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TEXTUAL DESIGN AND MORAL RESPONSE
IN THREE NOVELS BY MORDECAI RICHLER

ANGELA ROBBESON

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
at the University of Ottawa in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Master of Arts degree in English Literature



Angela Robbeson, Ottawa, Canada, 1993



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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the effects of the design strategies Mordecai Richler employs in three novels--Son of a Smaller Hero (1955), The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (1959), and St. Urbain's Horseman (1971)--with a view to exploring his thematic concern with morality in the modern world. After briefly examining some of the inadequacies of an exclusively text-centred critical approach to Richler's fiction--a critique informed by the writings of Wolfgang Iser--the thesis outlines and then applies an alternative reading model that emphasizes the role of textual design and reader response in the production of literary meaning. The Introduction outlines Iser's theories of the reading process and the role of the implied reader. The ensuing three chapters explore the effects on readers of the design strategies of the three novels. These novels form a group that traces the life of one man, exploring the various moral dilemmas he faces on the journey from youth to adulthood. Thus, Richler's novels encourage readers to formulate and to defend their own moral positions in relation to the fictional worlds and characters while reflexively enacting the difficulty of making moral judgments.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
(1) <u>SON OF A SMALLER HERO</u> : ECHOES OF ENTRAPMENT	17
(2) <u>THE APPRENTICESHIP OF DUDDY KRAVITZ</u> : STEPS TO MORAL BLINDNESS	47
(3) <u>ST. URBAIN'S HORSEMAN</u> : SCREENING THE JURY	73
CONCLUSION	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND WORKS CITED	105

TEXTUAL DESIGN AND MORAL RESPONSE
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INTRODUCTION

Mordecai Richler has suggested that technique transforms a pointless tirade into a purposeful and cultivated expression of a considered moral position: "'I think that writing is within a moral tradition ... I write out of a kind of disgust with things as they are ... Now if it were mere ranting, there would be no point in it at all, so it must be informed by a level of wit and style'."¹ Indeed, Richler's often caustic critique of the modern world is typically communicated in an engagingly humorous fashion. The union of a moral interest with an amusing story has become a hallmark of his fiction, intriguing his readers and critics alike throughout his forty-year career. For instance, Arnold Davidson, in his study of St. Urbain's Horseman, remarks on the incongruity between the serious moral tone of the novel and the sensational sex trial around which it is structured: "by deploying throughout the novel various (and generally juicy) details of the orgy that led to the trial, Richler manages to have his 'cheesecake' and deplore it too." To which Davidson

¹ Graeme Gibson, Eleven Canadian Novelists (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) 271. To quote Mark Schorer, technique refers to "any selection, structure, or distortion, any form or rhythm imposed upon the world of action; by means of which, it should be added, our apprehension of the world of action is enriched or renewed" ("Technique as Discovery," in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor [Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1948] 11).

adds, "at the same time, however, the trial fits perfectly into the plot."² The concession that Richler successfully reconciles seemingly contradictory ambitions is typical of the critical reviews of his texts. The dual impulse both to entertain and to be serious produces what Victor Ramraj calls "an absorbing tension of purpose in his novels."³ Seeking to describe this tension, many critics have focused on identifying Richler's moral centre--the code of honour, ethics and values that informs his fictional appraisal of the modern world. Much of the resulting critical enquiry is an attempt to extract the serious moral message from the engaging artistry of the texts, to wrest the "point in it" from the "wit and style". This approach has yielded conflicting conclusions regarding Richler's moral position and his project as a novelist.

David Sheps asserts that Richler "is a writer devoted to his craft and the purpose of his craft is to articulate experience as it truly is. The immediate task of his craft is to discover fictional strategies for the accurate representation of reality."⁴ Ramraj argues that Richler does not write from one particular standpoint but fosters an ambivalent vision of the modern experience which results in technically flawed writing. He charges that "the novels are untidily structured, sometimes with

² Arnold Davidson, Mordecai Richler (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983) 153.

³ Victor Ramraj, Mordecai Richler (Boston: Twayne, 1983) 15.

⁴ David Sheps, "The Novels of Mordecai Richler: An Interpretation," Mordecai Richler Critical Views on Canadian Writers 6 (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1971) xxvi.

alternating episodes and inset scenes revealing jarringly inconsistent observations, styles, and tones."⁵ John Ower contends that this ambiguity is not a technical weakness but a faithful representation of modern life; he asserts that Richler "is not revealing moral confusion or indecisiveness, but rather a perspective broad enough to embrace the contradictions of experience itself."⁶ Norman Friedman supports the argument that moral ambiguity in fiction is a deliberate textual strategy, stating that "the ambiguity of many modern writers is more a shouldering of moral responsibility than an evasion of it, for exploring the complexities honestly is more moral than making rigid categories."⁷ Philip Toynbee, in his review of Cocksure, argues that Richler moves beyond ambivalence toward sheer nihilism, contending that it is "quite impossible to detect the moral platform on which Mr. Richler is standing and from which his darts are launched."⁸ John Metcalf rebuts: "I thought the moral position in the book was very clear Perhaps too clear."⁹ Kerry McSweeney challenges the observations of all of these critics and reviewers, contending that Richler's immediate

⁵ Ramraj 1-2.

⁶ John Ower, "Sociology, Psychology, and Satire in The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz," Modern Fiction Studies 22 (1976): 428.

⁷ Norman Friedman, Form and Meaning in Fiction (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1975) 165.

⁸ Philip Toynbee, "Cocksure," rev. Mordecai Richler, Critical Views on Canadian Writers 6, ed. G. David Sheps (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1971) 108.

⁹ John Metcalf, "Black Humour: An Interview with Mordecai Richler," Journal of Canadian Fiction 3:1 (1974): 75.

concern is not with moral values at all but with entertainment value. He maintains that Richler has "not faced up to the problems of structure, theme, and characterization ... but has settled for getting as much mileage as possible out of his material": as with fireworks, a spectacular display soon reveals "a mess of wire and cardboard."¹⁰

Such disparate interpretations indicate that the attempt to locate Richler's moral centre in the words of the text is a vain pursuit. In their search for this elusive meaning, critics appear to be frustrated by Richler's textual strategies which, they complain, are messy, inconsistent, and ambiguous. Despite his alleged moral agenda, Richler does not play the pontiff; he allows his narrative voice to falter indefinitely between sympathy and censure. Although most of his novels are realistic, he frequently adopts the tone of satire and many of its stock conventions. His techniques of characterization and plotting are not didactic; he does not draw characters who embody high moral or conservative values and he does not plot his novels towards definitive closure or poetic justice. Perhaps the absence of these textual signposts leads some critics to conclude that Richler's writing is flawed, that his project as a novelist is uncertain, and that his moral position is ambiguous. However, much of the critical response to Richler's fiction reflects the analysis of only one side of the literary equation: the creation

¹⁰ Kerry McSweeney, "Richler's Fireworks," Essays on Canadian Writing 20 (1980-81): 162.

of the text by the author. Close scrutiny of the text solely as the product of an author eclipses the other side of the equation: the realization of the text as accomplished by its readers.¹¹

Authorial intent and the consequent creation of the text comprises only half of the act of literary communication; critics need to give equal consideration to the reception of the text by its implied readers and to the extent to which that reception is determined by the design strategies of the text.¹²

The concept of the implied reader, particularly as theorized by Wolfgang Iser, makes it possible to describe the structured effects of literary texts.¹³ Rather than viewing the text as a series of clues to the author's moral position and mindset, a reader-centred critical approach views the text as "a combination of forms and signs designed to guide the imagination of the reader."¹⁴ Textual strategies are seen to operate on two levels, encompassing both "the immanent structure of the text and

¹¹ Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" in Reader Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post Structuralism, ed. Jane Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) 50.

¹² Design strategies refer to the author's selection of techniques such as frames, part divisions, set pieces, mirroring, repetition and circular narration. To an extent, these strategies comprise the underlying structure of the novel.

¹³ Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) 38.

¹⁴ Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns in Communication in Prose Fiction From Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 58.

the acts of comprehension thereby triggered off in the reader."¹⁵ Here, the reader is an anticipated recipient, not a defined person. In the Introduction to her study The Reader in the Text, Susan Suleiman explains that this implied reader

differs from an actual reader in that he is created by the work and functions, in a sense, as the work's ideal interpreter. Only by agreeing to play the role of this created audience for the duration of his/her reading can an actual reader correctly understand and fully appreciate the work.¹⁶

This potential role is denoted by the text in "a network of response-inviting structures."¹⁷ Once conscious of the strategies used to manipulate emotional and intellectual responses to the text, readers are obliged to figure out why certain conventions have been selected for their attention. This process of discovery brings out the motivation governing the author's selection. Thus, in their own responses to the text, readers become conscious of their moral assumptions and convictions; then, by identifying the strategies which provoke such responses, readers achieve insights into the author's

¹⁵ Wolfgang Iser, "Narrative Strategies as a Means of Communication," Interpretation of Narrative, ed. Mario J. Valdes, et al. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976) 101.

¹⁶ Susan Suleiman, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism," The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation, eds. Susan Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 8.

¹⁷ Iser, Act 34.

motivation and purpose. Iser asserts that it is only by involving readers through such methods that the author can hope to realize the intentions of his text.¹⁸ Instead of approaching a text as an enigma containing a singular hidden meaning, readers must consider their act of reading as a fundamental part of the production of literary meaning. For, as Iser describes it,

meaning is the referential totality which is implied by the aspects contained in the text and which must be assembled in the course of reading. Significance is the reader's absorption of the meaning into his own existence. Only the two together can guarantee the effectiveness of an experience which entails the reader constituting himself by constituting a reality hitherto unfamiliar to himself.¹⁹

"In order to serve the various needs and desires of various readers", Robert Crosman notes, "texts ought to have plural meanings."²⁰ Textual strategies offer a framework within which readers must make their own interpretations: "strategies can only offer the reader *possibilities* of organization. Total organization would mean that there was nothing left for the

¹⁸ Iser, "Process" 57.

¹⁹ Iser, Act 151.

²⁰ Robert Crosman, "Do Readers Make Meaning?," in The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation, eds. Susan Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 162.

reader to do."²¹ Reading is, therefore, a performative act, an energetic interaction between literary structures and their recipients.²² Readers are not simply told a story; they must constantly observe and deduce. For this reason, Lionel Trilling argues, the novel has been the most effective agent of the moral imagination due to its "unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination."²³ This active engagement with the text is what Iser terms the "wandering viewpoint"; that is, readers divide the text up into interacting structures resulting in a grouping activity that is fundamental to the grasping of a text.²⁴ This grouping activity arises from the manner in which we read: "we look forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by their nonfulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject."²⁵ This wandering viewpoint is in response to the presence of "blanks"--the unformulated connections between textual perspectives and patterns which induce readers "to perform basic operations within the text ... to adopt a position *in relation to*

²¹ Iser, Act 86.

²² Iser, Act 20.

²³ Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals and the Novel," in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1948) 160.

²⁴ Iser, Act 119.

²⁵ Iser, "Process" 62-3.

the text."²⁶ By grouping together the written parts of the text, readers allow them to interact and, consequently, may observe the direction in which they lead.²⁷ By formulating connections between the elements of the textual design, readers may grasp the relationship between the design and the action of the narrative, between its form and its content. As Iser suggests above, this relationship may be termed the meaning, and its incorporation into readers' consciousnesses the significance. In order for communication to be successful, "the guiding devices operative in the reading process have to initiate communication and to control it."²⁸ While the subjectivity of readers is crucial to the realization of the text, the design of the text pre-structures a framework for possible responses. Therefore, the tension in Mordecai Richler's fiction is more complex than that between his serious moral concerns and his use of an entertaining style: the tension arises from the interaction between the readers' wandering viewpoint and the design of the text which seeks to guide their viewpoint.

Guided primarily by Iser's theory, an analysis of the textual strategies employed in Richler's fiction implies the moral position that shapes the themes of his novels and suggests his project as a novelist. The texts are carefully crafted to

²⁶ Wolfgang Iser, "Interaction Between Text and Reader," in The Reader in the Text, eds. Susan Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 112.

²⁷ Iser, "Process" 58.

²⁸ Iser, "Interaction" 110.

reflect Richler's conflicting moral responses to the modern world and, more importantly, to recreate similar responses in his readers. Textual strategies such as frames, part divisions, set pieces, mirroring, repetition, and circular narration, draw attention both to the choices available to the characters in their quests for success, acceptance, and self-knowledge, and to the sources of their failures. By such methods, Richler's fiction persuades readers to factor morality into the equation of success in the modern world. That is, readers are encouraged by the design of the texts to measure the protagonists' actions--or lack thereof--against others in the fictional community and against their own moral positions. The texts present fictional worlds of various moral attitudes and invite readers to choose between them.

But who are the "readers" implied by Richler's fiction? Sheps suggests that Richler defines his readers through the manipulation of setting and characterization. He notes that, throughout his fiction, Richler draws together several distinct cultural matrices--ranging from the exclusive to the pervasive--to fashion a metaphorical landscape for a universal modern experience. These matrices most often include, though are by no means limited to, Jewish Montreal, especially St. Urbain St. in the '30s and '40s; the generation whose childhood paralleled World War II and who came of age in the '50s; Canada and

Canadians abroad; and pop culture.²⁹ Sheps further argues that it is in their responses to the characters that Richler's readers are divided. He somewhat derisively suggests that

there are those who find the novels almost wholly objectionable because of the repugnant qualities of so many of the characters. Others are taken in by the postures adopted by his sensitive lonely young men and thus uncritically proceed to sentimentalize these figures as courageous knights who assault the unrelieved evil of a corrupt society.³⁰

For the purposes of this study, however, the definition of Richler's implied readers must include a consideration of theme. Whether or not readers can fully relate their experiences to the fictional environments and whether or not they find the characters repulsive or sympathetic, Richler's readers must, to some extent, share his concern for the fate of morality in modern--and more specifically in post-Holocaust--society. Unless readers too are in some sense struggling with questions of morality, they will not fully respond to a textual framework designed to draw them into the fictional milieus and provoke their judgments of the characters and, ultimately, of themselves. The term "readers" refers, then, to ideal readers--those who, in

²⁹ David Sheps, "Waiting for Joey: The Theme of the Vicarious in St. Urbain's Horseman," Journal of Canadian Fiction 3:1 (1974) 85.

