadets," and achieves its comic effect primarily from the incongruity of Jewish schoolboys marching through the streets of their ghetto looking as though they were British

[6] The term "French-Canadian" was widely used in that era, as the term "Québécois" only came into common usage much later.

soldiers. The boys are led by one of their school teachers of British descent who dresses and acts like an actual British officer. The seriousness of the Commander-in-chief is humorously contrasted with the cadets, who sing vulgar songs and slowly abscond from the parade along the route. The comedy is further heightened by the comments of various spectators watching the cadets as they march. For example, two elderly Jews have this brief exchange:

> "Jewish children in uniform?"
>
> "Why not?"
>
> "It's not nice. For a Jewish boy a uniform is not so nice." (40)

The final remark suggests that Jews should not be a part of organizations, especially military ones, as it may compromise their sense of Jewish ethnicity. The comment also recalls the horrors of the Second World War for European Jews at the hands of anti-Semitic military forces, ironically evoked for older Jews by images of Jewish boys in uniform.

Although the entire scene is tangential to the main narrative and primarily is included to establish a sense of place, there is a vein of satire running through it. The cadets pass by a Jewish library that has a poster in its window which announces an upcoming talk entitled "On Being a Jewish Poet in Montreal West" (41). The satirical effect is created by the hypocrisy of someone ostensibly striving to further Jewish culture even while he maintains an affluent lifestyle among Gentiles in a wealthy part of Montreal. Another satirical jab comes when the parade passes by the family home and store of one of the cadets who lowers his

eyes because there had been a fire there the previous night. He had known beforehand the fire was going to happen after his father "cheerfully" told him and his brother that they would be sleeping at their grandmother's place that night. The cadet knew it was a sign of "another fire, another store" (42). The satire is created by the contrast between the father's naïve attempts to hide his criminal behaviour from his family and his son's shame at what he knows is a morally culpable act. This satirical jab plays on the stereotype of corruption among Jewish businessmen.

The next set piece, entitled "Commencement," is the occasion of Duddy's graduation from Fletcher's Field High School. Once again, the episode is included for purely satirical ends rather than to advance the main narrative or provide any personal background on the characters. Fletcher's Field is clearly modelled after Baron Byng, the high school of Richler's youth in the Montreal Jewish ghetto. Richler mines Baron Byng for a host of satirical possibilities, foremost of which is the previously mentioned incongruity of having a faculty of teachers of British descent running a school of mostly Jewish boys. Many of these teachers were insensitive or ignorant about Jewish culture, if not outright anti-Semitic in their comments and jokes in class. Richler's satirical targets fall into two broad categories: the ineptitude and platitudes of the high school faculty and keynote speaker, particularly in their wilful ignorance of Jewish culture, and the rivalries, gauche manners, and generational tensions of the Jewish families in attendance.

The graduation ceremony is thoroughly British in tone, avoiding any gesture that would recognize that virtually all the students are Jewish. After the students sing a children's British song, "Ten Men Went to Mow" an audience member makes the satirical point, commenting: "A Yiddish song they couldn't sing? It would be against the law?" (67). Implicit in the satire is that it is completely inappropriate for a children's song to be performed at a high school graduation ceremony. The choice of a British song also undermines an event at which Jewish parents are expressing pride in their children. Then, a student plays a piano piece by Chopin, yet more music unrelated to Jewish culture and also ironic in that Chopin is reputed to have been anti-Semitic. Additionally, much satire is devoted to the school's choice of a distinctly non-Jewish speaker, Captain John Edgar Tate, described as a "proud descendant of a family of United Empire Loyalists" (68). His talk is filled with clichés and platitudes including: "Don't drop the ball. Because if you drop the ball you're passing it to Uncle Joe" (69). He speaks of the "Red Indian and the first British and French-Canadian settlers" who helped to build the nation, but he conspicuously fails to mention the contribution of Jewish immigrants to Canada's development (69). The incongruity of such an insensitive speech by an inappropriate speaker is reinforced once again by a satirical comment from the audience: "Why couldn't they have invited one of our own to speak?" (69). The school principal is also targeted for his bromides, for "every year" he says that the students are graduating to "the wide world" (66). Finally, the general incompetency of the teachers is satirized in the description of

one who "failed engineering" before he "decided to become a teacher" (67). The overall portrait of the school staff is one of ineptitude and cultural insensitivity.

The set piece entitled "The Screening" is preceded by a description of the bar-mitzvah of Mr. Cohen's son Bernie, which sets the stage for the satire that follows. Duddy is at the bar-mitzvah because he has been hired to make a film about it. In his description of the synagogue and the bar-mitzvah guests, Richler takes satiric aim at the tensions between modern Jews who wanted to move away from strict orthodoxy and their elders who held closely to conservative beliefs and practices. Richler is clearly moving towards trenchant satire in the following passage:

> The synagogue in fact was so modern that is was not called a synagogue any more. It was called a Temple. Duddy had never seen anything like it in his life. There was a choir and an organ and a parking lot next door. The men not only did not wear hats but they sat together with the women. All these things were forbidden by traditional Jewish law, but those who attended the temple were so-called reform Jews and they had modernized the law to suit life in America. (166)

A collision between reform and orthodox Jews occurs when Mr. Cohen's father, who has just walked five miles because Jewish law prohibits driving on the Sabbath, arrives at the temple:

> The old man stumbled. "Where's the synagogue?" he asked.

> "This is it, Paw. This is the Temple."
>
> The old man looked up at the oak doors and the magnificent stained glass windows. "It's a church," he said, retreating. (167)

Richler's sympathy is clearly with Cohen's father who is spared from any ridicule despite his refusal to give up his strict orthodox religion that he brought with him from the old country. That Richler sides firmly with orthodox rather than more modern-minded Jews may seem a paradoxical position given that he was a secular Jew who broke from orthodoxy early in his life, never to return to it. However, his satirical motive is once again to censure what he perceives to be hypocrisy, in this case of the reform Jews who were hiding their true motive of wanting to appear less Jewish by blending into the surrounding Gentile culture. Richler's criticisms are deftly captured by the comments of several characters. The unscrupulous Dingleman says he feels like "a Jesuit in a whorehouse" whenever he visits the temple (166). Uncle Benjy calls it a "cream-puff of a synagogue, this religious drugstore" that has "taken all the mystery out of religion" (167).

Bernie's bar-mitzvah is presided over by Rabbi Goldstone, who is remarkably similar to Weintraub's sports-loving Rabbi Cohen in *Why Rock the Boat*.[7] Like Rabbi Cohen, Rabbi Goldstone leads reform-minded Jews in a modern synagogue and is equally eager to appropriate as many trappings from the ambient Gentile culture as possible. "A fervent supporter of Jewish and Gentile

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[7] According to correspondence between Weintraub and Richler that is reprinted in *Getting Started*, both authors thought of the idea of the sports-minded rabbi independently of each other (229).

brotherhood," (166) Goldstone seeks to broaden his public prominence. He offers his time for radio interviews for such ridiculous subjects as "The Jewish Attitude to Household Pets" and sends copies of his speeches "to all the newspapers" (166). Like Rabbi Cohen, Goldstone is sports-minded, as shown when he gives his sermon at the bar-mitzvah on "Jewish Athletes - From Bar Kochva to Hank Greenberg" (168). He also mentions that if the congregation "took a look at the race horse chart displayed in the hall they would see that 'Jewish History' was trailing 'Dramatics Night' by five lengths" (168). Richler's condemnation of Rabbi Goldstone and his reform-minded ways is unequivocal, with the satire achieved by the highlighting of the absurdities the rabbi is willing to commit to fit into modern North American life. The satire is further reinforced when Mr. Cohen, ironically "one of the Rabbi's most enthusiastic supporters," (166) sees what a "foolish rabbi" he has (185).

"The Screening" employs a similar technique to the previous two set pieces, namely the juxtaposition of the main action with humorous remarks from the onlookers. These seemingly off-hand comments serve to expose and deflate the pretensions and follies of the artistic pomposity on display. This particular set piece is composed of a scene-by-scene description of Duddy's first film entitled "Happy Bar-mitzvah, Bernie!" The descriptions of film scenes are interspersed with facetious comments from audience members who are viewing the film for the first time. The satire focuses on the director, Peter Friar, who frequently describes himself as a great filmmaker forced into exile from the United States

because of his communist beliefs. In fact, he is only an artistic hack, as shown in this film scene and the subsequent comment made when Bernie and Rabbi Goldstone are at the prayer stand:

> Narrator: *As solemn as the Aztec sacrifice, more mysterious than Helen's face, is the pregnant moment, the meeting of time past and time present, when the priest and his initiate reach the ho'mat.*
>
> Rabbi Goldstone coughed. "That means priest in the figurative sense." (178)

Friar's pretentious style and florid narration are typical of the entire film, with the rabbi's comment serving to further underscore Friar's cultural and religious ignorance about Jews.

The final set piece is "The Crusader," a copy of Virgil's magazine which is subtitled "The Only Magazine in the World Published by Epileptics for Epileptics" (317). This magazine is a parody of the discourse of disadvantaged groups who agitate for special privileges in society because of their minority status. The stated mission of the magazine is to mobilize "health handicappers . . . to organize . . . to take a leaf from the book of negroes, Jews, and the homosexuals" (319). Richler is satirizing all groups that use their minority status as an excuse to explain their failings in life that are more likely due to a lack of talent or effort. Richler always maintained that Jews should be judged on their accomplishments alone and not given any special consideration because of their ethnic and religious background, no matter how historically persecuted they were

as a people. The satire is achieved through the clichéd and maudlin prose of the magazine which parodies the tone often taken by some special interest groups. For example, the magazine attempts to give an inspirational biographical account of Julius Caesar:

> Life was no breeze for the young Julius, but from the day of his birth until the day he met his untimely end, he never once let his health handicap stand in his way. *Julius Caesar had been born an epileptic and he was not ashamed of it.* He had guts a-plenty. (318)

Richler's satire is seen in the mawkish description of Caesar that typifies the magazine's tendency to appeal to sentimentality rather than thoughtful arguments or appropriate examples to advance its cause.

In a broader sense, the narrative of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* also works as a satire of Zionism. The link between Duddy's purchase of the land surrounding the lake and the Jewish effort to establish a homeland is alluded to when Duddy brings his family to see the property. Lennie says, "I wouldn't want a lake here if they gave it to me on a silver platter. Why develop things for them? Now Israel, that's something else" (367). Duddy's quest for land is spurred by his grandfather's aphorism that "a man without land is nobody," (49) a similar phrase to one often associated with early Zionism "A land without a people for a people without a land." Indeed, Duddy's ruthless and frenzied acquisition of land in order to gain respect can be viewed as a parody of Jews establishing their own county in Palestine in an effort to, as George Woodcock puts it, "solve the

problems that history has heaped upon the Jewish people" (67). Duddy's many setbacks in his pursuit of land, the most notable being his estrangement from his beloved grandfather as a result of his lying and cheating, especially as they involve Virgil, thus act as a rebuke of the misplaced hope in Israel that Zionists have. Writing this novel in the 1950s during the early years of Israel's existence, Richler is prescient in his raising of fears of the corruption of the Zionist dream, something suggested through the extent of Duddy's misbehaviours. Richler's satire of Zionism, as I will later show, also surfaces in *Barney's Version*.

Duddy: A Balanced Portrayal

Much of the criticism of Richler that came from within his own Jewish community sprang from what was perceived as a stereotypical portrayal of a Jewish boy who is greedy and malicious in his quest for material success. Far from being anti-Semitic, however, the nuanced and complex characterization of Duddy balances the more searing satirical attacks on Jews in the set pieces. Duddy accuses his Uncle Benjy at one point of being a sneering intellectual who reads "books that make fun of people like [Duddy]" (286). And indeed, Richler could have directed his satirical pen squarely at Duddy and censured him as his family does; at various points they call him a "conniving little yid" (331) and a "little Jew-boy on the make" (286). As Ramraj points out, however, the reader comes to see that Duddy is not primarily motivated by money, but by the need to be accepted by his family and a community that are quite indifferent and even

disdainful of him (224). Duddy is largely ignored by his immediate family, including his father Max, his Uncle Benjy, and his brother Lennie. Duddy learns of his father's dismissive attitude toward him early on, as in this exchange when his father refuses to defend him when he gets into trouble at school:

> "Do I always have to be in the wrong? Jeez. Why can't you stick up for me? Just once why can't you---"
>
> "You're a real trouble-maker, Duddy, that's why. Lennie never once got the strap in four years at Fletchers." (25)

During Duddy's summer working at Reuben's resort, his father never writes to him even once, although Duddy remembers that when Lennie was away at camp for a summer, "his father had written him every week [and] had driven out to visit him twice" (118). When Duddy imagines himself as having drowned after his disastrous night with the roulette wheel, he thinks of his father "maybe feeling sorry he hadn't treated him as well as Lennie," a thought that "made a hot lump in Duddy's throat" (98). When he visits his dying Uncle Benjy, he spells out his feelings of being unloved and uncared for:

> You think it's funny. Everything about me's funny. I'm a regular laughing stock. You know, as a kid I always liked Auntie Ida. But I remember when you used to come to the house you always brought a surprise for Lennie. I could have been dead as much as you cared. (285)

Duddy dismisses Benjy's defence of these accusations by telling him: "If you're so concerned, how come in real life you never have time for me?" (286).

Even his elder brother Lennie has little time or consideration for Duddy. Despite Duddy's efforts to establish a close relationship with his brother, Duddy discovers Lennie's embarrassment about him when he talks to a young lady who refuses to believe that he is Lennie's brother because "she knew all about Lennie and he had never mentioned he had a brother" (192). Such disdain from his brother, uncle, and father provokes a constant need for Duddy to wonder if his deceased mother had loved him, as when "once more Duddy was tempted to ask his father if Minnie had liked him, but he couldn't bring himself to risk it" (146).

Despite such neglect from his family members, Duddy shows them unswerving and selfless devotion, drawing our sympathy. He offers to give Lennie his tip money from his summer job to help with his tuition and goes to extraordinary lengths to bring his fleeing brother back from Toronto following Lennie's illegal participation in a botched abortion. Duddy defends his father when his school teacher proclaims that Max is "not fit to bring up a boy" (6), replying to the teacher that it was "an insult to [his] family" (10). When Benjy is dying of cancer, Duddy travels to New York to bring back Benjy's wife Ida, in spite of the inconvenience. Duddy reserves a plot of land in his future development plans for his grandfather, who first planted in Duddy the idea of buying the lake property. Such affection for his family helps not only to balance

the more unsavoury side of Duddy but also to reveal that his motivation for getting land goes beyond simple greed. He seeks to win his family's approval.

Duddy's character is made more sympathetic by the negative influences in his environment. When Duddy awakens one morning, he was "unsure of his surroundings but prepared for instant battle, the alibi for a crime unremembered already half-born, panting, scratching, and ready to bolt if necessary" (203). He learns such a fighter's mentality in an environment where he must ride roughshod over others or have the same done to him. His father holds up Jerry Dingleman, a notorious criminal, as a model for him to follow, and indeed Duddy likes to think that his anger is made of the "same hot stuff" as Dingleman's (65). Dingleman uses the unwitting Duddy to smuggle drugs into Canada after they travel to New York together, reinforcing, when Duddy learns the truth, his sense that one must be willing to use others in the struggle to get ahead. This lesson is repeated for him by Cohen, who explains to Duddy his personal business philosophy that includes justifying unsafe working conditions that killed one of his employees and outsmarting his business partner so that he went to jail for fraud instead of Cohen. By showing that the environmental influences on Duddy are devoid of ethics, Richler balances Duddy's more unattractive actions by revealing how he is simply appropriating the values around him.

Richler avoids making Duddy entirely a victim of naturalistic forces, however, by showing that he is not without free will in his decisions. Benjy's final

letter explaining the inheritance Duddy is to receive from him outlines the choice Duddy has to make:

> There's more to you than mere money-lust, Duddy, but I'm afraid for you. You're two people, that's why. The scheming little bastard I saw so easily and the fine, intelligent boy underneath that your grandfather, bless him, saw. But you're coming of age soon and you'll have to choose. A boy can be two, three, four potential people, but a man is only one. He murders the others. (331-32)

In the latter part of the novel, Duddy seems to waver between guilt, that, if faced, could lead to self-reflection and his development as a better person, and self-justification, that when succumbed to allows him to blame others and continue dishonest behaviour. For example, before Duddy's final reprehensible act of forging a cheque to get Virgil's money, he has qualms about what he is doing, something he does not experience at any other time in the novel. He attempts to justify the forgery when he thinks of Yvette and Virgil refusing to give him money: "It's their fault . . . they won't help me, they're forcing me into it" (364). Duddy reaches his lowest point when he steals the money from Virgil, whose paralysis he had already indirectly caused not long before. However, as Woodcock observes, both Virgil and Yvette are not well realized characters (77). Virgil is little more than a caricature and Yvette represents more a foil of human decency rather than a convincing character (77), facts that help to temper the

reader's disapproval of Duddy's actions and which seem to leave him morally unengaged with his mistreatment of them.

Critics have been unsure of how to assess Duddy and are often divided as to whether he is portrayed sympathetically or satirically. One instance of this uncertainty is found in Woodcock's contradictory claims that "the major part of the satire is directed against Duddy himself" (95) but that Duddy is "still a human being with whom we can feel" (95). Satire demands that we hold the target fully in contempt, a reaction that by nature leaves no room for sympathy. Richler does not unreservedly condemn Duddy nor fully overlook his many shortcomings. Most of the satire in this novel is directed at those around Duddy, who is perhaps only satirically censured when he commits his final depraved act of stealing from Virgil. To some degree, he seems to merit his Uncle Benjy's description as a "little Jew-boy on the make" (286), although the many mitigating aspects of his life and environment considerably soften the satire.