³⁰ David Sheps, Introduction, Mordecai Richler Critical Views on Canadian Writers 6 (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1971) xiv.

responding to the textual particulars of setting and characterization and in sharing Richler's thematic concerns, are able to respond fully to the textual design of the novels. An explication of how the design strategies operate in each novel suggests something of how these ideal readers are implied by the texts.

With the focus shifted from the author-text relationship to the reader-text relationship, it becomes evident that constantly changing responses to the texts are not an indication of weak writing but of carefully crafted guiding devices designed to draw readers into a sympathetic relationship with the characters while forcing them to fix a discerning eye on the action. Daniel Lenoski remarks of Richler's characters: "though we are often attracted to his creations, he also makes certain that we are distanced from them somewhat, so that we will be able to adopt a critical position."³¹ Northrop Frye notes that this technique is a clue to the writer's moral position: "for an effective attack we must reach some kind of impersonal level, and that commits the attacker, if only by implication, to a moral standard."³² This moral standard is implied by the textual design. For instance, a framing device persuades readers to compare the presentation of the character at the end of the novel with his presentation at the beginning and to judge the interim

³¹ Daniel Lenoski, "In Vindication of Duddy Kravitz," Etudes Canadiennes Canadian Studies 6 (1979): 121.

³² Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 225.

development. Similarly, contrasting pairs allow opposing views of a particular object or situation "and so the author can control the formation of this view through the relation of the contrasts."³³ Response to a novel's plot development, to its construction and resolution, also provides clues to the author's moral position and purpose. As Friedman explains:

since a plot works by setting up and then eliminating alternative courses of development until one has been fixed upon and the others have been denied, we can tell in the context what is positive and what is negative in terms of human evaluation. Even if the resolution is ambiguous, and even if there is no resolution--or even if a work is so impassive as apparently to deny any evaluation--these possibilities too tell us about the values embodied ... simply by virtue of the structure of the action.³⁴

This process of discerning textual strategies and then creating relationships among them enables readers to realize, or to make real, the intention of the work.³⁵ The design of the narrative both foregrounds the author's thematic concerns and encourages readers to formulate their own positions in relation to the author's implied standpoint.

³³ Iser, Reader 48-9.

³⁴ Friedman 193.

³⁵ Iser, Reader 48-9.

Richler's novels, then, do not simply include a moral, they are about morality. Richler explains that the onus for moral judgment is, finally, on readers: "'you have to make your judgments. One cannot append explanations of one's books or it's like running around with a key. Or footnotes'." ³⁶ Although by his own admission Richler's novels spring from his moral response to modern society, they are not fashioned into manifestos. Instead, they are designed to draw readers into experiencing his dilemma, into realizing the problem of finding and defending a code of values by which to live in the modern world. John Dewey, describing art as experience, stresses that "with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced." ³⁷ And Davidson remarks:

in Richler's best realistic fiction there is a kind of multifocal effect, a blurring of image that emphasizes the problems of judging. We are required to come to some estimation of Noah or Norman or Duddy, and we are also shown how hard it is to do so fairly. In short, Richler judges the reader's propensity to judge precipitously, to resort to ready, simplistic

³⁶ Donald Cameron, "Mordecai Richler: The Reticent Moralist," Conversations with Canadian Novelists (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973) 120.

³⁷ John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958) 54.

categories in order to classify complicated human behaviour.³⁸

Thus, while Richler's fiction may well be likened to fireworks, his methods are much more tightly organized and complex than the mess of wire and cardboard that McSweeney's facetious simile suggests. His strategies are carefully chosen to bring the modern moral dilemma to the forefront of his readers' awareness.

The following critical investigation of three novels, Son of a Smaller Hero (1955), The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (1959), and St. Urbain's Horseman (1971), will show how an appreciation of design strategies grounded in reader-centred analysis offers insights into the creation of meaning in Richler's fiction. The novels are each modified bildungsromans, stories of how the protagonists are shaped by their milieus. Taken together, they can be seen to form the tale of a boy's (Duddy's) shaping experiences within the Jewish Montreal ghetto, his adolescent (Noah's) efforts to scale the ghetto walls, and his adult (Jake's) quest to reintegrate the values of the ghetto into his modern, self-exiled life in England. Here, however, they will be considered chronologically by date of publication.

The need to decipher gives readers the chance to formulate their own deciphering capacities. That is, they must foreground an element of themselves of which they are not directly conscious. Such discovery is not limited to the production of

³⁸ Davidson 141.

meaning in a literary text, but also entails "the possibility that we may formulate ourselves and so discover what had previously seemed to elude our consciousness."³⁹

³⁹ Iser "Process" 68.

CHAPTER ONE

SON OF A SMALLER HERO: ECHOES OF ENTRAPMENT

The first time Noah Adler heard Vivaldi's The Four Seasons, he was so overcome that "all those stale lies that he inherited from others, all those cautionary tales, and those other dreadful things, facts, that he had collected ... knowledge, all that passed away, rejected, dwarfed by the entry of beauty into his consciousness."¹ This epiphany prompts Noah to replace inherited truths with personal truths, to seek "some knowledge of himself that was independent of others" (180). And indeed, Mordecai Richler's Son of a Smaller Hero, organized on the seasonal cycle, chronicles Noah's struggle to free himself from the psychological shackles of his family, friends, class, Jewish heritage and immigrant background. Ironically, "that which would destroy what he is, has made him what he is. His adversaries are his origins."² Accordingly, Noah's responses to his family and community are distressingly ambivalent. He matures, however, to realize that if he is to gain self-knowledge, he must accept both the individual members and the collective heritage of his family. And, if he is to achieve independence, he must formulate a

¹ Mordecai Richler, Son of a Smaller Hero (1955; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-NCL, 1966) 73-4. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

² John Moss, Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) 236-237.

personal code of moral values with which to negotiate his ambiguous world. Noah--true to his biblical name--survives the hardship of his environment and fulfils his quest. Before sailing to Europe, he explains to his estranged grandfather: "I'm going and I'm not going. I can no more leave you, my mother, or my father's memory, than I can renounce myself. But I can refuse to take part in this..." (203). "This", as readers grow to understand, is the community in which membership offers identity at the price of individuality and freedom.

Son of a Smaller Hero is not, however, only a portrait of the growth of the artist. Richler constructs the text to draw readers into Noah's ambiguous world and to urge them to grapple with similar ambivalent responses. By blurring the lines between good and bad, and right and wrong, Richler frustrates readers' propensity to employ the ready-made classifications of hero and villain. For instance, Noah rejects a world that makes stifling claims on him, but admits that "seen from a distance, it seemed full of tender possibilities, anachronistic but beautiful" (29). Likewise, readers may expect Noah to succeed in scaling the ghetto walls, but they may also question his unheroic tactics: he betrays Theo by having an affair with Miriam, whom he then deserts; he invades Melech's private life by stealing the contents of his padlocked box; he blackmails Max to stop him from exploiting Wolf's heroic reputation; and he abandons Leah, thus contributing to her heart attack and probable death. By featuring both the attractive aspects of the ghetto world and the grave

consequences of Noah's efforts to escape it, Richler creates a puzzle: is the quest for independence and self knowledge justifiable at any cost? Should readers praise or condemn Noah for his behaviour?

To begin to solve this puzzle, readers must judge Noah within the context of his environment by measuring his actions against the actions of others in his community. This task is guided by the textual design strategies of flashbacks, echoes, image patterns, a frame, and a circular construction. These strategies place readers in a predicament which parallels Noah's: faced with a series of unfolding events and given access to key incidents in the past lives of the central characters, Noah must weigh the options and choose his course, while readers must weigh the evidence and make their judgments. Hence, the novel, like all of Richler's major novels, is a story about, as well as an exercise in, the difficult task of making absolute moral judgments in the modern relativistic world.³

The most striking effect of textual design in Son of a Smaller Hero is the impression of circularity: the novel ends as

³ Although the Author's Note to the novel insists that the work is pure fiction, Richler describes a crisis in his own life similar to the one Noah undergoes:

'I came from an observant religious Jewish family. On balance, that gave me a lot because it's a very rich tradition But, by the time I was no longer a young boy ... I could no longer accept these values--and most of us couldn't--and religious values were a thing of the past more than anything else. And so we all had to come to grips with finding values of our own' (Adam Handel, The Apprenticeship of Mordecai Richler, National Film Board of Canada, 1986).

it began, with Noah taking leave of his family and the ghetto community. The design strategies heighten the effect of narrative circularity--whether through the chapter titles that signify the seasonal cycle, or through the numerous flashbacks that capture individual minds circling between past and present. Alvin Kernan remarks that the notion of circularity is double-valued: "the circle has been in the past a figure of perfection, but it has also been the figure of empty, meaningless movement, of eternal hunger which never finds satisfaction or rest."⁴ The circular images spread throughout the text create a pattern which charts Noah's futile attempts to escape the ghetto. By recognizing this circular image pattern, readers grasp Noah's sense of entrapment and begin to understand his need to take desperate measures to escape his confining world.

Noah begins his cycle of meaningless movement early in his life. He "ran away from home at seven years and again at ten, the last time getting as far as Toronto" (36) but was returned to the ghetto. Then, "during the war he had tried, twice, to get into the army and once into the navy" (36) but was rejected and, again, returned to the ghetto (36). At nineteen, Noah rents a room in downtown Montreal. Although he stays away from the ghetto for a year, he persists in aimless wandering.⁵ His new world is

⁴ Alvin Kernan, in The Plot of Satire (New Haven: Yale UP, 1965) 153.

⁵ By equating geographic separation from the ghetto with escape to a better world, Noah unwittingly mimics his father's attempt to equate his daily walking circuit in Montreal with circling the globe (178), with this parallel suggesting yet another

a labyrinth of city blocks that suggests a "colossal pinball machine Every ten seconds or so somebody drops a nickel in the slot, pulls the trigger, and zoom goes a streetcar or seventy cars or three hundred pedestrians down the alley" (25). Whirling repeatedly about the city in his taxi, Noah becomes one of the pinballs. Persistent memories reveal that he is defined by the world he has rejected. His recollection of a Zionist meeting illustrates his ambivalence. The meeting concluded with a circle dance: Noah "thought it obscene, ugly, to be watching but not taking part he started towards the dancers, but ... turned back embarrassed. Finally, desperately, he tried to break into the circle. But they were whirling past too fast, and he was spun back and away from them" (28). The communal circle includes and excludes, protecting those who join, while enticing with its ambiguous values those who stand off and watch.

Having dismissed one world, Noah does not find another to replace it. The stale academic circles of Theo's community do not offer any direction.⁶ They lead him instead to Miriam. The fact Miriam, sister of Moses, is noted for her rebellion implies that Noah's relationship with this woman is another defiantly escapist act.⁷ His actions continue to denote anxious circles: when speaking to Miriam, he makes quick, excited "circles with his

instance of entrapping circularity.

⁶ Note that Direction, Theo's literary magazine, "was known as No Direction" (42) among the smart people in his academic circles.

⁷ See Numbers 12.

hands" (45, 70, 79). After his father dies, the image of the circle becomes threatening. When Noah discovers Wolf's corpse in the charred ruins of the scrap yard office, he looks up from the bottom of the pit and sees the circle of his uncles' disapproving faces peering down at him: "They spun around him like figures on a top" (141). When onlookers strain to catch a glimpse of Wolf's body, "policemen made a circle around the heap of rubbish and held back the surging crowd with threats" (140). The circle breaks, resulting in the fallacious report that Wolf Adler died for the Torah.⁸

Haunted by his father's death and defeated by a sense of responsibility for his ailing mother, Noah is trapped in something of a downward spiral. He arrives drunk at the Goldenberg's party: "the terrace spun around him Noah squinted into a spinning confusion of faces. The moon whirled like a top" (173). His own reeling consciousness seems to threaten his sanity: "He held on to sleep the way a drowning man must cling to his share of driftwood Finally, each morning, there was the febrile feeling of his ship being pulled back into a whirlpool. Noah rowed madly with both oars. But the oars were broken" (157). Leah's guilt tactics, which play on Noah's grief over Wolf's death, his love for his mother, and his sense of familial responsibility, overwhelm him: "The broken oars burst

⁸ The police are equally ineffective at crowd control during the funeral proceedings; on silver motorcycles, they "swung around in front of the hearse and spun in circles like bewildered, injured birds" (147).

free of their locks. The boat itself broke up underneath him. And Noah, who did not call out for help, felt the waters close over him. 'Yes, Maw. Anything you say' " (163). Drained of energy, Noah surrenders to filial obligation.

Through the circular imagery, readers perceive both the alluring embrace of the protective communal circle and its power to entrap and crush the spirit of the individual. Readers trace the pattern of Noah's failed attempts to overcome his ambiguous responses to his community and to seek his freedom from the entrapping circles. His path leads endlessly back into the ghetto and, finally, to the brink of apparent self-destruction. The sympathy inspired by Noah's plight helps to diffuse the ill-feelings readers may harbour towards Noah for leaving a trail of broken hearts behind him when he finally strides free of the ghetto.⁹ For Noah is not destroyed. At his moment of sinking, he finds the tools by which to rebuild his broken ark: the secrets of his grandfather's box and his father's journals. Until Noah realizes that his life is inextricably part of a generational cycle which both defines his origins and outlines his potential fates, all of his steps toward personal morality and self-awareness are attempts to define himself against his family and community.