French-Canadians in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*

Although most of the characters in this novel are Jewish or British immigrants or their descendents, Duddy's French-Canadian girlfriend Yvette plays a significant role in the action. Duddy describes Yvette as his "Girl Friday" who spends much of her time attending to his needs despite his frequent ill treatment of her (249). Her level of devotion to Duddy goes beyond the limits of credibility, another example of the oft-mentioned criticism concerning Richler's

unrealistically realized female characters. Despite Duddy's heavy demands on Yvette and expressions of love for her, he never considers marrying her, instead thinking that he has "plenty of time to find . . . a rich wife" (270). Woodcock also observes that in addition to her saintly character, which is out of place among the cast of "rogues and fools" in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, she inexplicably speaks English as a middle-class Anglophone of that era would and later in the novel gets a job as a legal secretary with no apparent education for the position (77).

Nevertheless, Yvette offers a view into Richler's attitude toward French-Canadians. Her innate goodness and willingness to put others before herself stand in contrast to the other characters that are driven by self-interest. Richler condemns or ridicules almost everyone in the novel to varying degrees but spares Yvette any mockery despite her naïve behaviour. Yan Hamel observes that in this novel and *Barney's Version*, Richler has put Jewish males into close relationships with French-Canadian women. Hamel contends that Duddy's need of Yvette for support on many levels mixed with his unwillingness to commit to her in marriage stands as a rebuke of those Jews who are reluctant to fully bridge the ethnic gap between them and the French-speaking community around them.

Nevertheless, Richler also shows a natural sympathy between those Jews and French-Canadians who are a part of the working class. Duddy reflects on how Yvette's background helps draw them closer together: "meanwhile, with Yvette, he could be himself. She came from a poor family too and she knew that a

guy's underwear got dirty sometimes" (270). This natural affinity between the poorer classes ultimately ends, though, in the exploitation of French-Canadians at the hands of the entrepreneurial Jews. In addition to Duddy's abuse of Yvette, French-Canadian workers are shown to be exploited at Uncle Benjy's sweatshop and forced to work in dangerous conditions at Cohen's scrap yard, an exploitation the narrative seems to critique.

Richler's unrealistic portrayal of Yvette is perhaps a reflection of his lack of first-hand knowledge about French-Canadians, having grown up in a ghetto whose residents were suspicious of outsiders and thus intent on keeping their distance. He nevertheless sympathetically portrays French-Canadians in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, displaying a positive attitude towards them that would last his entire life and re-emerge decades later in *Barney's Version*.

Conclusion

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz is a seminal novel in several ways. Its satirical focus on Montreal society broke from the existing Canadian tradition of mainly rural settings and British inflected culture. With this novel, Richler continued to open up the Montreal Jewish ghetto of his youth to a wide audience in an unsentimental fashion that helped prepare the way for later minority satirists to write about their own communities in a realistic way. Despite the criticism he knew would inevitably arise from his own community, he was not afraid to satirize those aspects of Jewish society that were, in his view, worthy of

censure. The close examination of his portrayal of Duddy nevertheless reveals that Richler held a grudging respect for the parochial ways of his community, despite his departure from Orthodox Judaism at an early age.

Both Richler and Weintraub would later turn to the Quebec nationalist question in their fiction. Both were accused of harbouring anti-Francophone sentiments because of their satirical work about Quebec politics. These two early novels, which predate the emergence of Quebec separatism as a serious force, offer an early look into their attitudes concerning Francophones. As shown in the first two chapters, Weintraub, in particular, is sympathetic and even defensive about the importance of the French language and culture, and Richler portrays Francophone characters in decidedly positive ways, especially when contrasted with the folly and vice of most of the other characters around them. Such early views will prove useful to keep in mind when dealing with their satirical forays into Francophone topics in their later novels, the subjects of the last two chapters.

Chapter Three: Anglos Under Fire: Weintraub's Dystopian Vision of Post-Separation Quebec in *The Underdogs*

Weintraub continued his satirical examination of Montreal society by turning his novelistic sights onto contemporary political events of the 1970s. Like *Why Rock the Boat, The Underdogs* is a wholly satirical novel in structure and tone. This novel's significant departure from the Canadian satirical tradition is its purpose of exposing and condemning perceived injustices committed against a minority group. Prior to *The Underdogs,* the Canadian satirical tradition included many examples of novels that attacked folly and vice within the majority English-speaking community but satire was never employed as a means for a minority group to address grievances. *The Underdogs* examines the plight of Montreal Anglophones in the 1970s within the highly charged political climate following the rise to power of the Parti Québécois (PQ).[8] Weintraub signals the purpose of his satire in an epigraph that cites Einstein: "Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind"(8). The rapid growth of hard-line Quebec nationalism in that era prompted Weintraub to respond with incisive attacks that denounce the alleged mistreatment of Anglo-Quebecers. As noted earlier, Highet contends that a common denominator of many satirists is a feeling of inferiority that stems from belonging to a minority group and their consequent desire for retribution.

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[8] Marc Levine points out that the Anglophone population in Montreal fell by almost 100,000 in the ten years following the PQ election in 1976 (120). According to an analysis by Statistics Canada, a large number of Anglophones moved from Montreal to other provinces in the 1980s and 1990s (Hou and Bourne 22). Additionally, Don MacPherson analyzes statistics that reveal a significant drop in English-speakers in Quebec in the two years following the 1995 sovereignty referendum.

Weintraub's status as an Anglophone writer within a largely French-speaking Quebec contributes to his satire of the majority community. The narrative of *The Underdogs* displays an insider's knowledge of the Quebec linguistic situation of that era, not surprising given Weintraub's near life-long residency in Montreal.

Weintraub's later documentary film entitled *The Rise and Fall of English Montreal* (1993) further articulates his specific complaints and offers insight into his earlier motivations for embracing satire in *The Underdogs*. The film gives a broad historical background of the English community in Montreal which for a couple of hundred years had been a thriving, vibrant contributor to the economic and cultural life of the city. Juxtaposed to this history are interviews with and commentary from contemporary Anglo-Montrealers who express feelings of dismay arising from the harassment they feel they are subject to from a Quebec government they think is bent on making their presence all but invisible in a misguided effort to promote the French language.

The film explores the specific reasons for the malaise of the Anglo-Montreal community. Foremost is Quebec's Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101, which was passed into law by the Parti Québécois in 1977 and which mandated that all indoor and outdoor commercial signs in Quebec be solely in French. Many egregious examples of over-zealous sign law inspectors are detailed, including one in which a Montreal business owner had to go to court four times to defend a sign outside his shop that had "hello" written in dozens of different languages. The drive of the Montreal municipal government to change

English place names to French ones is also cited to illustrate the effort being made to hide the historical presence and contribution of English-speaking citizens. For example, Dorchester Street, named after the British Lord Dorchester, is renamed Boulevard René Lévesque. The film also explores myths and stereotypes about the English-speaking community, the most common being that all Anglo-Montrealers excel at business and are consequently wealthy. The film explains that, in fact, only a very small percentage of Anglophones are rich; the rest are either middle-class or poor. Indeed, there is considerable poverty among Anglophones. The film describes the wealthy English-speaking "robber barons" from bygones eras as the "equal-opportunity exploiters" who were happy to get rich on the backs of both the French- and English-speaking working poor. The film's commentary also claims that the English-speaking community is by nature reserved and law-abiding and so decidedly timid in asserting its complaints about Bill 101; Weintraub's novel and documentary film attempt to give voice to these grievances. Produced fifteen years after *The Underdogs* was published, Weintraub's documentary film thus shows in considerable detail many of the specific and ongoing irritants that fuelled his earlier satirical attacks.[9] His film underscores the historical context of the novel's satirical attacks, historical grounding being one of the key requisites of the wholly satirical novel.

This chapter will demonstrate that Weintraub's primary satirical purpose in *The Underdogs* is two-fold: firstly, to denounce the restrictive language laws and

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[9] The film is considered by many to be his most memorable, particularly because of its polemic content in the midst of a tense linguistic debate.

other forms of perceived discrimination against Anglo-Quebecers and secondly to warn of the economic collapse that Quebec separation would cause if it ever came to pass. I will also show that although the satire of Quebec nationalism is sharp and uncompromising, Weintraub strives to contribute to the linguistic debate in a relatively measured and fair manner. This novel is not a diatribe against Francophone society but rather a careful examination of specific points of malcontent the English community harbours against certain factions of the élite and political class in Quebec. The satire against Quebec nationalism is further moderated by Weintraub's inclusion of a satirical look at a Jewish family living in hardship within the Republic of Quebec.

The characters and plot of *The Underdogs* are typical of wholly satirical novels. Living in the post-separation Republic of Quebec is Paul Pritchard, the protagonist, a twenty-two-year-old Anglo-Montrealer who closely resembles Harry in *Why Rock the Boat*; both are simple-minded and sexually-obsessed young men who get swept up in the madcap action around them. Much of Paul's time and energy is spent pursuing Mona, a young lady who, like her female counterpart in Weintraub's previous novel, is a more intelligent and complex character than the male protagonist. Paul wanders through the narrative mainly as a device to facilitate the satirical barbs rather than as a fully-fleshed out character that evokes the reader's sympathy. Furthermore, the implausibility and episodic nature of the plot that are typical of wholly satirical novels also facilitate this novel's satire. The plot strains and then breaks with verisimilitude in its zany

kidnapping story of a visiting foreign dignitary in Quebec and the far-fetched negotiations that ensue. The improbable plot serves to reinforce the focus of the novel on the satire rather than the development of a realistic narrative. Furthermore, the episodic structure allows for a broad range of satirical targets as the action moves through different spheres of society.

Weintraub's central concern is to satirically ridicule Bill 101 and the perceived excessiveness with which it was enforced. In one scene an Italian restaurateur is forced to change the menu item *Zuppa* to "*soupe à la culture minoritaire*" and eventually to close his business due to his refusal to take fettuccine Alfredo off his menu after no suitable French translation could be determined (104). The much decried language inspectors are satirized for their misguided efforts to safeguard French culture; the so-called language police seek out "cultural crime[s]" such as that committed by a certain restaurant in serving "English muffins without a permit" (189). Paul ponders the irony that despite the sizeable number of English-speaking people in Quebec, "the English language had no more status there than Swahili, Esperanto or Pig Latin" (10).

Weintraub further satirizes contemporary events in recounting the obligation for Anglophones to obtain a "Certificate of Linguistic Purity" in order to secure employment involving anything more than menial labour (24). Mona attempts to pass the test to obtain the certificate, and although she demonstrates flawless command of French grammar and culture, she fails because of her poor

score on the pronunciation tests. Weintraub relies on exaggeration to make his satirical point:

> One of the technicians patiently showed her where she had gone wrong. The variance of half a squiggle on the graph, at the spot where she had said *ligne*, showed how the *gn* sound had been prolonged a microsecond too long. This meant that in uttering the word she had raised her upper lip three millimetres higher than was prescribed by the standards of linguistic purity. (57)

As a result of this experience, Mona reflects that "like almost every other Anglo, she [is] doomed to work for the rest of her life at a job that paid the lowest of wages - cheap Anglo labour for the French overlords" (27). While exaggerated, the satire is based on real-life stories of Anglophones losing their jobs after failing grammar tests required by the government even when their spoken French is strong and their jobs require little written communication in French. Peter Woolfson cites the example that 532 nurses failed their language proficiency tests between 1976 and 1981 (47). He recounts the high profile case of a bilingual nursing assistant, Joanne Curan, who failed the written exam by a few points and subsequently lost her position at a hospital (47). As recently as 2005, CBC news reported that two Anglo-Montreal nurses were fired because they failed French grammar tests that the government required for their continued employment ("Quebec Nurses").

Weintraub satirizes the general trend of Quebec in that era to make French the predominant language at the expense of English. The narrator recounts his impression that "French students . . . [are] becoming defiantly unilingual" even though previous generations of French-Canadians were often able to function well in English. One character explains that "now that the Frenchman of Quebec is *maître chez lui*, he . . . feels that he has the overdog's privilege, which is to remain linguistically ignorant" (44). With satirical exaggeration, the character contends that "years ago every French garage mechanic in Montreal used to be able to speak English, but today the rector of the University of Montreal doesn't know how to say 'Hello' " (44), an overreaction to creeping Anglicization of the past. He warns of the danger if there is widespread acceptance by French-speakers of such an attitude because "without speaking English they will never be able to function outside this little ghetto they have made for themselves" (44).

Weintraub's satire of Quebec separatists is not limited to the linguistic situation. Satirical theorists have noted that satire, in addition to its oft-used purpose of condemning folly and vice, also appears in dystopian fiction for other ends. Ogborn and Buckroyd state that it may be used "to warn of future danger rather than trying to effect moral improvement" (14); she cites George Orwell's use of this type of satire in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* as a form of cautionary political commentary. Valentine Cunningham explains that satirists have exposed "modern utopian experiments" of the twentieth century as "antithetical to human good" (423). By showing the economic collapse of a futuristic post-separation

Quebec and the ways separatist ideals of equality and social justice could be corrupted by its leaders' greed and lust for power, Weintraub warns about the gulf that, in his view, would inevitably develop between the socialist revolutionary ideals and the devastating consequences of their attempt at instituting such ideals.[10] In the same vein in an essay published in 1998, Richler describes the leftist ideals of Quebec's sovereignty movement as promising "day care, full employment, whopper pensions, and winning lottery tickets. A ring-a-ding francophone Utopia" ("Ottawa" 330). Weintraub strenuously attacks these socialist ideals as destined to lead to economic catastrophe if implemented. It must be noted that Weintraub has, in other contexts, great admiration for communists because of the conviction they hold for their ideals. In *City Unique*, for example, he praises the courage of the Montreal communist Paulette Buchanan for continuing to work for the cause despite her fear of being arrested (248). Weintraub is concerned in *The Underdogs* with demonstrating the reductio ad absurdum if socialist ideals are pushed fully to their logical conclusion.

Weintraub's satire of socialism is achieved through characterizing the Republic of Quebec as a full-fledged socialist state and then revealing the likely fallout from adhering to such an economic model. In doing so, Weintraub satirically attacks the Quebec nationalist movement as so ideologically driven that its citizens' economic well-being suffers as a result. For example, consumer goods

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[10] The political situation in Quebec spawned other dystopian novels that were published soon after *The Underdogs*: Hugh MacLennan's *Voices in Time* (1980) and Hélène Holden's *After the Fact* (1986). While the political contexts in both are vague, the narratives in these novels feature Anglophones struggling in what appears to be post-separation Quebec.

in the Republic are of poor quality and are only sporadically imported from communist countries, such as Albania and North Korea (66), thus showing the Republic of Quebec to be even worse off than the most backward socialist states. In an instance of direct satirical denunciation in the novel, the narrator observes that the absence of mass production and assembly lines is due to Quebec "paying its workers the highest minimum wage . . . and accepting from them, in return, the lowest productivity" (66). Any hope of restoring a market economy that would strengthen the economy is thwarted by the government that allows almost no privately owned businesses "lest they become too profitable and lead to a recrudescence of capitalism" (65). Capitalism in the Republic is considered as an evil foisted on Quebec by greedy Anglophones. This facile view is exemplified, for instance, during a pageant celebrating the "Proclamation of Sovereignty" when the "Allegorical Anglo Capitalists of the Colonial Era" appear holding large moneybags (20).

The Republic of Quebec's socialist ideology leads, in the novel, to the disappearance of industry and commerce and a return to an agrarian-based economy. The Sun Life Building is ironically described as a "very prestigious indoor farm" containing "big Snowball cauliflowers . . . with fine white buds, firm and flavoursome" (10-11). Weintraub's favourable description of this building is clearly ironic and serves the satirical purpose of contrasting how it has gone from housing "mighty capitalists" working for the "greatest corporations in Canada" to growing vegetables for the agrarian cause (12). Cars, too, have all but

disappeared from Quebec, "replaced by the gentle tinkle of bicycle bells and the clip-clop of horses' hooves" in the streets of Montreal (16). The portrayal of the complete economic collapse of Quebec after separation allows Weintraub to warn that tyrannical adherence to socialist ideology is often placed ahead of the actual well-being of a country's citizens.

As Weintraub will do later in a more measured way in his documentary film, he satirically attacks the Quebec separatists' penchant for rewriting and falsifying historical accounts by showing that the Republic of Quebec strives to downplay or suppress the Anglophone community's historical presence in society. In the novel, street and place names that are bound up in Anglophone heritage, such as "Point St. Charles, Verdun, Crawford Park, Lasalle," are now called simply "Région Sud-Ouest" (17).[11] Even McGill University is renamed "Université Maurice Duplessis" (77). The satire is furthered by the ironic description of how Quebecers would no longer be "oppressed" by the many great traditions of "Anglo pragmatism, eclecticism, common law, *ad hoc* solutions and *a posteriori* thinking" (79).