⁹ Miriam feels this dual response of sympathy and censure when she expects Noah to end their relationship: "Her needs were contradictory. She despised him for what she thought he was going to say, but, on the other hand, she was afraid that he was suffering terribly, and that made her feel tender towards him" (168).

Early in his quest for freedom, Noah behaves according to what he does "NOT WANT" (179). He rejects what he considers to be the immoral behaviour of the people around him. Ironically, by striving to behave morally, Noah deeply hurts the people he loves. He regards this pain as the price of his independence. Imagining his mother rising to his defence at the family meeting, he muses: *"It is necessary, at times, to hurt others. But I'm hurting her very much. I'd better be right"* (26). To decide whether or not Noah is right, readers must exercise their own moral sense and measure Noah's actions against the behaviour of the people he hurts the most in his quest for freedom: Melech, Leah, and Miriam. Through the design strategies of the novel-- flashbacks, echoes, a frame, and the controlling seasonal cycle-- readers recognize that the present behaviour of the central characters is affected by their past experiences. By drawing past episodes and current behaviour into relation, readers see that Noah's actions are attempts to prevent the same seeds of bitterness, self-pity, hate, and neuroses that have taken root in Melech, Leah, and Miriam from finding fertile soil in his life. For instance, the design strategy of flashbacks reveals that, unlike the people around him, Noah seeks the truth in all of his endeavours and expects resolute honesty of himself and others. This sometimes leads him to hurt others; however, the sympathy readers may feel for Melech, Leah and Miriam is undermined by the revelation that they not only condemn themselves to relive the

pain of their pasts, but they bitterly inflict that pain upon the young man they love.¹⁰

Flashbacks reveal that both grandfather and grandson recall the incident that ruined their relationship when Noah was just eleven years old. After witnessing his father and uncle cheating Moore at the scrap-yard scales, Noah brings the dishonesty to the attention of his grandfather who "had begun to haggle in a jocular way" (18) with the oblivious customer. Silenced by a slap, Noah thereafter regards Melech as a crook. Melech, recalling the episode early in the novel, "remembered that Noah had not known and had refused to understand that the Goy stole much of the scrap; that he mixed cast iron with the brass and weighed down the sacks with earth" (19). He defends fighting one injustice with another: "'Look at me, I'm a crook? All I ask is what's comink to me by right'" (23). When he recalls the episode again, near the end of the novel, Melech's justification for cheating is unchanged (196).¹¹ Self-righteous throughout, he believes that an explanation would have prevented the incident:

¹⁰ Victor Ramraj suggests that, as well as a tool for reader response, "flashbacks are evidently Richler's best method of introducing the reader to the pre-history of the novel, but, juxtaposed as they are with Noah's contrasting current experiences, they serve also as a recurring structural indicator of his binary feelings and responses," in Mordecai Richler, *Twayne's World Author's Series 707* (Boston: Twayne, 1983) 20.

¹¹ Noah, in contrast, reaffirms his rejection of Melech's tactics by chastising similar behaviour in Max: "'Anti-Semitism is an obscene enough thing, Max, without it being used to rationalize your business perversions'" (191).

"if I had explained it to him first, everything would have been all right" (38, 203).

While Melech's lament remains unaltered through the course of the narrative, Noah gains a measure of self-awareness from his recollections. He initially recalls the incident with self-reproach, likening his actions to Melech's crooked ways: "He remembered old Moore, who had been cheated by his grandfather. The way I'm cheating Theo, he thought. Honest Theo who took me in and said meet my wife and read my books and sleep in my study. ...I'm still trying to walk off with his wife" (96). Still, the parallel use of flashbacks leads readers to see that Noah feels as justified in his love as Melech does in his hate. However, Noah learns from the incident with Moore; just as he was unable to comprehend his grandfather's duplicity, Noah, finally, refuses to persist with the deception of Theo. When Theo discovers Noah and Miriam in bed together, he offers the lovers a way out of an awkward situation. Rather than agreeing, which Miriam is eager to do, Noah is blunt in his recently discovered integrity. While Melech once laughed and shared a drink with the man he was cheating, Noah cannot:

Noah faced Theo firmly, refusing, beforehand, to play the role that was being offered to him so blatantly. To apologize, agree that they had been drunk, and then, afterwards, to go ahead with the surreptitious affair.

You may make love to my wife as long as I don't see and you don't tell.'" (105-106)¹²

Miriam is appalled at Noah's cruelty, but "Noah was exhilarated. ... He was beginning to develop a morality of his own" (106). Having once rebuked Melech's covert business ethics, Noah refuses to allow himself to behave clandestinely. Like Miriam, readers may call Noah cruel: cruel to cuckold a friend; cruel to reveal the truth in so bold a manner as to cause Theo to faint; and cruel to coerce his terrified lover into leaving her husband so abruptly. However, readers must also concede that Noah, while he lacks a certain sensitivity, behaves with the candour that his grandfather does not have.

Another pair of flashbacks portends Wolf's demise and encourages readers to compare Noah's reaction to his father's death with the past ordeals of Leah and Miriam. Leah's father, Jacob Goldenberg, "robbed Leah of innocence by asking for a light" (186). On his death-bed, he told her: "'When the Baal Shem Tob--well, when he died--there was a light...a kind of light. If--I'm not saying--but if you should see anything, would you...I mean don't be ashamed to say...'" (93). Leah lied about the light so that her father could die believing that he was a saint. Wolf, too, is falsely conferred the status of saint. Like Leah, Noah

¹² At this point Noah recalls a similar offer from his past: "He sensed that Miriam and Theo were united against him in the same way as Melech and Wolf had joined forces much earlier. Wolf had said: 'You can go without a hat. Eat ham. But not in front of Zeyda.' Perhaps, Noah thought, eating ham was not so unimportant after all" (106).

betrays his father's memory by confirming Wolf's dubious heroism: "Well, he thought, my father was a hero. That calls for another drink" (169). Miriam, too, "had never got over her father's death" (98). Like Wolf, Louis Peltier ran headlong to his grisly fate. Feeling responsible for his bizarre suicide, Miriam recalls: "'I didn't even have the courage to look ...He was my father. I had betrayed him'" (103). Noah also suffers inexplicable guilt over Wolf's death: "Drunk, he imagined that he was his father's murderer" (172).

Noah, haunted by the loss of his father, begins to drink heavily.¹³ However, he summons the strength to face his ghosts, perhaps in response to the models of emotional crippling he finds in his mother and girlfriend. Leah is broken by her lie. Years later, the incident still plagues her, weaving in and out of her fever-induced reveries (88-93).¹⁴ Miriam too is defined by her ordeal; she seems to reenact the imagined betrayal of her father by repeatedly betraying her husband, punishing herself in the process: "Nobody had understood that all those men were being used in anger. That all that time she had been looking for the

¹³ Unlike Miriam, Noah did have the courage to look at his father's corpse; he is haunted by the memory: "His father's body, the toes turned inwards, robbed him of sleep" (172). "He often awakened in the middle of the night to reach out for Miriam. Instead there was his father's body. Toes turned inward" (173).

¹⁴ Noah knows that Leah is defined by her lie. When she is ill, Noah suspects that she may repeat history: "I wonder if she'll ask me when the time comes, ask me like he asked her, if there was a light" (169). And, although she is alone in her final attack, Leah's last thought is to pass her own misery to her child: "'A light...If you should see... If--Boyele...'" (204).

one man who could destroy her" (127). In contrast, Noah refuses to be destroyed by the mystery and false heroism surrounding Wolf's death. His search for truth confirms his individuality: "It was only important that they made a hero out of my father if it mattered that Wolf, one small man, had been swindled even by death. It does matter to me, he thought. In fact, that explains all my differences with them" (187). He wrenches confessions from Schloime and Max about their respective parts in starting and then covering up the fire that killed Wolf. He also blackmails Max into dropping plans to exploit Wolf's martyrdom to further his political ambitions. The title of the novel, Son of a Smaller Hero, suggests to readers that Wolf's death is as much a defining moment in Noah's life as Jacob's and Louis's deaths were in the lives of Leah and Miriam. However, by learning the truth, Noah assuages his grief, thus ensuring that he does not fall into the same pattern of self-pity and neurosis as Leah and Miriam. Considering the women's ruined lives, it is difficult to fault Noah for taking the necessary steps to avoid such a fate.

Flashbacks to Melech's past reveal that he, like Noah, loved a Gentile girl when he was young.¹⁵ To his everlasting grief,

¹⁵ Readers later learn that Max also loves a Gentile woman. Each generation, to varying degrees, faces the moral issue of fathering a child in such an affair: receipts and photographs imply that Melech supported an illegitimate child (159); when Noah asks Max what he would do if Miss Holmes were pregnant, Max replies: "'Mail her a hat-pin. Hey, what do you think'" (190); and, when Miriam suspects that Noah will leave her, she asks: "'What if I were pregnant?'" (167). Noah evades the question and, since she is not pregnant, the complex issue of subsequent moral responsibility remains on the periphery of readers' concerns.

he sacrificed her love for his faith. Decades later, as he rehearses his rationalization, memories of Helga invade his thoughts: "*I am a strong man. I didn't go against my family the way he does. I had respect. Helga has blonde hair and walks straight. She claps her hands together when she dances*" (38).

Readers understand, long before Noah does, that Melech's actions are governed by his pain.¹⁶ After banishing Noah from his house, again because of religious differences, "Melech watched him go. He wanted to call him back, but he also wanted to punish Noah because he, Melech, had loved Helga and had deserted her" (39). Noah faces the opposite dilemma. When his feelings for Miriam change, he too notes a tension between his own desires and his family's wishes: "If he left her, the Adlers would be triumphant. They would say that an affair or marriage between a Jew and a Gentile was doomed from the beginning. But, on the other hand, he wasn't going to marry Miriam to spite the Adlers" (129). Loathe to hurt Miriam, Noah drunkenly proposes and "comes close to falling into a trap that would be the reverse of his grandfather's mistake. Melech would not marry the 'wrong girl', but he continued to love her. Noah was willing to marry the wrong girl, even though he had ceased to love her."¹⁷ However, Miriam

¹⁶ When Noah discovers the photographs, receipts, and letters in Melech's box, he both pities and condemns him for his actions: "Oh, Melech, Noah thought. My poor, suffering Zeyda. Still, he thought, you did wrong to punish us" (160).

¹⁷ Arnold Davidson, Mordecai Richler (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983) 50.

recognizes that the relationship is over and they part. Readers may wince at Noah's insensitivity when, having left Miriam weeping on the sofa, he observes that "It was going to be a fine day" (171); yet, they also see that, by remaining true to his emotions, he prevents a lifetime of bitter misgivings which may lead him, as they do Melech, to punish others for his own cowardly mistakes. Even Miriam remarks that while the lost love is painful, Noah's momentary cowardice and dishonesty--the traits that Melech displays by leaving Helga--are unforgivable.¹⁸

In these ways, flashbacks call Noah's present actions into comparison with the past actions of the people in his life. Even as he commits various transgressions, readers must concede that Noah repeatedly strives towards a personal truth, honesty, and integrity instead of following his familial tendency towards lies, deceit, and guilt. This is not to suggest, of course, that Noah is a vessel of virtue in a sea of despicable characters; however, the narrative device of flashbacks do suggest that Noah's commendable determination to face the truth is a more difficult task than most characters are willing to undertake.

The difficulty inherent in confronting the truth is stressed repeatedly throughout the novel by another narrative device, the design strategy of echoes. Instead of turning readers' attention to the novel's pre-history, echoes are contained within the temporal framework of the novel. The occurrence of several

¹⁸ Miriam says: "'I'll be able to forgive you everything in time ... Except your having to get drunk. Except your having asked me to marry you'" (170).

similar events and the repetition of similar sentiments throughout the narrative encourage readers to draw various moments of time into comparison and to note the parallels between specific characters. Like image patterns and flashbacks, echoes urge readers to cast their minds continually back over the course of Noah's maturation and to compare his growth against the stagnation of the people around him.

Four fainting episodes suggest that braving the truth requires a moral fortitude that many of the characters lack. Wolf is overcome by the realization that he wants to murder his father: "He shut his eyes. Swaying dizzily he reached for the gear.... Wolf slumped forward in the seat, his face contorted and his eyes squeezed shut.... Paquette shook him and Wolf passed out gratefully" (63-4). Theo cannot bear to hear that his wife is in love with another man: "Theo stifled a sob. He swung back as though to hit Noah, shut his eyes, tottered, and collapsed to the floor" (106). Leah loses consciousness in a heart attack when she realizes that Noah will break *shiva* for Miriam: "her breath came awfully short and her face turned grey. She gasped. Perspiration poured down her face" (161). Noah too has his moment of weakness. Tormented by the mystery of his father's death, he drinks himself into oblivion: then "Noah climbed up on a chair. 'A spectre is haunting Outrement,' he said solemnly, 'It is the spectre of...'" He tottered. Harvey broke his fall. Noah passed out in his arms"

(174).¹⁹ As one character after another is overwhelmed by the painful truth, readers find that they must admire Noah's determination to seek out truths despite the pain they may bring.²⁰ And the truth proves painful indeed: when Schloime admits to setting the fire that killed Wolf, "Noah gripped his hands together tight. The fury, the pain, raging inside him prevented him from speaking" (185).²¹ It is upon facing the truth about Wolf's death that Noah realizes that his strength of character is uncommon: "At last Noah understood about the concentration camps. About the Goldenbergs and Harvey. [They] had been telling the truth when they said they hadn't known. They couldn't cope with knowing" (186).

¹⁹ Noah's pain moves John Moss to remark that Noah is not ruthless. He is determined, but he is not without conscience; he does not avoid suffering. In fact, that is why Noah Adler is, perhaps, the greatest and most convincing of Richler's protagonists--because he has the capacity to suffer, and he does so, and he proceeds in spite of it to fulfil what he conceives to be his destiny or, at least, the conditions of its prelude" in Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) 235.

²⁰ Noah sometimes isolates himself by championing the truth. He is estranged from the Goldenbergs because "he thought it important for Harvey to know that there were people who agreed to see completely, and could still love.... that his being homosexual did not horrify Noah. But it did horrify Harvey. He denied everything. The family was scandalized" (181).

²¹ Noah's speechlessness mirrors Melech's reaction to learning that Wolf died trying to save the box. Unlike others, he does not faint in the face of this terrible truth, but he is struck dumb: "Melech looked at him--his mouth opened and his hand pressed to his throat suppressing a scream" (141).

By behaving in accordance with his emotions, by championing honesty and integrity, and by braving the truth, Noah grows through his experiences. His changing contemplation of the night sky reflects his transformation over the course of the novel. After first meeting Miriam, Noah believes that the universe is his for the taking: "It would be all right, he thought, to reach out and pull down a star or two to look at. They can't be as big or as far away as they say.... If you were tall enough you could pick them like berries" (56). This romantic euphoria is tempered by despair when, after learning of his father's death and his mother's illness, Noah again surveys the night sky: "Theatre marquee lights had gone out. Nightclub neon spluttered, then failed. Only the stars stayed on.... But the stars were too high" (162). Finally, despair turns to relief when, after finally learning the truth about his father's death, Noah finds comfort in the night sky: "Here, there were honourable agreements too. The distance between you and the stars was fixed. The moon wasn't figuring to collide with the earth" (187). Such echoing indicates the extent to which a mature, practical realism has replaced Noah's impetuous, romantic impulses.²²

²² In a related set of echoes, Miriam quotes Noah. Her phrases: "'I would like there to be tests that you could put me to'" (161), "'Can you stay the night?'" (164), and "'He married me so that he could have someone to blame his failures on'" (165) were first uttered by Noah (100, 79, 79 respectively). The once romantic sentiments echo foolishly in their later contexts, thus stressing both Noah's growing pragmatism and the decline of the romance between Noah and Miriam.

Noah's increasingly mature responses to his environment are paralleled and sharply contrasted by another set of echoes: the unchanging sentiments repeated by Melech, Wolf, and Leah epitomizing a legacy of regret, fear, and suffering. Although all three characters feel that they have been cheated out of their rightful position in life and that they have been made to suffer unduly, each has a unique lament. Melech, bitter that he was forced to become a coal and scrap dealer to support his family, shouts at Wolf: "'Me, the son from a scribe. I could have been a scholar too.... No, I worked for my children'" (62). And this demand for respect as the son of a scribe echoes throughout the novel (22, 29, 62, 91, 109). Wolf, fearful of persecution, is constantly dodging blame. When Melech questions him about Noah's leaving the ghetto, he says "'Paw, it's not my fault, eh?'" (20). When a neighbour shouts a rude joke from the back yard, "Leah scowled. It's not my fault, Wolf thought" (32). Even when he passes out in the attempt to murder his father by burying him under two tons of scrap metal, Paquette finds him mumbling: "'It was an accid... Not my fault" (64). Leah's misery echoes in her repeated assertions that after "an unending road of years, each one harder than the last" (88, 93), her life is over. Finished (60, 94, 200). These sentiments, echoing throughout the novel, have rung in Noah's ears for twenty years. As the novel progresses, so too does readers' appreciation of Noah's ambition to reject this legacy. However, readers also begin to see that by denying his family and heritage, Noah impedes his ability to find

his identity. Noah must accept his family and examine his role in their lives. Having once uttered, *"I did not make my mother to suffer or my father bewildered, or my grandfather hard. I should have had the right to begin with my birth"* (56), Noah must learn to recognize his part in the generational cycle of his family's history.

When Noah and Miriam first moved to the cottage in Ste. Adele, "Noah felt freer than he ever had previously: there was no past and no future. He did not worry about his family" (114). His father's death brings with it revelations which force Noah to consider both his past and his future. He unwittingly comes into a two-part inheritance: the contents of Melech's padlocked box are echoed absurdly in the contents of Wolf's false bottom drawer. The discoveries provide the keys to Melech's life and to Wolf's death. George Woodcock notes that the box which had created a lie about Wolf's death, now reveals a truth: Noah's "life is suddenly filled with echoes: he realizes that, just as he sought liberation through his affair with Miriam, so, half a century before, his orthodox grandfather carried on a love affair with a Gentile girl in Poland."²³ For nearly thirty years, Melech sent money to Helga and her, possibly their, son in Poland, and, though her last letter was posted in 1939, he still writes to her--these letters are hidden in the box. Contemplating the photographs, Noah finds it "difficult to see the relationship

²³ George Woodcock, Mordecai Richler, Canadian Writers 6 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971) 23.

between the righteous and God-fearing Jew and the young lover embracing a giggling girl at a village fair" (160). However, he immediately grasps that Melech's guilt, regret and pain have long been inflicted on the Adler family. Despite his empathy, Noah silently rebukes his grandfather: "you did wrong to punish us" (160). Later, Noah's new awareness moves him to comment: "Melech Adler is a coward and without truth" (185). While the box reveals the secret of Melech's life, it only deepens the mystery of Wolf's death. Noah wonders: "But how does my father come into this? *Did he know?*" (159).

When Noah discovers Wolf's journals, he realizes that his father lived a life of almost incomprehensible emptiness. In contrast to the Polish language which prevented Noah from reading the letters in Melech's box, Wolf's code is "pathetically easy to decipher" (177). The enormous ledger includes an essay entitled "THE INGRATITUDE OF CHILDREN" and a list of ludicrous projects and inventions (179). It is, however, in the laborious calculations that Noah finds evidence of his father's tedious life. Wolf recorded twenty-two years of quarrels with Leah, timed himself in the toilet, measured his urine, weighed himself before and after eating, and counted his daily steps around Montreal.²⁴ Although the journal is intensely self-conscious, Noah recognizes

²⁴ The meticulous lettering on Melech's scrolls (141) is reflected in Wolf's ornate handwriting and careful calculations (177). This private craft mirrors Louis Peltier's secret beer-bottle top murals (103). The private torment of these men is rendered poignant by their compulsion to create opulent records of it.

that Wolf was defeated by his family. Later, when Noah and Max argue about Wolf's death, Noah declares: "'Wolf Adler died because his father was a coward and allowed the *Goyim* to define him.... his wife was a bitch and his son a blindly selfish bastard. One brother a moron and the other a scoundrel'" (191). Arnold Davidson notes that the contents of the box and the journal suggest that

neither Melech nor Wolf was fully his own man. In each case the secret record attests to limitations not acknowledged by the public face. In each case the message to Noah is also the same. To what degree will he be the continuation of his grandfather's and his father's lives.... It is at this point that we can see how much Noah must accept and deny his forebears.²⁵

Unsettled by the messages hidden in the box and by the journal, Noah scrutinizes his relationships with Miriam and his mother. Clearly, he is unhappy with his discoveries: after studying the contents of the box, Noah leaves Miriam; and, after finding the journal, he leaves Leah. Spurning his inheritance, Noah takes steps to break out of the limitations imposed on him by these relationships. Readers finally see the key to Noah's life-long pattern of aimless, circular movement: throughout his struggles, Noah has allowed his desire to be admired and accepted to overpower his desire for freedom.

²⁵ Davidson 48.

By casting an eye back over the text, readers note that Noah, like his father and grandfather before him, has never truly been his own man; he has been trapped by the roles set for him by family and friends. When Noah questions the Jewish faith, he is deeply hurt by his family's cold responses. He wanted to be liked; so, when they fed him with drink, "he played the role of the drunkard for them" (37). This self-betrayal echoes in his relationship with Miriam. Although his emotions change, Noah does not want to hurt Miriam, so "he began to play a part with her" (128). He finds the strength to leave her only when another role beckons with greater urgency--Noah goes to Ste. Agathe to play dutiful son to his ailing mother. Here, he renews his relationship with Leah's side of the family. Again, he plays a role so that the Goldenbergs will like him; he "agreed to everything.... Noah was so intent on conforming that he conformed too much, and was suspected as an eccentric, a non-believer, by all" (180). When he hears Max's campaign plans to manipulate his position as Wolf's grieving son, Noah seems to consider the role: he "wiggled his ears and raised his eyebrows. Experimentally" (187). This role-playing sharply contrasts with Noah's simultaneous efforts to resist his family's attempts to draw him into kinship. He is quick to repudiate Schloime's comment, "'We're both lone operators, eh? We both like *shiksas*--dames--and we both don't give a damn about eating kosher'," with "'We've got nothing in common'" (84). Moreover, Noah is horrified when his uncle repeatedly asserts that Noah reminds him of Melech (84,

185, 186). Gradually, Noah comes to the realization that he is defeating himself both by betraying his true feelings to win approval and by denying his family to affirm his individuality. An echo reveals that Noah achieves a balance between doing what is right by himself and by his family. After he catches Schloime robbing Panofsky's, he cannot refrain from helping him even though he deplores his actions: "I'm not free yet, he thought. I had to help him, in spite of everything. No, I'm not free yet" (84). At the end of the novel, Noah steadfastly refuses to work on Max's campaign: "I'm free, he thought. Max can go to hell. You require me to be an alcoholic, he thought. But you'll never get that, Max. Not out of me, you won't" (202). Michael Greenstein notes that Noah "will be neither martyr nor scapegoat; his father had been both."²⁶

Clearly, then, the design strategy of echoes operates on several levels simultaneously. The fainting episodes stress the difficulty of facing truths and champion Noah's determination to do so. Noah's incremental gains in maturity and pragmatism are reflected in his changing meditations on the night sky that sharply contrast the ever-echoing laments of his mother, father, and grandfather. Yet, as well as drawing the distinctions between Noah and his family and community, echoes reveal the connections between them. Noah finally learns to perform the same task that readers have been performing from the beginning of the narrative:

²⁶ Michael Greenstein, "The Apprenticeship of Noah Adler," Canadian Literature 78 (Autumn 1978) 46.

he compares his actions and weighs his potential futures against the actions and fates of his father and grandfather. The box and the journal create echoes in Noah's life, revealing to him as well as to readers the tools by which to free himself from destructive entrapment by his family and the ghetto community.

The symmetry of Son of a Smaller Hero, as suggested by its coming full circle from Noah's first to his second departure from the ghetto, is underscored by a framing device. In both the first and the final sections, Noah's leave-taking is associated with a Sunday family meeting and a private encounter between Noah and Melech. While the family meeting scenes stress the transformation of the Adler family in general, it is the private encounter scenes that emphasize the changes that occur in Noah over the course of the novel. Davidson remarks that the final encounter between Noah and Melech is "psychologically and narratively the real climax of the novel."²⁷ The closing of the frame--or the completion of the circle--encourages readers to recall Noah's behaviour in the first meeting. The final encounter scene provides an integrated view of Noah's development--the product of his numerous epiphanies of self-awareness. When Noah first faced Melech, he "stood before him embarrassed" (37); at the second encounter, "he stood before him confidently" (202). His confidence is reflected in his ability to define himself. At the beginning of the novel, Noah faltered in his attempt to explain his departure: "'I'm sort of between things. I was born a Jew but

²⁷ Davidson 52.

somewhere along the way something is missing. But I don't know what it is....I think it's freedom that I want. I--I no longer have any rules to refer to the way you had. I...' (38). At the end of the novel, Noah declares: "'You said that you wanted me to be a Somebody. A Something. I've come to tell you that I have rules now. I'll be a human being. I'll...'" (203). Although he does not finish this statement--indicating, perhaps, that he still has much to learn--readers understand that Noah has formulated a code of moral values based on honesty, truth, and integrity.²⁸

Noah's maturity is evident in his behaviour toward Melech. Noah's first visit had been to clear the air--to ask only for understanding and to offer only apologies. Beneath his stern exterior, Melech secretly wished that Noah would ask him a favour, expose a weakness, so that they might relate more fully. The second meeting is a firm farewell. Noah apologizes again but, this time, he also requests a favour: he asks if he might have one of the scrolls that Melech copied. Melech is touched by the request and the tone of the meeting turns from confrontation to reconciliation. While Noah behaves with a new understanding of his grandfather, he discovers that he still has much to learn about him and about compassion. When he asks Melech what Wolf

²⁸ Furthermore, by asserting his humanity--his position as a "something"--Noah repudiates his father's and grandfather's estimation of him: Wolf's last words to Noah had been "'So what are you? A nothing'" (123), and Melech, just minutes before Noah's declaration, says, "'Look at you! A nothing'" (202).

thought was in the box, Melech lies, despite the fact that Melech "rebelled against the idea that Noah should come to respect Wolf and not him" (203). Noah "understood the gift of Melech's lie, and was speechless" (203). He recognizes that Melech's dishonesty is a self-sacrificing kindness. In response to this revelation, Noah decides not to tell Melech that Schloime had started the fire that killed Wolf. Then, unlike the earlier meeting, in which Noah was evicted by a furious patriarch who was intent on punishing him, Noah leaves on his own terms, and it is Melech who "felt that he had been punished" (204). Thus, "the novel comes full circle as Noah's love punishes and defeats his grandfather's injustice."²⁹

Noah sails for Europe prepared to face a new spring, one which holds the promise of growth that the previous spring had denied.³⁰ This observation notes the largest design strategy in the novel: the narrative is divided into five parts with each part entitled by the season it depicts. Victor Ramraj remarks that the chronological arrangement of Noah's current experiences as well as the temporal titles given to the five parts of the novel point up the theme of maturation.³¹ However, while these chapter headings mark time, allowing readers to trace Noah's

²⁹ Greenstein 49.