The Republic of Quebec's official account of its only military battle, the "Battle of Pointe Fortune," is almost "entirely fiction" (22) in its official reinterpretation of the cowardly actions of the narrative's fictional security forces. The battle is, in the novel's historical reality, nothing more than a minor skirmish in the days immediately following Quebec's declaration of independence. After a

[11] Such an appellation is now used to denote one of the boroughs in the city of Montreal. Point St. Charles (or Pointe-Saint-Charles), Verdun, and Lasalle all have French origins but subsequently received many working-class immigrants from England, Scotland, or Ireland.

group of Anglo-Quebecers escape across the border into English Canada, they are rounded up by the Canadian military and put onto buses to be taken back into Quebec. At the border there is a confrontation and after the windows of a tavern are broken, a Quebec police officer, Sergeant Brisebois, receives "a shallow flesh wound in the left buttock," (32) a scene which offers a mildly scatological allusion to Weintraub's views on repression in post-separation Quebec. The satirization of the impulse to falsify history is manifested thereafter:

> In the years to come these meagre events were to provide an inexhaustible source of raw material for Quebec's historians, film-makers and balladeers. Sergeant Brisebois was immortalized as a warrior who had been "prepared to give his life" to repel an invasion by fascist forces from Canada. And the *Bureau du symbolisme national* came up with a tattered *fleur-de-lys* flag, one corner of which was stained red, allegedly with patriotic gore from the wound of Sergeant Brisebois. (32)

Weintraub's satirical attacks on nationalism are, however, targeted exclusively at the Republic's political leaders and intellectuals. In satire that approaches direct denunciation, Paul remembers a time before separation when Quebec had intellectuals whose "parochialism was legendary" (101). He feels that the Quebec people were "betrayed by their leaders, who had given them this rotten government . . . and betrayed by their intellectuals, who had been so busy waving Quebec's flag that they had forgotten to defend its freedoms" (101). The

sharpest satirical jabs are directed at Martineau, one of the government managers who, in contrast to the shoddy clothing of most citizens, is always impeccably dressed in "creamy cuffs . . . ostentatiously stitched with chocolate-coloured thread" (27) and who is concerned with little other than his next sexual exploit. In contrast to the élite, ordinary Francophone citizens are described as "decent, intelligent, warm-hearted, civilized people" whom Paul likes very much (101). In fact, Franco-Quebecers in the novel are generally not shown as malicious but rather as duped by the empty rhetoric and false promises of their leaders. While such a portrayal of Quebecers could be interpreted critically as stereotyping Francophones with a sheep-herd mentality, such a phenomenon has played out in various democratic societies where the general population has abdicated its responsibilities, such as in Germany in the 1930s during the Nazi regime.

Weintraub takes many satirical jabs at the *Front de Libération du Québec* (FLQ), a paramilitary group that was active in Quebec in the 1960s and early 1970s. He parodies the FLQ through the Anglo Liberation Army (ALA), a ragtag group of English-speaking radicals that Paul inadvertently gets mixed up with. The ALA's mission is to "tell the world how Quebec oppresses its Anglos, and to gain support for the new country we are going to create – a free and independent Angloland" (129). The group spends their time reading asinine articles they have written that encourage Anglophones to rise up in arms against such things as oppressive French grammar. For example, one ALA member calls for "Anglos . . . to throw off the yoke of the circumflex and cedilla [so that] men and women will

be free to put whatever stress they please on their vowels" (152). In a parody of the kidnapping of James Cross by the FLQ, the ALA abducts a Senegalese diplomat by using Mona to entice him back to her apartment. The demands of the ALA for his release are similar to those made by the FLQ for the safe return of James Cross. Far from intimidated, the Senegalese hostage finds the Anglo cooking so offensive that he asks his captors to kidnap his personal chef so his meals can be prepared as he likes them. The cumulative effect of Weintraub's parody of the FLQ members is to make them appear misguided in their terrorist activities as well as overblown and inane in their rhetoric. Weintraub also shows that Anglophones, in a reverse situation, may be just as liable to spawn a similar paramilitary group.

Weintraub's satirical attacks on his contemporary society are also directed at the monolithically defined and gullible citizens of the rest of Canada, especially their attitude vis-à-vis the political situation in Quebec. Canadians outside Quebec are described as erroneously believing that it was the "Montreal Anglos, with their insatiable greed, who had exploited the poor French Canadians for two whole centuries" and were therefore the "actual *cause* of Separation" (33). This facile argument is rebutted by one character's explanation that "the rich Montreal Anglos - about one per cent of the Anglo population - had sent their money out of Quebec" before separation, leaving the Anglophone middle and poorer classes behind (35). Weintraub further describes Canada's national character as filled with "cantankerousness, masochism, and an insatiable need to complain" (34).

Such traits ultimately lead to the complete dissolution of the country in the novel not long after the separation of Quebec, a replication of the outcome sought by the Abolishment Party as imagined in his earlier novel published already eighteen years previous. Such satire helps to balance the attacks on Quebec nationalism.

Furthermore, Weintraub repeatedly satirizes his own Montreal Anglophone community, particularly for its prudishness. The English-speaking women who own boarding houses enforce strict rules about the moral behaviour of their tenants; Paul's landlady firmly believes that "the prevalence of extra-marital sex" was the sole cause of the "decline of the Anglos in Montreal . . . except that it had been hastened by the presence of rock-and-roll music . . . a theory frequently heard from the pulpits of Anglo churches and synagogues" (50). Parks where young people spend time are closely watched by the "Morality Patrol of the Presbyterian Vigilance League," whose surveillance results in frequent fights that are broken up by French-speaking police officers looking on in amusement at "this continuing spectacle of Anglo masochism" (54). The Montreal Anglophone community thus does not escape satirical censure of its anachronistic values as compared to the more progressively and fun-lovingly portrayed Francophone culture.

In addition to the satirical attacks on the English-speaking community, the frequent presence of farce in the narrative also helps to lighten considerably what would otherwise be a dark vision of post-separation Quebec. Weintraub employs comedy that is devoid of satire in the repeated dinner-table jokes about the

repugnant food in boarding houses and in the running gag concerning a constipated Anglo boarder who is frustrated by the strict four-minute limit on using the bathroom. Weintraub's dystopian vision is somewhat unique in the way it mixes sharp satire and farce. One need only compare *The Underdogs* to Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four,* Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World,* or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* to observe that Weintraub's overall tone is considerably lighter than the rather sinister outlooks of these other dystopian novels. Weintraub's tone is also considerably lighter than the other aforementioned dystopian novels by MacLennan and Holden that are set in post-separation Quebec. His reasons for adopting such a tone may be closely connected to his choice of Quebec separatism as his primary satirical target. Unlike many other dystopian novels that satirize global social and political events, his satirical target is taken from the specific linguistic crisis within his own city. Weintraub's use of farce to help soften the biting satire may spring from a desire to avoid unnecessarily fanning the already heated debate that was raging between English and French speakers.

Like *Why Rock the Boat, The Underdogs* digresses in its narrative to peer into the Jewish community. Weintraub's portrayal of the plight of the Jews in post-separation Quebec further satirizes it, this time in its treatment of minority communities. First, the narrative contains a quick summary of the history of the Jewish community in Montreal from its development in the St. Urbain Street ghetto, where Jewish immigrants first settled, to their gradual move to more

prosperous regions of the city. When Mona, a Jew, visits her family, most of the Jewish community in post-separation Montreal has returned to the original ghetto of their immigrant ancestors. Although not forced to do so, the Jews have made such a move because they can no longer afford the high taxes of the wealthier areas of Montreal, so they had to "sell their houses to the French, for a fifth of their value" (110). The devastating economic consequences of Quebec's post-separation government have, in fact, reduced the Jewish community to living in abject poverty, another criticism of the government's laws that severely disadvantage non-Francophone communities. Post-separation Quebec's treatment of Jews is even likened to the persecution in Europe that they were fleeing when they immigrated to Canada:

> Their great-grandparents, from Cracow and Bucharest and Odessa . . . gained their first toe-hold on freedom [in Canada], finally safe from the whips of the Cossacks. And now, as Mona's father put it, "We're back at square one." (110)

The narrative goes on to satirically prod Jewish society, showing that Weintraub criticizes his own people as readily as he attacks any post-separatist Quebec government. The satire of the Jewish community begins when Mona's sharp-tongued mother Gloria proves to be a caricature of a stereotypical Jewish mother. She greets Mona with: "the princess is honouring us with a visit" (111). When Mona's father Jack talks about his new interest in yoga after losing interest in other quasi-spiritual endeavours, Gloria retorts: "you don't need a book to

teach you how to stare into space" (112). Her comment not only portrays her as a shrew, it underscores the shallow, semi-religious pursuits outside of Jewish culture and religion that some Jews undertake. In addition, Gloria and other Jewish women like her are satirized for their ambitious match-making schemes:

> Jewish mothers could no longer aspire to their daughters' marrying doctors or lawyers, as there were no longer any Jewish doctors or lawyers, thanks to the Linguistic Purity Laws. But there were certain occupations that carried more status than others, and it was here that a mother's hopes could reside. Shoe repairmen, for instance, ranked high in Jewish society. (118)

Weintraub's satire of the Jewish community is another source of balance to the satire of Quebec nationalism, albeit with implicit attacks on the results of a post-separatist government's social and language policies.

Rather than acting as a sweeping and facile diatribe against all Francophones, Weintraub's satire has an underlying purpose of political and social reform. His desire is to contribute to the restoration of harmony between the French- and English-speaking communities. The novel ends with an explicit statement of this theme when Paul, pondering the future possibility of Angloland, realizes that "the way a country treated its minorities . . . was a measure of whether a country was civilized or not" (225). As well as expressing his desire for a new Angloland to be tolerant of its own French-speaking minority, he clearly insinuates that modern Quebec's treatment of Anglophones was far from civil.