³⁰ Margaret Atwood notes that while it is a rebirth--a new experience--for Noah, his "return to Europe brings the family--much to their disgust--full circle" in Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anasi, 1972) 156.

³¹ Ramraj 27.

development through seven seasons, they also suggest a cycle. Representative of both progression and repetition, this design strategy epitomizes Noah's physical and psychological journey. As he repeatedly leaves and returns to the ghetto, and as he looks to his past experiences and to his family history, Noah progresses towards independence and autonomous identity. His awareness of seasonal change is reflected in his growing self-awareness.³² The overall design of the novel is not only an echo of Noah's first epiphany--the recognition of beauty in Vivaldi's The Four Seasons--it is a symbol for the metamorphoses that Noah must undergo if he is to escape his environment.

In the final analysis, Noah's success comes at the cost of several broken hearts. As the novel unfolds, however, readers learn that the characters are largely responsible for their own misery. Moreover, acting with humanity, love, forgiveness, integrity and honesty, Noah finds that he cannot help but inflict and, indeed, suffer pain. It becomes increasingly evident that, had Noah chosen differently, he would have recreated in his own life--and in the lives of the next generation of Adlers--the same cycle of bitterness, regret, emptiness, hate, and guilt that victimized him throughout his youth. Each of Noah's morally

³² Noah's efforts to achieve maturity and spiritual rebirth stand in contrast to Wolf's lackadaisical response to the seasons. Waiting for poor business to pick up, Wolf surmises: "Well, what could you expect? The summer was always like that. Things would pick up in the fall" (34). And when fall business is no better, he thinks: "Well, the autumn was always slow. What could you expect? Things would pick up during the winter" (59).

questionable actions is balanced by a step towards his creation of a system of values by which to break the cycle of self-destructive behaviour and establish an identity as a "human being". The design strategies of the novel--the circular construction and image patterns, the framing scenes, and the use of flashbacks and echoes--recreate Noah's struggles by taking readers through the course of Noah's maturation, asking them to weigh Noah's behaviour not only against those around him, but also against his alternative courses, thereby projecting potential futures for him. In order to judge his present behaviour, readers are continually led to look backwards through Noah's life and heritage and forwards to his conceivable destinies. Ultimately, judgment rests with readers who must, in their responses to Noah, call on their own codes of moral values --even as these interact with the text--and measure Noah's against them. That readers walk with Noah, look through his eyes, feel his experiences and define, as he must, their own sense of morality, is, ultimately, the ambition of Richler's overall textual design.

In The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, readers meet with a slightly younger protagonist who also aspires to escape the ghetto and to legitimize his identity as a "somebody". However, while Noah's early mistakes lead ultimately to moral and spiritual success, Duddy's blind race towards a symbol of success leads him to moral and spiritual bankruptcy. Whereas the design strategies in Son of a Smaller Hero urge readers to praise the

moral achievement within the desperate act, those in The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz encourage them to condemn the immorality that underlies the superficial success.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE APPRENTICESHIP OF DUDDY KRAVITZ: STEPS TO MORAL BLINDNESS

The bildungsroman typically portrays a young character who enters adulthood by learning, through a series of trials, to behave according to the moral, ethical and legal standards of society. The most common maturing plot involves a sympathetic protagonist whose will vacillates as a result of "inexperience and naivete ... or even of absolute wrongheadedness ... in his beliefs and attitudes."¹ Life experience gradually tempers this perspective, inducing the hero to conform to his society's code of values. In Mordecai Richler's The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, whose title highlights its status as bildungsroman, Uncle Benjy advises his young nephew to become a gentleman, warning: "'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'."² But Duddy, growing up in an environment of opposing values, fails to heed his uncle's warning and chooses instead to murder the potential gentleman within. In his consuming quest for recognition as a Somebody, Duddy "climbs

¹ Norman Friedman, Form and Meaning in Fiction (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1975) 87.

² Mordecai Richler, The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (1959; rpt. Markham: Penguin, 1965) 279. All page references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

to fortune over the bodies of relatives and friends."³ Yet, despite his failure to mature spiritually and emotionally, he enters adulthood a seemingly prosperous and well-respected man. Because this resolution counters the standard conventions of the bildungsroman, it is unclear, as D.J. Dooley notes, "whether Richler is writing a serious novel of education or apprenticeship to life ... or a parody of such a novel."⁴ As difficult as it is to situate Richler in relation to the text, it is more perplexing still to identify his attitude toward his protagonist. The most demanding task of all, however, is for readers to assume and defend a moral stance on the infamously troubling character of Duddy Kravitz.

The contradictory critical responses to Duddy confirm the difficulty of assuming a moral stance on him: Richler weaves a complex plot which alternately arouses readers' sympathy and provokes their censure.⁵ As readers move to convict Duddy on moral grounds for his increasingly cruel and selfish actions, the young hero surprises them by exhibiting an admirable loyalty to his family and by revealing a grievous sense of neglect. While Noah Adler is the son of a smaller hero who is himself the son of

³ Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) 150.

⁴ D.J. Dooley, "Mordecai Richler and Duddy Kravitz: A Moral Apprenticeship?" Moral Vision in the Canadian Novel (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1979) 99.

⁵ For conflicting critical responses to Duddy's character, see A.R. Bevan, Warren Tallman, Daniel Lenoski, D.J. Dooley and J.A. Wainwright. For a discussion of these responses, see John Fern and Victor Ramraj.

a smaller hero, Duddy Kravitz is "the forgotten child of a forgotten child."⁶ Growing up in a motherless household and in the shadow of his favoured older brother, Duddy hungers for, but is denied, the affection of his father and uncle. This lamentable circumstance is held in balance against Duddy's actions; he alienates his zeyda and betrays Yvette and Virgil, sacrificing a potential spiritual and emotional wealth for the simple rewards of material gain. Readers may think that Duddy's behaviour is understandable, but is it acceptable?

In a cursory examination, then, the text appears to present an ambivalent portrait of Duddy and so to invite an ambivalent response from readers. Stephen Hennigan, noting the distanced and non-didactic narrative voice and the finely honed narrative structure of the novel, observes that Richler is careful to "avoid the perils of moralizing didacticism on one hand, and either excuses or naturalistic determinism on the other."⁷ John Ower suggests that shifting tone and viewpoint intensify this ambivalent portrait: "simplistic moral judgments are suspended in favour of a satiric vision that combines comic affirmation with ironic condemnation, a brutal realism with a humane sensitivity

⁶ Daniel Lenoski, "In Vindication of Duddy Kravitz," Etudes Canadiennes Canadian Studies 6 (1979): 123.

⁷ Stephen Hennigan, "Myths of Making It: Structure and Vision in Mordecai Richler and Beauchemin," Essays on Canadian Writing 36 (1988): 24-25.

to ethical questions."⁸ Yet, despite Richler's cultivation of an apparently ambivalent pose, the text persists in inviting strong reader response. Readers sense that they "are required to come to some estimation of ... Duddy."⁹

Wolfgang Iser offers one way into (and out of) the problem of readers' ambiguous appraisals of the character of Duddy Kravitz. In his text The Implied Reader, he suggests that it is through the manipulation of a variety of textual strategies that an author incites and controls his readers' responses. For instance, in Iser's view, a text may be designed so that

the reader is constantly forced to think in terms of alternatives ... to visualize the possibilities which [the characters] have not thought of. While he is working out these alternatives the scope of his own judgment expands, and he is constantly invited to test and weigh the insights he has arrived at.... The esthetic appeal of such a technique consists in the fact that it allows a certain latitude for the individual character of the reader, but also compels specific reactions--often unobtrusively--without expressly formulating them. By ... keeping him at a variable distance from the events, the text gives him

⁸ John Ower, "Sociology, Psychology, and Satire in The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz," Modern Fiction Studies 22 (Autumn 1976): 414.

⁹ Arnold Davidson, Mordecai Richler (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983) 141.

the illusion that he can judge the proceedings in accordance with his own point of view. To do this, he has only to be placed in a position that will provoke him to pass judgments.¹⁰

The textual design of The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz manipulates readers' wandering viewpoints, provoking reactions which, although not expressly formulated, are somewhat pre-structured by specific textual strategies. Although readers experience the "illusion", as Iser describes it, of spontaneous responses, their reactions are carefully guided by the strategies of the text. The novel's four-part structure, four set pieces and four frame devices draw constant attention to Duddy's alternative choices. This recognition of choices induces readers to become conscious of their own moral convictions and to measure Duddy's actions against them.

Duddy's apprenticeship is traced in four distinct and chiefly chronological movements which are demarcated by numbered sections. The first section recounts Duddy's youth and concludes with the awakening of his ambition to own land; the second describes how he rapidly acquires half the land; the third depicts numerous crises and his ensuing breakdown; and the fourth concludes the apprenticeship with Duddy's attaining the whole tract of land. Although this chronology, combined with Duddy's roguish character, suggests a picaresque narrative, Richler adds

¹⁰ Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns in Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1975) 118.

a philosophical edge to the entertainment. Austin Warren explains: "In the picaresque novel, the chronological sequence is all there is.... A more philosophical novel adds to chronology the structure of causation ... [showing] a character deteriorating or improving in consequence of causes operating steadily over a period of time."¹¹ It is precisely this development of character, the course of Duddy's apprenticeship, that readers must judge.

Each of the four sections of the novel closes with a single statement which incites readers to reflect on Duddy's actions within that section. The final line of Part One is uttered by the pathetic comic Cuckoo Kaplan, who defends his idleness with the cliché: "'I was just going to get this show on the road'" (102). This phrase is one of the countless empty slogans and dead precepts which resound in Duddy's world. (Note, for instance, Lennie's "'Anatomy's the big killer'" [20] and Max's "'You can be honest with me, and I'll be honest with you'" [37].¹²) Duddy learns to use similar clichés to "cover up his tracks or to

¹¹ Austin Warren, "The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction," in Perspectives on Fiction, ed. James L. Calderwood (New York: Oxford UP, 1968) 76.

¹² Northrop Frye notes that the lowest level of the mythology of concern is the social mythology, partly acquired from "the steady rain of assumptions and values and popular proverbs and clichés and suggested stock responses that soaks into our early life and is constantly reinforced" (The Stubborn Structure [London: Methuen, 1970] 30). Duddy's apprenticeship is not about learning from his own experiences, but about learning how to categorize his experiences according to the unthinking responses of his stagnant social mythology.

disclaim moral responsibility."¹³ He quotes Cuckoo's cliché, "'That's show biz'" (223), upon learning that Macpherson, the teacher he tormented in high school, is in an asylum, thereby denying his own responsibility and signalling his preference for a world of appearances. When Yvette blames him for Virgil's crippling accident, he denies culpability with the sardonic truism: "'I didn't give him epilepsy'" (312). By the end of the first section, readers suspect that Duddy's frequent references to his zeyda's words, "'A man without land is nobody'" (62, 82, 101), indicate that he will adopt this proverb in the same insipid and unexamined manner in which he adopts all other expressions. As he does not distinguish between the solemn maxim of a well-respected man and the tired clichés of a drunken clown, Duddy fails to measure words against action and character. This failure sets the course of Duddy's apprenticeship. The closing line of this section is also self-reflexive: with Duddy's discovery of the lake property, "the show"--the apprenticeship--begins in earnest.

The closing lines in each of the following three sections are spoken by Duddy either to Yvette or to Max. His remarks hang in the air unanswered--an overt clue that readers must provide their own responses. In the conclusion to Part Two, Duddy, ecstatic upon acquiring half of the lake property, asks Yvette: "'Well, what do you say? What's your opinion of Duddy Kravitz now?'" (220). At this midway point in the novel, the text is

¹³ Dooley 107.

asking readers for their assessment of the young apprentice. Duddy's self-congratulatory tone belittles their moral dilemma. Readers must balance their admiration of his energy with an appraisal of Duddy's actions and note that he resorts to several questionable practices in order to collect the funds necessary for purchasing the land. He has accepted--from the staff and guests at Rubin's Resort--the repayment of more than twice as much money as he was cheated out of at Irwin's roulette wheel, he has lied to Cohen in order to sell his film venture, and he has peddled illegally imported pinball machines, attempting to cheat Virgil out of his payment in the process. Although these shoddy business ethics pale in comparison to Duddy's later actions, this disregard of the values of fairness and honesty indicates that Duddy will strive to achieve his goals at any cost. Readers must decide if this single-mindedness of purpose is admirable or despicable. As Victor Ramraj notes, the issue is complex: Richler invites readers "to consider whether Duddy should choose to survive by adopting the questionable values and succeed by those standards, or refuse to adopt them and go under like ... MacPherson, Lennie, and the failed comedian Cuckoo Kaplan."¹⁴ However, unless readers are willing--as Duddy is--to dismiss any consideration of moral values, it is difficult to praise Duddy for his actions or to declare his achievement an unqualified success.

¹⁴ Victor Ramraj, Mordecai Richler, Twayne's World Authors Series 707 (Boston: Twayne, 1983) 38.

In Part Three, Duddy is plagued by a series of financial and emotional setbacks: the pretentious director Friar abandons Duddy's venture into the film business, Lennie flees to Toronto following a botched attempt at an illegal abortion, Virgil suffers a crippling accident, Yvette leaves Duddy, he is forced to declare bankruptcy, and Uncle Benjy dies of cancer. These manifold pressures drive Duddy to a nervous breakdown. He retreats, finally, to Yvette and Virgil's cottage in Ste. Agathe, where he recovers. The standard bildungsroman might end here, with Duddy's decision to forsake his ambitions in favour of the human rewards of love and friendship. Readers are tantalized "with the possibility that the character who has till now been observed chiefly in his external behaviour will begin to develop an internal life."¹⁵ Warren Tallman observes: "ruined, but at last aware of what it means to be human, Duddy becomes bearable. Such would appear to be the lesson he masters, the saving knowledge he acquires in the course of his apprenticeship ... it isn't."¹⁶ This illusion of maturity is shattered by the closing line of this section. When a news headline pulls Duddy back into the fray, he explains: "'My luck has changed, that's all'" (284). He stresses that only his circumstances, not his ambitions, have altered. It is evident that Duddy has failed, despite his trials and tribulations, to experience emotional and spiritual growth.

¹⁵ Dooley 104.

¹⁶ Warren Tallman, "Richler and the Faithless City," Canadian Literature 3 (Winter 1960): 63.

He gambles away the potential saving grace of this green world with Yvette and Virgil in the Laurentians for the chance to possess his own green world--a superficial one barren of love and happiness. Readers watch Duddy squander a vital opportunity for moral education, and although Richler does not pose the question, Hugo Mcpherson suggests that readers must wonder: "Will Duddy reproduce on his own land the nightmare which he has escaped?"¹⁷

In the final section of the novel, Duddy, desperate to procure the last tract of land, commits a federal offence by forging a cheque on Virgil's account.¹⁸ The offence is also a moral one: Duddy accepts the risk that Virgil may suffer a debilitating epileptic fit when he discovers the treacherous deed. This comes to pass and, consequently, Duddy loses the love of the only people who truly cared for him. On the verge of another breakdown, he gains a small measure of the recognition he craves; a bagel shop waiter offers him a tab. The novel concludes with Duddy's ambiguous questioning declaration: "'You see, he

¹⁷ Hugo Mcpherson, "Fiction (1940-1960)," in Literary History of Canada 2 vols. 2nd ed., eds. Carl Klinck, et al. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976) 2: 227.

¹⁸ When Duddy rushes home from the bank with the stolen money, the unsuspecting Virgil rejoices: "'Duddy can do anything'" (304). The comment is ironic--considering that Duddy is capable, not of rising to any challenge, but of sinking to any depth. Having once made the half-joking admission, "'I'll raise the rest of the money even if I have to kill somebody for it'" (121), Duddy now seems prepared to go to such lengths.

said, his voice filled with marvel. 'You see' " (312).¹⁹

Ironically, Duddy himself has chosen not to "see". Over the course of his apprenticeship, he comes into contact with various exemplars of success and failure from a wide range of social and economic worlds: Ste. Agathe, New York, McGill, Toronto, and Westmount. Duddy knows that, in these worlds, he is not a Somebody.²⁰ To Max, this forgotten son is finally worthy of respect. But Duddy has long since discovered that his father's esteem is not the measure of a great man; Dingleman--his father's hero--turns out to be, in Duddy's estimation, a "two-bit, dope-smuggling cripple" (311). Having learned all of this, but choosing to ignore the lessons, Duddy joins a long line of literary figures who frustrate readers by their wilful blindness: "'Don't you see?' is the question we want to shout at Oedipus as he stands before us and before fate in the pride of his rationalism ... 'Don't you see?' we want to shout again at Lear and Gloucester The same with Othello So with Moliere's

¹⁹ When Duddy impersonates Virgil in his fraudulent call to the bank, he "waited an hour and a half before he attempted to make the call. Even then he hung up three times (see, he thought) before ... he actually put the call through" (304). Here, Duddy uses the word "see" to argue for his moral goodness while in the act of committing a crime. At the close of the novel, his "see" is an argument for his position as a Somebody even as he has become persona non grata to the important people in his life.

²⁰ Duddy suspects this of Dingleman when Calder says that he has never heard of him: "What, Duddy thought, if the truly powerful people in the city knew nothing about the Wonder? Could it be that Dingleman was only famous on St Urbain Street?" (198).

Organ So with Milton's Eve."²¹ And so too with Richler's Duddy. Thus, Richler, through the novel's carefully crafted four part structure, encourages readers to follow the apprenticeship step by step, pausing at the close of each section to reflect on Duddy's progression towards manhood. The fact that Duddy is presented with options, with opportunities for moral education, and with second chances, makes his monstrous transformation into the new Boy Wonder of St. Urbain Street all the more disconcerting to witness.²²

Several critics complain that Richler mechanically manipulates his readers' responses to Duddy, that "the novel's pattern is rather too schematic and clear-cut."²³ This criticism is based perhaps on the appraisal of only the explicit structure of the novel. This conspicuous framework is duly

²¹ Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1948) 146-7.

²² Ann Boutelle compares Duddy's transformation to Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: "Both ... present the corruption of (relative) innocence, stage by pitiless stage. By the end of each novel, the portrait is complete--the last shred of innocence covered by paint (Duddy Kravitz is the more cynical of the two books, as ... Duddy has succeeded in blinding himself to what he has done, while Dorian Gray can at least see.) In each novel, possible Duddys and possible Dorians are killed off as the work progresses, leaving the monsters alone at the end" ("The Dorian Gray Phenomenon in Canadian Literature," in Dalhousie Review 57 [Summer 1977]: 266).

²³ Kerry McSweeney, "Mordecai Richler," in Canadian Writers and Their Works, Fiction Series 6, ed. Robert Lecker, et al. (Toronto: ECW Press, 1988) 169. Note, too, Tallman's remark that "every right-minded reader will realize that Richler is manoeuvring Duddy into a trap" ("Faithless City" 63).

tempered by an episodic plot. These episodes include several set pieces, four of which are set off from the main text by sub-headings. Readers note that the first two exemplify Duddy's conformity in his early and conventional apprenticeship within the school system, while the second two indicate the traditions and groups from which Duddy separates himself as he struggles to define his place in the world. As a young boy, Duddy was a rogue. At the Talmud Torah parochial school, "those who were too big to beat up he tried to become friendly with. He taught them how to steal at Kresge's and split streetcar tickets so that one could be used twice, how to smoke with bubble pipes, and the way babies were made" (49). Despite these and other youthful transgressions, the first pair of set pieces suggest that Duddy was a fairly typical youngster. In "The March of the Fletcher's Cadets" (40-44), Duddy participates in a school ceremony and is unremarkable within the group. In fact, throughout the entire episode, Duddy is referred to only twice. First, "Sivak goosed Kravitz" (42); then, at the appropriate moment, "Duddy Kravitz like the rest turns to salute the Union Jack" (41). This conformity and near passivity is emphasized in the second set piece, entitled "Commencement" (63-66). Once again, Duddy's presence is hardly noteworthy; in the final paragraph, the narrator mentions that "Duddy Kravitz was the four hundred and tenth boy to be handed his diploma" (66). Readers recognize this moment as a true beginning, for as Duddy walks from the stage, his conventional education ends and his true schoolmaster, experience, begins to

teach its lessons. It is as an apprentice to the business world that Duddy distinguishes himself. Later, he acknowledges only this subsequent education, boasting to Mr. Calder: "'I come from the school of hard knocks'" (197).

As the novel progresses, Duddy withdraws from his community. While his monetary goals grow larger, his sense of community shrinks. The second pair of set pieces stresses the choices that Duddy makes and indicates their impact on his life. "The Screening" of "Happy Bar-Mitzvah, Bernie!" (152-159) occurs in the centre of the novel. It is a comically crude depiction of a genuine apprenticeship, an avant-garde record of a young Hebrew boy's passage into manhood. As such, it contrasts to the apprenticeship of Duddy, who does not display a spiritual connection with his Jewish tradition and views the community's bar mitzvahs as potential sources of profit. While even the ignoble Mr. Friar attempts to grasp the significance of the tradition, Duddy thinks only in terms of marketability. Friar argues, "'the record of a wedding or *bar mitzvah* needn't be crassly commercial. We could concentrate on the symbolism inherent in the ceremony'", to which Duddy counters, "'they'd have to be in colour. That would be a big selling point'" (115). By changing his business name to Kane, Duddy not only aligns himself with media mogul Citizen Kane (and, incidentally, with an enormously successful first-time director) but also distances

himself from his Jewish background.²⁴ Thus, in "The Screening", the "orthodox apprenticeship to position within the religion is contrasted with Duddy's unorthodox but vigorous apprenticeship to an identity all his own."²⁵ While Bernie "is instructed in the ways of the world by his religious advisor" (155), Duddy excludes religion from his curriculum.²⁶ This exclusion emphasizes that Duddy is not simply a product of his environment; he consciously selects the values of his community that he will embrace and the values that he will reject.

The final set piece, "The Crusader" (269-273), is Virgil's poignantly humorous mimeographed magazine for epileptics. He mails Duddy--who has been unable to face him since the car accident for which Duddy was partly responsible--two copies of the first issue. The last item in it is entitled "A Change of Heart: A Short Story with a Moral". Duddy is evidently moved by the piteous story of learning to accept disability in others: the next scene is his reunion with Virgil and Yvette. It seems here that Duddy has acknowledged his role in Virgil's accident or at

²⁴ Duddy's adoption of the name Kane may also be an attempt to equate himself with Orson Wells, an enormously successful first time director. Obviously, he misses the irony of aligning himself with the movie's central character--a man who, in his dying moments, recalls a life of utmost emptiness despite apparent success.

²⁵ William New, "The Apprenticeship of Discovery: Richler and MacLennan," Canadian Literature 29 (Summer 1966): 72.

²⁶ Significantly, the bar mitzvah ceremony is held in a modernized temple designed by the Reform Jews who had adapted their practices to suit the new world. Readers note that the text does not suggest that there is no place for the Jewish tradition in Duddy's modern world, but that Duddy finds no place for it.

least has grasped the connection between Virgil's physical affliction and his own emotional malady. Virgil's "Crusader" and "A Change of Heart" appear to alter the direction of Duddy's crusade and effect within him a genuine change of heart.²⁷ However, Duddy fails the next test of his friendship and again betrays Virgil's trust, wounding him physically and emotionally. Rather than embracing them, Duddy eventually dismisses all cripples from his life. When he evicts Dingleman from his property, he declares: "'On my land ... no trespassers and no cripples'" (311). Virgil's newsletter creates an opportunity for Duddy to salvage his only truly human relationships; however, it leads, instead, to his further separation from community. In the last scene of the novel, Duddy stands in near isolation. He speaks savagely to his zeyda, "'I'm all alone'" (312); and to Yvette he declares, "his voice filled with wrath, 'I have to do everything alone. I can see that now'" (315). By separating himself from his Jewish tradition, by betraying and thus destroying his only friendships and loves, and by refusing to recognize his own emotional crippling, Duddy alienates self from soul. Ironically, while his maturation should involve both personal and social growth, culminating in mature membership

²⁷ This supposition is supported by the fact that, in Dante's Divine Comedy, Virgil is the poet who leads Dante through Hell and into Purgatory. Readers suspect that Virgil has a similar task in this story--to lead Duddy from the hell of the world which has tried his sanity, to the purgatory of the green world at Ste. Agathe.

within a community, it involves, instead, a self-inflicted contraction.²⁸

The carefully designed set pieces serve to draw attention to Duddy's changing relationship with his community from the beginning to the end of his apprenticeship: the first two set pieces suggest Duddy's conformity in his community, and the second two highlight his withdrawal from spiritual and emotional contact with his community. Readers perceive that Duddy has worked hard to define himself through purposeful, free choices which indicate a conscious development of priorities. To judge him, readers must become aware of their own priorities and measure Duddy's decisions against them.

As readers near the conclusion of the novel, certain words or images remind them of similar words and images at the beginning of the novel. By drawing the two moments into association, a frame is created. The final outcome of Duddy's apprenticeship is most evident in the four framing devices of the novel: the image of the dangling telephone, Mr. Macpherson's prophecy, the zeyda's proverb, and Max's stories. Together, these frames bracket the spectrum of Duddy's development, indicate the key source of his downfall, and depict the results of his actions. The dangling telephone spins over two of Duddy's

²⁸ Ironically Duddy believes he is expanding his horizons. He entertains bohemian writers, arguing: "'Intellectual stimulation is good for you...It broadens you'". He also reads self-improvement manuals and memorizes *How to Increase Your Word Power* (224-7). Once again, Duddy separates words from actions, working to cultivate, not his heart and soul, but his vocabulary.

victims: Jenny Macpherson at the beginning of the novel (32), and Virgil at the end (306). This image frames the gamut of Duddy's apprenticeship, signifying the extent of his final moral depravity.²⁹ The first incident is the accidental consequence of a childish and mischievous prank. Duddy's late night crank call was intended for Macpherson; however, since the teacher was out, his chronically ill wife got up from bed to answer the phone. Her consequent death weighs heavily on Duddy's mind. Years later, Hersh offers some consolation: "'Look, we were kids then. How were you to know--'" (260). McSweeney notes: "during the course of the novel, Duddy is given the opportunity to accept responsibility for what he has done."³⁰ Duddy does not, however, turn this harsh lesson into an opportunity for moral growth. Readers recognize this failure upon discovering the second dangling telephone over Virgil's twisted body. His seizure is the result of his learning that Duddy has robbed him of more than two thousand dollars. Hersh's reassurance no longer applies; in the latter incident, Duddy has acted deliberately, aware of the probable consequences. Despite suffering guilt for his role in Virgil's accident following a serious seizure, he again risks Virgil's health for his own gain. Evidently, for Duddy, the

²⁹ I am indebted to Gerald Lynch for this argument. Michael Greenstein also refers to this image, although he links it with the image of the cane (Kane/ Cain) as "instruments or double hooks of Duddy's guilt" (Third Solitudes [Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1989] 146).