He once again balances this latter criticism of contemporary Quebec's treatment of its minorities with a message about the imagined future Angloland: "Anglos must always remember to be bilingual. Unilingualism always meant defeat in this part of the world" (225), a reminder of the danger of returning to erstwhile attitudes held by many Anglo-Quebecers in their refusal to learn French. Despite tensions that flair up from time to time, the tenor of the linguistic debate in Quebec has moved considerably away from the confrontation that marked the era in which this novel was published, and, consequently, this novel can now be read to gain insight into the linguistic tensions of that time rather than to understand the current state of the language situation in Quebec.

The less polished style and weak characterization of *The Underdogs* are reasons that it has only a minor place in the Canadian literary canon. Although it is not a widely read or studied novel, it is important in the development of Canadian satire for its contribution to giving a voice to a minority group that felt mistreated, a satirical purpose not previously employed in the Canadian tradition. A similar political context in Quebec was to give rise almost two decades later to satire of a similar nature in Mordecai Richler's *Barney's Version*.

Chapter Four: Satirizing the Separatists: Richler's Treatment of the Quebec Sovereignty Movement in *Barney's Version*

Richler wrote *Barney's Version* during a period of heightened linguistic tensions in Quebec. Many Anglophones in the early 1990s felt outraged at the reluctance of the Quebec government to allow them any leeway to display commercial signs in English.[12] Adding to the strife was the second sovereignty referendum in 1995 held after a bitter and divisive campaign. In that era Montreal was widely regarded as a city in decline, mired in economic stagnation caused by political uncertainty. The Anglophone community was especially hard-hit after years of a steady exodus of its members to other parts of Canada. For Richler, who had already proven to be an outspoken and polemical writer about Quebec politics, these latest linguistic skirmishes were new grist for his satirical mill: *Barney's Version*, a novel set mainly in contemporary Montreal.

As in Weintraub's *The Underdogs*, *Barney's Version* attacks Quebec separatism, although Richler differs substantially from Weintraub in his satirical approach. Whereas Weintraub wrote a wholly satirical novel whose overriding concern is its dystopian portrayal of post-separation Quebec, Richler's satire appears only sporadically and is tangential to his central concerns. Weintraub's characters and plot existed only to further his satirical ends, while Richler had character development firmly as his focus, along with plot, although the latter to a

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[12] Bill 101 was passed into law as the *Charte de la langue française* in 1977, banning English on commercial signs. In 1988 the Quebec government passed Bill 178, which eased certain restrictions of Bill 101, but did little to placate some English-speaking Quebecers, as it still outlawed any language except French on outdoor signs.

lesser extent. *Barney's Version* is foremost concerned with exploring its protagonist, Barney Panofsky, who is recounting his memoirs in the first-person. Barney is a complex and deeply flawed man, who, in spite of a caustic personality and frequently ill-mannered behaviour, ultimately wins the reader's sympathy through his devotion to his wife and children. *Barney's Version* also follows many of the conventions of the murder-mystery genre, for Barney has been accused of killing his friend. Barney's innocence is revealed only in the final paragraph of the novel.

Richler's many references to the political events of that era help to give a sense of time and place to the narrative as well as to satirize his long-standing separatist political foes. This chapter will demonstrate that Richler's satire in *Barney's Version* continues in the tradition started by Weintraub of giving voice to the disenfranchised minority of Quebec Anglophones living through the linguistic debates of that era. Richler's purpose is to expose and condemn the political class that was again leading Quebec through a rather tumultuous period of the sovereignty debate. This chapter will also show that Richler's many satirical barbs against separatists are balanced in a variety of ways. Like Weintraub, Richler can be considered somewhat of a Francophile, showing warmth towards Francophone characters even while he disdains Parti Québécois politics. Through Barney's affection for Chantal and Solange, two of Barney's close Francophone friends, Richler carefully distinguishes between the governing political class that he holds in contempt and more ordinary Francophones for whom he shows

genuine admiration. Richler also maintains this difference through Barney's love of the Montreal Canadiens, a team that for much of its history has embodied the identity and aspirations of French Canadians. The narrative at times conveys Richler's sense of regret over the decline of Montreal, a city he is clearly fond of. Additionally, like Weintraub, Richler maintains a certain balance in his satirical attacks against Quebec nationalism by satirizing the Canadian establishment. Finally, and again like Weintraub, Richler modulates his treatment of Quebec separatist politicians through his satire of elements within his own Jewish community.

As Weintraub did with his documentary *The Rise and Fall of English Montreal,* Richler expressed his discontent with the state of affairs in Quebec in several works of non-fiction. In a 1982 essay, Richler describes Bill 101 as "vengeful and mean-minded in its particulars" which reduced "with a stroke some twenty percent of the population to second-class citizens" ("Language" 10, 14). His *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec! Requiem for a Divided Country* (1992) is a treatise on the political crisis of the era leading up to the referendum. He gives abundant anecdotes and statistics about the government's efforts to bolster the French language at, in his view, the expense of Anglophones, such as in this passage:

> In 1990, four provincial agencies, with a total annual budget of $24 million, were in place to deal with our linguistic conundrums: the Commission de toponymie, whose function is to rename towns, rivers, and mountains that have English place-names; the Office de la

> langue française; the Conseil de la langue française; and the . . . Commission de Protection, whose inspectors have been dubbed "the tongue-troopers" by ungrateful English-speaking Montrealers. (2)

While mostly an examination of the history that led up to the late twentieth-century troubles within Quebec, *O Canada!* also shows the beginning of his satirical jabs at the so-called sign laws. He recounts that he and a group of his friends founded the "Twice As Much Society" because, as they facetiously point out, the existing law "did not go far enough" (57). They wanted to "lobby for an amendment . . . that would call for French to be spoken twice as loud as English inside and outside" (57). The language police would be "armed with sound meters to detect Anglophones who spoke above a whisper, sending offenders to the slammer" (57). The satire that was to appear in *Barney's Version* clearly had its origins in the earlier ruminations of Richler and his peers as they poked fun at the law.

Along with the methodical examination of the ills of separatism and the sign laws in *O Canada!*, Richler also exhibits a satirist's desire for moral reform and change. In this passage, he shows a sense of regret about the toll that the linguistic feuds were taking on the country:

> As Canada teeters on the verge of fracturing, I am sometimes subject to fits of sentiment about this cockeyed country I grew up in and still call home. Impatient with our two founding races, I wonder why,

> instead of constantly picking at the scabs of their differences, they couldn't learn to celebrate what binds them together. (108)

In short, Richler's *Oh Canada!* voices many of the complaints that surface several years later in the satire of *Barney's Version*.

In an essay published a year after *Barney's Version*, Richler examines and largely condemns Quebec sovereigntists and their actions during the 1995 referendum campaign. A review of his characterization of various players shows a satirist's tendency to caricature to make an acerbic point. For example, Richler dubs Lucien Bouchard "a veritable Dollard des Ormeaux redux" because of what Richler glibly refers to as Bouchard's embodiment of Lionel Groulx's vision of a "strongman" who could lead Quebec ("Ottawa" 326). Richler quotes Groulx, who he describes as one of the "philosophical progenitors" of Quebec's nationalist movement, going so far as to claim: "Happy . . . are the peoples who have found dictators" ("Language" 5). Richler goes on to rather categorically and simplistically describe Quebec nationalism as an "essentially xenophobic" movement which would produce "an independent Quebec [that] would not be a healthy environment for non-francophones" ("Ottawa" 329). As evidence, Richler cites the example of a leading Quebec intellectual, Pierre Bourgault, as having warned that "there would be trouble in store for non-francophones if their vote deprived 'real' Quebecers of independence" (329). Richler then argues that if separation comes to pass, he expects "a revival of racial strife in Quebec where . . . it has never lurked far below the surface" (331). He accuses the Parti

Québécois of adopting a policy of "genteel, non-violent ethnic cleansing" because of what he perceives as the PQ proclivity to stir up linguistic tensions that result in masses of Anglophones fleeing the province (330). Richler goes on to describe the mood in Montreal during the days leading up to what was to be a close vote in the referendum:

> Dread was rampant. . . . Rich and middle-class people, francophones among them, emptied their bank accounts and safety-deposit boxes and transferred their savings and stock portfolios to Ontario. . . . Even the poor in the Eastern townships . . . were scared. (336)

He tells of a real-estate agent who, the day after the referendum, received forty-five calls from people wanting to sell their properties in the Laurentians. This review shows Richler's proclivity to argue one side, as he assumes the position of a polemicist seeking to provoke debate and anger rather than the historian aiming to expose facts and encourage reflection.