³⁰ McSweeney, "Mordecai Richler," in Canadian Writers and Their Works 168.

rewards of land ownership are superior to those of loyal friendship. Although readers may forgive Duddy's earlier involvement in Jenny Macpherson's death and, in fact, pity him for his resulting sense of guilt, it is difficult to absolve Duddy of blame for this later, contemptible action. No longer a roguish student, Duddy has become a master swindler.

The bitter and ironic parting words of Mr. Macpherson constitute the second frame device. When he faces a defiant Duddy concerning the phone call which caused his wife's death, he sneers: "'You'll go far, Kravitz, you're going to go very far'" (40). Macpherson's taunt may be snide--as though he does not expect Duddy to succeed beyond the bounds of St. Urbain Street--or it may be the shrewd recognition that Duddy is "nasty enough and ruthless enough to reach the ranks of the millionaires in the course of time."³¹ The frame closes when, as both mockery and moral condemnation, the words return to haunt Duddy during his hour of emotional and financial bankruptcy: "A leering Mr. MacPherson waited around every corner. 'You'll go far, Kravitz. I told you you'd go far'" (256). At the end of the novel, Macpherson's words prove prophetic. Duddy seems a prosperous man; he is the owner of a sizable tract of good land and a large home. However, he is also penniless and has earned the respect only of strangers and his father, the pimping, lying Max the Hack. Duddy has gone far and yet has gone nowhere at all; although he reaches

³¹ Dooley 106.

his goal of land ownership, he does not accomplish that part of his dream which included giving his zeyda a farm.

Macpherson's hateful prophecy is balanced by the zeyda's loving proverb, the third framing device in the novel. When Duddy is just seven years old, his zeyda tells him, "A man without land is nobody Duddel, remember that'" (48). He does remember it, and, resolving to be a somebody, he fixates on land ownership. Like Macpherson's words, the zeyda's are ambiguous: does he refer to his garden, to forging a community in the new country, or to the importance of a Jewish homeland?³² Duddy never knows, and, unfortunately, he is not given any guidance when he reveals his plans to his zeyda. However, Duddy fails to see the irony in using the maxim to justify actions of which his zeyda would never approve. By stooping to despicable means in an attempt to realize his dream, he alienates the very man who inspires it. The zeyda refuses to enter the promised land, disowning his grandson for his deeds. Duddy, echoing Dingleman's contemptuous words, closes the frame by spitting the proverb back: "'You don't want a farm. You never have. You're scared stiff of the country and you want to die in that stinky old shoe repair shop.... A man without land is nothing. That's what you always told me. Well, I'm somebody. A real somebody'" (312-313). By comparing the separate contexts of the maxim, readers recognize Duddy's utter failure to see that meaning lies in actions and in character. Instead of attempting

³² Note that the narration surrounding this anecdote includes a discussion of gardening, community, and Zionism; the context of this quotation is deliberately ambiguous.

to understand that his zeyda cannot accept the moral price of a farm on Duddy's land, Duddy assumes that his zeyda prefers to be a nobody. Had he attempted to equate Simcha's words with his life, he would not have expected the man to partake in the spoils, to be proud of his underhanded accomplishment.³³

The final framing device in the novel is Max's legend of the hero of St. Urbain Street. In concluding his apprenticeship, Duddy usurps the Boy Wonder's position as this hero. For years, Max had "delighted in telling tales about the legendary Boy Wonder. His favourite, a story that Duddy had heard over and over again, was the one about the streetcar transfer" (23). This legend was the paragon of success with which Duddy grew up. He wanted to be "another Boy Wonder maybe. Not a loser, certainly" (62). Later, he learns that they are one and the same: drug dealing, not streetcar transfers and luck on the horses, is behind Dingleman's success. Duddy imagines, when he decides for a brief time to give up his pursuit of the land, the sorts of stories that might be told about him: they would say he was generous to the poor, forgave his enemies, took care of old friends, and was cultured (281).³⁴ However, Duddy, in his

³³ Simcha is described in the following terms: "Among other immigrants he was trusted, he was regarded as a man of singular honesty and some wisdom He would lend a man money ... agree to settle a dispute or advise a man in trouble, he never repeated a confidence" (45).

³⁴ It is, perhaps, this daydream that leads Eli Mandel to suggest that "the pathos of the novel is contained in [Duddy's] sickening knowledge that what he is creating does not square ... with what could be created, with what he perhaps intended to

competition with, and ultimate rejection of, Dingleman, manages to supplant him.³⁵ At the end of the novel, Max's new story, the closing of the frame, reflects Duddy's position, not as a public benefactor, but as the new Boy Wonder: "'He was born on the wrong side of the tracks with a rusty spoon in his mouth A motherless boy my boy a St. Urbain Street boy'" (315). Although his apprenticeship is over, Duddy, like Dingleman, will always be a boy.³⁶ Thus, readers perceive, in each of the framing devices, Duddy's many failures: failure to weigh the consequences of his actions, failure to measure words against deeds, and failure to reevaluate his goals in order to reflect an understanding of the people who inspired them. By embracing only the tainted values of his environment, Duddy becomes both their agent and their victim.

From the beginning of the novel until the end, the textual design highlights the numerous choices available to Duddy. The turning point of the novel represents the most significant choice of all. At the final stage of his apprenticeship, Duddy must choose between two potential masters: Cohen and Uncle Benjy.

create" ("The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz," rev. Queen's Quarterly 67 [Spring 1960] 131).

³⁵ Even before Duddy throws Dingleman off his land, he rejects him as an idol: "'Boy, when I was a kid I used to think you were some guy. My father used to--What a dirty son-of-a-bitch you are!...Hanging's too good for you'" (287).

³⁶ This recall's Cohen's remark, when he suspects that Duddy is swindling him: "'A boy from the boys,' he said, 'that's what you are'" (151). Duddy, it seems, feels that he has surpassed boyhood and the Boy Wonder; when he chases Dingleman from his land, he calls him "sonny" four times.

Their advice epitomizes the diametrically opposed options open to Duddy when he recovers from his breakdown.³⁷ Cohen advises Duddy to harden himself, confiding, "listen here. My attitude even to my oldest and dearest customer is this," he said, making a throat-cutting gesture.... 'A plague on all the *goyim*, that's my motto'" (265). Conversely, Uncle Benjy warns Duddy to "'be a gentleman. A *mensh*'", or he, like his Uncle, will look back on his life in shame (279). One represents the unscrupulous businessman who admits to hushing up a suspicious death to protect his own interests. The other is a family member, who, on his own death-bed, acknowledges his many mistakes and realizes that living honourably is the only true success. Duddy initially decides, "'I'm going to be a gentleman'" (282) and tells Yvette, "'I'm thinking of going to night school'" (283). By choosing a new source of training, Duddy momentarily diverts the course of his apprenticeship. However, seconds later, he espies a newspaper headline regarding Dingleman's arrest and changes his plans. He chooses, instead, to live by Cohen's advice, thus murdering the potential gentleman within him as his uncle feared he would.

Desmond Pacey argues that "Duddy is the inevitable product of a society which has no respect for any values other than

³⁷ Note that there are only fifteen pages between these two pieces of advice and Duddy makes his decision to go after the last piece of land only six pages after the second option is presented. In the ensuing chapter, Duddy forges the cheque and Virgil has his major seizure. This rapid unfolding of options, actions, and results increases the dramatic effect, enhancing the sense of climax.

material ones."³⁸ However, considering the many moments in his apprenticeship at which Duddy must make a choice--an informed and deliberate choice--it is difficult to argue that his development is predetermined by his environment. Certainly, Duddy's initial priorities are misguided by the ambiguity of his grandfather's proverb and by his father's worship of a morally debased hero. It is also true that Duddy does not grow up with a moral model to counter the materialistic ethic of the modern age. However, the novel focuses on adolescence--the period at which it becomes necessary to establish one's own priorities and to make decisions accordingly. Duddy, on the brink of adulthood, neglects to reexamine the priorities he has maintained since he was a small boy of seven. As important, his more serious choices involve not just social misdemeanours but personal betrayals as well. He closes the door on several potential courses of development. By blinding himself to the lessons of his apprenticeship, Duddy fails to achieve emotional or spiritual maturity. He remains a cruel and selfish child, devoid of a personal system of moral values. Even ineffectual Lennie can recognize this tragic character flaw, remarking: "'You have no code of honour, Duddy. That's your trouble'.... 'What's in it for me, that's your philosophy'" (186-7).

Duddy is self-aware enough to realize that his choices have made him a scoundrel. When he reappears in St. Urbain's Horseman,

³⁸ Desmond Pacey, Creative Writing in Canada (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1967) 266.

he is conscious of the outcome of his apprenticeship; although he is a millionaire, he has an empty personal life, for, in his own words, "'Who in the hell could love Duddy Kravitz?'"³⁹ Yet, he refuses still to accept accountability: "'All I needed was money in the crib and I would have grown up to be such a fine, lovable guy. A kidder. A regular prince among men'" (302). Duddy is instead the ugly frog--the embodiment of Uncle Benjy's Wildean observation: "'Experience doesn't teach: it deforms'" (279). Tom Marshall notes that this aphorism "which seems to be borne out by the development, physical and/or moral, of Dingleman, Aunt Ida, Virgil and Duddy himself--would be cause for despair, were it not for the balancing insistence on free will and freedom of moral choice."⁴⁰ Duddy complains that this freedom is difficult to bear: "'It's hard to be a gentleman--a Jew, I mean--it's hard to be. Period'" (292). Nevertheless, as Rabbi Goldstone tells Bernie at his bar mitzvah, there comes a day when "'you are old enough to be responsible for your own sins. Your father no longer takes them on his shoulders'" (155). Even sympathetic readers realize that, although children may be evaluated in light of their parents' characters, adults are not. As Duddy moves into his twenties, his behaviour is no longer qualified by Max's or Benjy's past actions.

³⁹ Mordecai Richler, St. Urbain's Horseman (1971; rpt. Manchester: Panther Books, 1972) 176.

⁴⁰ Tom Marshall, "Third Solitude: Canadian as Jew," in The Canadian Novel Here and Now 1, ed. John Moss (Toronto: NC Press, 1978) 152.

Richler designs The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz to recreate the experience of emotional and spiritual maturation. By following Duddy's steps from youth to adulthood, readers experience Duddy's dilemmas and are encouraged to evaluate his reactions. This is possible only by their imagining other answers, decisions, and actions and by positing the appropriate ones as right choices in accordance with their own code of honour and their own equations of success. By repeating this process throughout the course of the novel, Richler leads readers to become thoroughly conscious of how difficult it is--and yet how necessary--to formulate a system of values by which to live honourably in the modern world. In St. Urbain's Horseman, readers learn that devising a moral code is only part of the dilemma; acting upon it and defending those actions is as difficult a task.

CHAPTER THREE

ST. URBAIN'S HORSEMAN: SCREENING THE JURY

The theme of moral judgment that is implicit in Mordecai Richler's early novels is made explicit in St. Urbain's Horseman.¹ Unlike Noah Adler and Duddy Kravitz, Jake Hersch faces more than metaphorical conviction on figurative moral charges. He stands before judge and jury, family and friends, media and audience, charged with indecent assault, possession of cannabis, and aiding and abetting sodomy. Significantly, readers are virtually excluded from the court proceedings: it is only on the last day of trial that they are permitted unmediated access to the Old Bailey, and it is only upon Jake's sentencing that they learn the specific charges laid against him. In contrast, readers are the sole witnesses to Jake's personal inquiry into his life--an inner trial that unfolds in tandem with the official proceedings. In Arnold Davidson's view, Jake becomes "both the prosecutor and the defendant in his own private judicial process as, a Jewish expatriate Canadian, quite out of place in court at the Old Bailey, he reviews the past that brought him to that pass."² Fragments of Jake's memory, knowledge, and imagination

¹ Mordecai Richler, St. Urbain's Horseman (1971; rpt. Manchester: Panther Books, 1973). All references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

² Arnold Davidson, Mordecai Richler (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983) 142.

serve as documents and depositions admitted into evidence. Readers sit in secret tribunal, weighing the testimony and delivering judgment. As in the earlier novels, they are confounded by a defendant with "discordant qualities--positive and negative--that, although relatively easy to identify, are hard to add up."³ Their deliberations become increasingly complex in light of their implied roles as representatives of justice called upon to administer the law. Before convicting, readers must establish the moral law: that is, they must determine in their own minds what constitutes an infraction of the moral code of modern society. Even then, the task of judging Jake is problematic. This dilemma echoes that found in Richler's earlier novels:

Certainly Noah should do what every literary portrait of the artist as a young man prescribes and bravely strike out to fulfil his own anticipated destiny. Yet, by so doing, he probably kills his mother. Obviously, Duddy is a *pusherke*. And, just as obviously, he is more But difficult as Duddy's case is, Jake's is still more so. Nevertheless, as even a cursory reading of the novel demonstrates, Jake must be judged. The problem ... is to do so justly, and that, in a nutshell, is Jake's problem too.⁴

³ Davidson 140.

⁴ Davidson 141-142.

The design strategies used in St. Urbain's Horseman stress the difficulty of passing fair judgment: the juxtaposition of the early scenes, the inclusion of journal extracts, the use of repetition, the manipulation of mirrors, and the creation of a controlling structure, have the combined effect of initially unsettling and then reassuring readers in their roles as jury members. By engaging with the design strategies, readers gain a sense of all that must be factored into the development of a code of values suited to the modern world, and of how difficult it is to act according to such a code.