As he does in his non-fiction, Richler takes frequent satirical aim in *Barney's Version* at separatist politicians and their aspirations for Quebec sovereignty. He mocks the over-wrought style of separatist proclamations when Barney reminisces:

> Only yesterday, it seems, the separatists officially launched their referendum campaign with a show performed before a thousand true believers in Quebec City's Grand Théâtre. Their prolix, if decidedly premature, Declaration of Sovereignty . . . owed more to Hallmark

> Cards than to Thomas Jefferson. "We, the people of Quebec . . . know the winter in our souls. We know its blustery days, its solitude, its false eternity, and its apparent deaths." (80)

Without naming them explicitly, Richler describes Jacques Parizeau and Lucien Bouchard, the two leaders of the separatist forces in the 1995 referendum, as "a two-headed beast: our provincial premier, a.k.a. The Weasel, and his minions in Quebec City, and Dollard Redux, the fulminating leader of the Bloc Québécois in Ottawa" (81). One of Bouchard's comments is alluded to with an ironic twist added by Barney's friend:

> Only yesterday The Weasel's most rabid pointman had warned *les autres* that if we voted No massively we would be punished. "That's good news," said Irv, "because that prick must have started at least another thousand nervy Jews packing. I'm grateful. Now if only they'd opt for Tel Aviv rather than Toronto or Vancouver." (202)

Richler's contempt for separatist leaders of that era becomes clear through his satirical epithets and mockery of their efforts.

Richler also satirizes the efforts in Quebec to downplay the historical contribution and presence of Anglophones. In a passage that is entirely digressive from the main narrative, Barney recounts that there is a proposal to change the name of the building where he lives, Lord Byng Manor, to Le Château Dollard Des Ormeaux. He derides the folly of trying to erase a part of English heritage, particularly when it would be in honour of an opportunistic French fur trader

who, in his view, came "to a deserved bad end when his raiding party was ambushed" (77). Barney later sarcastically describes the renaming of Lake Amherst to Lac Marquette as having been done "in the seventies by the Commission of Toponymie, which is in charge of cleansing *la belle province* of the conqueror's place-names" (107). The "loopy language laws" are detailed in an account of a visit to a bar by a "latter-day, pot-bellied *patriote* in a Hawaiian shirt and Bermuda shorts" who is "saddened to discover a banner suspended from the bar that read: ALLONS-Y EXPOS . . . GO FOR IT, EXPOS" (83). The bar owner retorts: "When you can send in an inspector who is twice the size of us Anglophones . . . we'll take down the sign" (84). In the novel's afterword, Barney's son Michael comments that "there are actually grown men out here, officers of the Commission de Protection de la Langue Française, who go out with tape measures every day" to ensure the sign law is being respected (414).[13] The satire is achieved through the note of scorn or mockery that accompanies every mention of Quebec's political leaders or their laws that restrict the use of English.

Like Weintraub, Richler also satirizes radical sovereigntist organizations such as the FLQ that resort to terrorism to further their cause. Barney's son Saul goes through a rebellious stage in his youth as a Quebec nationalist sympathizer, at one point barricading himself with others in the faculty club of his college as a means of protest. The group hang banners out the window that say "Vive le Québec libre" and "Repatriate the FLQ freedom fighters" (69). Their manifesto

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[13] Richler cites an example in *O Canada!* of inspectors from the commission regularly visiting a pub in downtown Montreal to document violations of the sign law (1-2).

includes: "That in recognition of the past exploitation of the Québécois collectivity, the White Niggers of North America, fifty percent of Wellington courses should now be taught in French" (69). Barney mocks their lack of mettle by describing the minor irritants, including overflowing toilets, a lack of electricity, and petty arguments over contact-lens fluid, that the protesters have to endure during their occupation that eventually lead them to capitulate (70). Later in his life, Saul becomes a conservative, even writing "right-wing diatribes" that are diametrically counter to the views of his rebellious youth (67). By portraying Saul as eventually coming to his senses and turning away from his sovereigntist leanings as he matures, Richler suggests that the nationalist movement is filled with misguided young people whose fight for Quebec independence is motivated more by their own youthful crises than deeply held political views.

In addition to the frequent satire about separatists and the referendum, Richler adds a melancholic note of regret that mirrors his non-fiction accounts of the decline of Montreal. Barney says that he is "rooted in a city that, like me, is diminishing day by day" (81). He further bemoans the downward slide of a city whose residents are increasingly choosing to move away:

> All that's flourishing now are FOR SALE/À VENDRE signs, sprouting up every day like out-of-season daffodils on front lawns, and there are stores with TO LET/À LOUER signs everywhere on once fashionable streets. (81)

Mirroring an incident from Richler's non-fiction that was recounted earlier, a real-estate agent answers the query of Michael, Barney's son, about selling a property by saying: "The day after the referendum, I had calls from forty-two people . . . wanting to sell their properties, and I have yet to see an offer for any one of them" (407). Michael finds his trips to Montreal to be increasingly "depressing" because of the city's "burgeoning tribalism" that has prompted so many of his friends to move away (414). The regret expressed in the novel clearly mirrors Richler's own lament over the decline of Montreal.

Despite his many unmitigated attacks on Quebec's political leaders, Richler shows his admiration for French-speaking Quebecers through Barney's devotion to two of his Francophone employees, Solange and her daughter Chantal. Barney calls them "loved ones" along with his family (380) and in fact in his will he leaves five hundred thousand dollars each to Miriam (his third and most beloved wife) and Solange, as well as half that amount to Chantal (410). He describes Solange as "the most admirable of women" (121) whom he holds "in such high regard" (168). Despite Solange's admission of wanting to vote in favour of the referendum proposal, he remains loyal to her and only gently chides her, as in this exchange:

> "It would be foolish of you to vote Yes. I don't want you to do it."
>
> "You don't want me to? How dare you! What would you do if you were young and French Canadian?"

> "Why, I'd vote Yes, of course. But neither of us is young and stupid any more." (170)

The sentiment Barney expresses in this exchange is similar to his attitude toward his son Saul who, as discussed earlier, grew out of his separatist inclinations as he matured. While Barney's attitude toward Solange and Saul could be interpreted as paternalistic, it is perhaps forgivable given his advanced age. Barney's admiration of Solange despite her separatist leanings is further indication of Richler's distinction between separatist politicians, whom he holds in contempt, and ordinary citizens, whom he likes regardless of their politics. Yan Hamel points out the irony that Richler is often accused of being anti-Francophone. Hamel shows that Solange and Chantal display impeccable virtue throughout the narrative, especially in contrast to Barney's many shortcomings. They often act as a moral conscience for Barney by rebuking him for his misdeeds (Hamel 70). Hamel concludes that Richler's portrayal of Solange and Chantal is hardly the work of someone who holds Quebecers in disdain (70).

Richler further shows his genuine affection for Francophone Quebecers and their culture through Barney's love of the Montreal Canadiens. Rick Salutin's play entitled *Les Canadiens* explores the connection between this hockey team and French Canadians. Ken Dryden, in a preface to the play, states that "at one time the Canadiens acted as a focal point for otherwise submerged expressions of nationalistic feeling" (8). Roger Kahn, in a review of the play, expands on Dryden's idea:

> There was a time when Les Canadiens worked as a symbol for Quebec spirit. The French of Canada, proud of their traditions and staunch in their Roman Catholicism, felt repressed by Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. . . . Les Canadiens [some have suggested] were not merely a hockey team. Rather they embodied all that might have been had Montcalm, not Wolfe, carried that September day in 1759. (50)

The period during which the Canadiens were an especially powerful symbol of French-Canadian culture coincided with Richler's youth in the 1930s to the 1950s. In his 1984 essay entitled "The Fall of the Montreal Canadiens," Richler celebrates the unique French-Canadian visage of the Canadiens and bemoans its passing:

> Richard. Beliveau. Lafleur. The Montreal Canadiens, a proud dynasty now in sharp decline, are not, as tradition surely demanded, counting on a magical Québécois skater to renew their dominance of the league. Somebody now playing out there in Thurso or Trois-Rivières or Chicoutimi. No, sir. Today *le Club de Hockey Canadiens* is looking to an aging commie - Vladislav Tretiak, goalie for the Red Army - whom they devoutly hope to sign. (209)

In the novel, Barney repeatedly expresses admiration for his "beloved Montreal Canadiens" (3). He refers to the team as "*nos glorieux*" and reminisces at one point about its exploits in 1950 when Maurice Richard played on the team (3). Later Barney attends a game, lamenting the weakness of the current team when compared to its bygone days when he was young (121). Barney's genuine love of

the Canadiens hockey team, a singular symbol of French-Canadian culture and nationalistic sentiment, helps to balance the satire directed at Quebec separatist politicians.

Richler also offsets his attacks against separatists by satirizing Canadian academe as embodied in the character of Blair Hopper, Miriam's romantic partner after she separates from Barney because of his infidelity. Although many of Barney's barbs against Blair are undoubtedly motivated by jealousy, the source of much of Barney's derision is Blair's firmly established place within the Canadian literary establishment. Barney refers to Blair as that "pretentious bastard" (13) who is a "drudge on tenure" (14). Barney mocks him for his excessive social activism, calling him "Herr Doktor Professor Save-the-Whales, Stop-the-Seal-Hunt, Wipe-Only-With-Recycled-Paper, Hopper" (167). Barney mocks Blair's liberal literary perspectives when he imagines Blair reading his own "deconstructionist *pensées* on Mark Twain's racism" or "Hemingway's homophobia" (18). Barney ridicules what he sees as the repetitive nature of much scholarly work when he learns of Blair's upcoming biography of Keats. Barney retorts that "there have already been about six" such biographies, likening such redundant academic work to "artificially ripened tomatoes" (314) in its lack of authenticity. After Blair suggests to Miriam that she could, in her position as a radio show host, interview ten Canadian authors to produce material that could then be turned into a book by a Toronto publisher, Barney dismisses Canadian literati by saying that "there aren't ten" writers in Canada, and "anything can be

published in Toronto" (345). Such ridiculing of the Canadian literary establishment, a metonymic reference to Canada and Canadian identity, once again helps to balance out Richler's strident attacks on Quebec nationalists.

As he did in his earlier *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Richler takes aim at a segment of the Jewish community. This time, in *Barney's Version*, he satirizes the efforts of Canadian Zionists who go to great lengths to promote their cause. When Barney attempts to break into respectable Jewish society, he offers to help fund-raise for the United Jewish Appeal, an organization which promotes the immigration of Jews to Israel. Irv Nussbaum, a seasoned fund-raiser, explains to Barney why local anti-Semitic incidents help their efforts:

> We've got a problem this year. There's been a decline in the number of anti-Semitic outrages. . . . Don't get me wrong. I'm against anti-Semitism. But every time some asshole daubs a swastika on a synagogue wall or knocks over a stone in one of our cemeteries, our guys get so nervous they phone me with pledges. So, things being how they are this year, what you've got to do is slam-dunk your target about the Holocaust. Shove Auschwitz down at him. Buchenwald. War criminals thriving in Canada to this day. (189)

Irv later explains that the discrimination the Jews had to endure in past generations was in reality a "blessing" because it facilitates "Israel and Jewish survival" (203). He bemoans the decline of anti-Semitism because the increased acceptance of Jews in society poses a danger to their continued existence as a

distinct community. Irv argues that the Jews "didn't survive Hitler so that [their] children could assimilate and the Jewish people disappear" (203). The source of Richler's inspiration for Irv's comment about the dangers of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles came while Richler was on a trip to Israel. While there, he saw a cartoon entitled "Final Solutions" that showed "emaciated concentration camp Jews in one panel; in the next a Jew being married to a Gentile" (Kramer 336). Richler, himself married to a Gentile, was dismissive of such alarmist scare tactics, noting that the B'nai B'rith would never have approved of the Catholic Church discouraging its members from marrying Jews because it might endanger Catholicism (Kramer 336). Richler's mockery of hard-line Zionists, like the fictional Irv Nussbaum, can at least partly be explained by his dislike for nationalists of all stripes. Kramer contends that Richler thought of the similarity between Israeli and Quebec nationalism as following Karl Marx's adage: "History repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce," with Israel as the tragedy and Quebec as the farce (335).

Richler's satire against Quebec separatism in *Barney's Version* is in response to the specific context of the linguistic feuds and referendum battles of that era. The overarching themes dealing with Barney and his relationships are universal in their appeal, but the digressions into Quebec politics help to ground the novel in what was a tumultuous period of Quebec history. Although relatively brief and almost entirely ancillary to Barney's narrative, the satirical attacks are incisive and unmitigated in their censure of what Richler sees as expressions of a

separatist form of tribalism in Montreal. Far from being singular, such satire is part of a continuum in his career that had begun several years earlier with the publication of a number of non-fiction works that detailed and censured the language policies of the Quebec government. This novel goes further, however, than Richler's non-fiction in modulating the attacks on separatists. Richler's sharp satire of the Canadian literary establishment and the Zionist element within Jewish society shows his willingness to target milieus of which he was a part. Richler's sympathetic portrayal of Francophone women along with Barney's love and nostalgia for the Montreal Canadiens reveal Richler as a Francophile. However much he disdains separatist politicians and intellectuals, *Barney's Version* unequivocally demonstrates that Richler holds most Franco-Quebecers and the emblems of their culture in high regard.

Conclusion

This study has shown that Mordecai Richler and William Weintraub are innovators in the Canadian satirical tradition. Their focus on urban and ethnic concerns, as well as the plight of Quebec Anglophones, has taken Canadian satire away from the largely rural preoccupations of British descendents of their satirical predecessors. Weintraub's *Why Rock the Boat* is a satirical response to what he considers to be objectionable aspects of Montreal society of the 1940s, most notably English-language newspapers and reform-minded rabbis. Weintraub's *The Underdogs* draws from contemporary events in its satire of Quebec nationalism. The novel ridicules what Weintraub sees as unfair language policies that reduce Quebec Anglophones to second-class citizens and warns its audience of what he sees as the inevitable economic and cultural decline of Quebec should it ever separate from Canada.

In contrast to Weintraub's novels, Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and *Barney's Version* focus on character exploration and use satire as only an ancillary tone. Both Duddy and Barney elicit ambivalent responses from the reader because of their many flaws, but they ultimately prove to be sympathetic in part because of their devotion to their families. In *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Richler opened up the Montreal Jewish community to a broader Canadian audience for the first time, and indeed Richler is considered to be the first Canadian ethnic writer to achieve widespread critical and commercial success by writing about his own community. In *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, some of

Richler's satire of the Jewish community is directed at what he sees as hypocrisy within the drive to modernize Judaism to suit modern life in North America. In addition to its satirical attacks on the Quebec separatist movement, *Barney's Version* satirizes Zionists, a segment within the Jewish community that he had satirized in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, albeit in a less direct manner. A comparison of Weintraub's novelistic treatment of the Jewish community with Richler's reveals that they both wrote within a tradition of examining and satirizing aspects of Montreal Jewish society.

Because of their satirical attacks on the Quebec separatist movement, both authors have been accused of disparaging French-speaking Quebecers and their culture. Michael Posner reports that following the publication of *O Canada!* Gilles Duceppe called Richler a "consummate racist with a totally decayed mind" (284). Posner quotes Michel Bélanger, a highly positioned Quebec bureaucrat, as saying: "foreigner is not the right expression [for Richler]. I think the right expression is he doesn't belong" (284). Kramer notes that Richler has frequently been portrayed in the French-language media in Quebec as anti-Francophone (322). For example, Kramer mentions that several Quebecers misquoted Richler's comments concerning Quebec women and their place in society before the Quiet Revolution (322). Richler simply stated that women in that past era tended to have excessively large families and that "this punishing level of fertility, which seemed to be based on the assumption that women were sows, was encouraged with impunity from the sidelines by the Abbé Lionel Groulx" (*O Canada!* 14). A

number of prominent Quebecers, including politicians and comedians, accused Richler of calling Quebec women "sows" when in fact he was simply critiquing the very conservative clergy and mindset that Quebecers had, by a huge majority, themselves rejected, one that relegated women to demanding and prolonged reproductive roles.

Weintraub also has been criticized; Lajoie and Allen find fault with Weintraub for attempting to build a nostalgic narrative in his novels and works of non-fiction about the bygone days of Anglophone society in Montreal. Implicit in Lajoie's and Allen's argument is that Weintraub should accept the new linguistic reality in Quebec and stop lamenting an era in which Anglophones held most of the power and wealth. In a review, Amy Barratt recounts that Weintraub's adaptation of the novel *The Underdogs* into a play of the same name was scheduled to be staged at the Centaur, a Montreal theatre, in the late 1980s. The production was pulled before it could be performed, probably out of concerns that the subject was too controversial for Montreal society.

This thesis has demonstrated that the accusations of Richler and Weintraub as anti-Francophone are unjustified. An examination of their work, and in particular the four novels in this study, shows that Richler and Weintraub are in fact Francophiles who take issue only with the political and intellectual élite of Quebec nationalism, seeking to expose what they perceive as the absurdity of some of this élite's social policies. Their early novels, published before any significant rise of the Quebec sovereigntist movement, help to establish Richler's

and Weintraub's sympathetic attitudes toward French speakers and their culture. In *Why Rock the Boat*, English Montrealers who refuse to learn French are satirized for their cultural insensitivity and arrogance toward the Francophone majority. *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, while satirizing Jews and WASPs, avoids any satire of the French-speaking community, and in fact portrays the only significant Francophone character, Yvette, in a largely positive albeit underdeveloped manner. *The Underdogs* maintains a careful distinction between satirizing separatist leaders and showing respect for ordinary Francophones and their culture. Similarly in *Barney's Version*, Richler uses a variety of means to modulate his biting satire of separatist leaders, including satirical attacks on Jewish Zionists. Richler's satire of elements within the Francophone political and social élite are simply part of his larger role as a polemist who consistently satirized any aspect of society, including his own Jewish community, that he deemed worthy of censure.

One of the purposes of this thesis was to show that Richler is not simply an exception within Canadian literature, as various critics have suggested when discussing his unusual subject matter and satirical targets. Rather, Richler, along with Weintraub, form a tradition of Montreal writers who employ satire in their examination of the minority groups to which they belong and the situation of those communities within Quebec society.

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