As literary jury members, readers undergo a figurative screening process which tests their capacity for exercising fair judgment. Through the juxtaposition of the early scenes of the novel, readers are made privy to Jake's unvoiced pleas for a discriminating judge, are presented with a series of scenes that portray unfair judgments, and are tested for a propensity toward hasty, misinformed rulings. Jake, fearing that his voice will be lost in the contradictory testimony, silently pleads: "*Listen, your lordship. They're twisting everything*" (19). Conscious of the jury's power, he wills them away: "*Your lordship, listen to me--tell the jury to go home*" (23). As the circumstantial evidence against him amasses, Jake asks that it be considered within his specific context: first, in light of his personal history--"*your lordship, you have a scene from my early sex life*" (34); second, in relation to his social environment--"*Your lordship, look at it this way. There's a sexual revolution going*

on outside" (41). Jake's entreaties reveal his fear of being misunderstood, and consequently, misjudged. Readers are made aware both of their authority and of the need to lend a discriminating ear to the proceedings.

Immediately following Jake's petitions, readers are presented with scenes--both past and present--which depict poor judgment based on a distorted context or on circumstantial evidence. This juxtaposition explicates Jake's silent fears and warns readers against making poor judgments. When, as a young man, Jake tries to go to New York, he is deemed undesirable by the border officials who either mistake him for Joey or do not believe, as Jake insists, that his friends had jokingly forged his name on numerous left-wing petitions (96). The night Jake and Nancy meet, he appraises her according to the reading material he finds in her apartment: "she could see him ... like a judge sifting through evidence. Two years detention for reading Vogue. Six months in solitary for Elle. The Ladies' Home Journal, off with her head.... Enjoying herself she did not protest that she had sublet the flat" (48). When Mrs. Hersh spies Nancy embracing Luke, she assumes that the two are having an affair. Nancy insists: "'You are not to say a word to Jake. Do you understand?' 'Oh, I understand. Don't you worry.' ... 'Do you actually think Luke is my lover?' 'Who said a word?'" (70). Readers note that each misjudgment has the power to change Jake's life: the border official's mistake altered Jake's destiny, sending him to London instead of to New York; Jake's mistake could have thwarted the

development of his relationship with Nancy; and the misunderstanding that causes Mrs. Hersh to brand Nancy a "whore" (55) could lead to problems between Jake and Nancy. Such scenes are designed to caution readers to consider all the evidence carefully before pronouncing judgment.

This lesson is put immediately into practise as readers are repeatedly tested for their own tendency to convict Jake on the grounds of circumstantial or misleading evidence. Several early scenes in the novel function as prosecution testimony, attempting to implicate Jake in a variety of immoral acts. As the narrative unfolds, Jake's defence testimony dismisses the indictments. The temporal gap created by this arrangement of scenes tempts readers to a premature conviction. In the opening chapter of the novel, readers encounter several pages of The Good Britons, a script the police found in Jake's bedroom. The script features Mary Poppins as a scantily clad, whip-bearing dominatrix, which, as far as the prosecutor is concerned, is proof positive of Jake's perversion. Because readers are unacquainted with Jake at this point, they may be inclined to agree. However, they later learn that Luke and Jake collaborated on The Good Britons in their early days together in London; they considered the script a parody and worked on it as a time-filler (163). Similarly, readers discover that there is nothing diabolic in the fact that Jake, "no equestrian himself, keeps a saddle and a riding crop in his cupboard" (14). The equipment belongs to the Horseman; Jake took it from Ruthy when he repaid Joey's debt to her (305). In fact,

as Arnold Davidson remarks: "all this material evidence in the court case is ultimately explained, and what seems in the courtroom to demonstrate Jake's depravity really proves no such thing."⁵ This observation extends to inadmissible evidence. For instance, scandal seems to lurk behind Nancy's fear that an unspecified incident that occurred in the toilets at Harrod's might incriminate Jake. His assurances to Nancy only incite readers' curiosity: "'They can't bring it up. It never made the charge sheet'" (37). However, once again, the truth proves innocuous, not appalling. Readers learn that Jake was merely a protesting bystander when his brother-in-law, Herky, overwhelmed by a professional admiration of Harrod's toilets, began to snap photographs. His misinterpreted actions, which caused customers to deride the two as "'filthy buggers!'", were explained by Jake to the store's detectives (195). Finally, even evidence which seems to implicate Jake in crimes unrelated to the trial proves misleading. Mrs. Herish raises questions in readers' minds when, after peeking through Jake's correspondence, she confronts him: "'Does Nancy know that you send money every month to a woman in Israel?'.... Is the child yours?'" (77-78). Jake's answer-- "'Everybody wants to be cast in a Jacob Herish production'" (78)-- rings false. The truth, however, confirms his innocence of the implied charge of adultery; Chava and Zev were abandoned by Joey, and Jake sends them money in an attempt to atone for his cousin's sins (212). In these ways, the clever juxtaposition of scenes in

⁵ Davidson 151.

the first section of the novel serves both to warn readers away and to tempt them towards hasty, foolish judgments grounded in incomplete or conjectural evidence and improper contexts. This design strategy unsettles readers in their role as jurors, alerting them to the potential abuses of their positions of power and trust, and warning them against convicting without a full appraisal of the evidence or a complete understanding of the context of the defendant's actions.

As one design strategy urges readers to pay particular attention to the context of Jake's behaviour, others reveal how difficult it is to factor in the modern context without losing sight of traditional moral values. The careful orchestration of the novel's early scenes seems to give way to a bewildering jumble of testimony and evidence. However, as the trials unfold, readers distinguish patterns amid the clutter and recapitulation. Two design strategies encompass two different, though connected, areas of Jake's life: the social and the private. The inclusion of journal extracts details Jake's absurd social context while the repetition of various scenes and statements evokes Jake's inner life. The narrative is littered with press clippings from some of the more than three dozen newspapers and magazines cited in the novel.⁶ Notably, readers, as jurors, are properly shielded from the press surrounding Jake's trial: "Nancy had ripped out the story with his photograph on the back page" (12).

⁶ Several of these periodicals have names which emphasize the theme of judgment: the Standard, the Observer, the Chronicle, the Times, Look Magazine, and the Mirror.

However, the media circus does operate as witness for the defense by mimicking Jake's sense of bombardment by the ludicrous, pathetic, and often grotesque world within which he attempts to define his moral values. By classifying the various exhibits, a pattern emerges: each of the press clippings is relevant to Jake's life. For instance, some of them taunt his insecurities. His irrational guilt for his happiness in the midst of human misery is mocked by the black humour in the headlines: "Chin up! The Polio Girl Can Cook" (12), "The Crippled Boy Who Wants to Back Britain" (31), and "While You're Eating Your Dinner Tonight, 417 People Will Die From Starvation" (311).⁷ Jake's fear of dying of cancer is fuelled by the articles: "Surgery: How Not to Die of Cancer" (19) and "Monthly Tests for Cancer" (281).⁸ Headlines such as "Mixed Marriages Stink" (177) and "'Happy' Marriages May Just Be Dull" mock Jake's comfortable relationship with Nancy.

Two of the clippings have a more particular relevance, urging readers to compare Jake's actions to those of his friends, Duddy Kravitz and Harry Stein. By doing so, they observe the vast distance between Jake and his friends on the moral-ethical spectrum. The article "Instant Reducing Pills Contain Tapeworm" (139) details the scandal that makes Duddy rich. The press

⁷ Notably, Jake's responses to these headlines are contradictory. He laughs at the crippled boy (31) but sweeps the Times from the table when reading about world starvation (312).

⁸ One is in Time magazine and the other in the Times newspaper--perhaps a reminder of the "time" cancer patients have left to live.

clipping "Hitchcock Film Idea Behind Bid to Kill Starlet" (304) describes Harry's vendetta against an actress who scorned him. While Jake is not a model of virtue, his actions never equal Duddy's and Harry's blatant disregard for life in the name of profit or revenge. Other journal extracts provide a social context for Jake's trial at the Old Bailey. Spread throughout the narrative are headlines or references to articles about sex that provide a context for Jake's position as a defendant against charges of sexual misconduct. Esquire prints an article entitled "Is Your Kid Brother a Homosexual?" (85), Saturday Night magazine features "French Canadian Attitudes to Sex" (40), and Mayfair magazine includes "'Quest', a survey on the sex life of single girls in London today" (61), while yet another issue boasts: "THE NUDEST NATHALIE DELON. SUSAN STRASBERG STRIPS. SCRUMPTIOUS SALLY'S ALLEY IS A SENSUAL PLACE TO BE" (59). Jake's indecent pinch is a minor offence in comparison to the actions of Paul Crane who, standing trial for rape, boasts of his many sexual affairs in an Express piece entitled "My Life and Loves: By Air Canada Steward on Sex Charge" (58). These press clippings recall Jake's appeal to Justice Beal to note that a sexual revolution is taking place outside the courtroom walls. While readers are urged to consider the context of all evidence before passing judgment, these journal extracts warn readers against allowing the absurdity and immorality of the modern social context to override their moral and rational deliberations. The second category of press clippings balances the first: on one hand, readers are

tempted by the headlines to qualify Jake's behaviour by comparing it to the actions occurring in his society; but, on the other hand, readers must note that Jake's penchant for measuring his happiness against the scale of human misery that is spelled out in the newspapers is ludicrous. Indeed, just as it is irrational for Jake to feel guilty for his happy and comfortable lifestyle because there is misery in the world, so too is it irrational for him to expect to be exonerated for his crimes simply because there are greater offenders in society. Readers must, then, establish their own middle ground and decide to what extent the modern social context should be allowed to qualify private morality.⁹

While the inclusion of journal excerpts provides evidence of an absurd modern world, the design strategy of repetition reveals the inner workings of Jake's mind. Combining memory, imagination and history, Jake's private ruminations centre on the Holocaust and depict his growing preoccupation with his failure to act against its injustice and the consequent creation of the Horseman fantasy.¹⁰ Jake admits that he is exhilarated by the trial

⁹ In each of Richler's major novels, readers are invited to compare the main protagonists' behaviour to the failures of their communities: recall the comparison between Noah and such failures as Schloime, Max, and Wolf; or between Duddy and Macpherson, Cuckoo, and Friar. Readers are asked if success within this context is success enough to satisfy their own moral codes.

¹⁰ Jake's obsession with the unresolved injustices of the holocaust is revealed in his attic aerie--a symbol of his mind--which is filled both with paraphernalia depicting Nazi terrorism, and with the journals and the equestrian equipment of the Horseman who, Jake imagines, stalks the earth to wreak vengeance.

"because at last the issues had been joined.... After years of waiting somebody had at last come to ask him, Jacob Hersh, husband, father, son, house owner, investor, sybarite, and film fantasy-spinner, for an accounting" (76-77, [257]).¹¹ Jake, convinced that his happiness is undeserved, repeatedly victimizes himself with his guilt-ridden imagination: "in Jake's Jewish nightmare, they come. Into his house. The extermination officers seeking out the Jew vermin. Ben is ... heaved out the window. Molly [is] ... flung against the brick fireplace. Sammy is dispatched with a pistol" (65). Variations of this nightmare recur throughout the narrative. When cavorting with his family, "he would all at once be riddled with anxiety. *Why am I being allowed to enjoy myself?*... Jake would scrutinize the surrounding woods for advancing Nazi troops. Search the grass for poisonous snakes. Rake the skies for falling planets" (252). During an evening out with Nancy, "he would suddenly, unexpectedly, clamour for the bill. *Gas leak.... GAS LEAK!* ... Sammy and Molly. Sprawled lifeless on their beds" (255). Jake's guilt extends beyond the Nazi death camps; he awaits a host of "Injustice Collectors": "concentration camp survivors. The emaciated millions of India. The starvelings of Africa.... The thalidomide babies, the paraplegics. The insulted, the injured" (76-77, [257]). However, it is the repeated images conveyed by war crime

¹¹ Here and throughout, page references enclosed in square brackets indicate that the quotation, though not exact, is repeated here with variation, often minute variation.

testimony that echo tellingly throughout the narrative. Eva Taube notes that

a series of overlapping images intermittently flash through the narrative like camera shots repeated and relocated in various contexts in the novel, images of human beings reduced to impotent victims. The repetition functions emotively to heighten the shock, and intellectually, through the sheer restatement, to induce a mood of brooding and thoughtful contemplation.¹²

Jake repeatedly recalls portions of actual transcripts of post-war investigations: children recording their names in their own blood on the barracks walls; women forced to drink from latrine water; and bodies beaten, gnawed by rats, or thrown into pits of seething human fat (64-55, 147, 225-226). He is particularly haunted by the ominous exchange between an officer of the court and a witness: "'Mengele cannot have been there all the time.' 'In my opinion, always. Night and day.'" (65, 126, 147, 225, 226, 309). Wilfred Cude describes these dull unchanging phrases as "the devil's own measure, timing tick, tock, tick, the relentless beat of damnation, counting against Mengele on the metronome of hell."¹³

¹² Eva Taube, review of "St. Urbain's Horseman" by Mordecai Richler, Canadian Literature 96 (Spring 1983) 183.

¹³ Wilfred Cude, "The Golem as Metaphor for Art: The Monster Takes Meaning in St. Urbain's Horseman," Journal of Canadian Studies 12:2 (1977) 53.

Ofelia Cohn-Sfetcu observes that, although Jake is able to pass hard judgments, he "is unable to act accordingly. And it is this very incapacity that obliges him to use Joey as his self-justifying image ... to have him perform acts he himself should perform."¹⁴ As Jake reflects on the injustices of the world, his cousin's challenge--spoken many years ago in Montreal--echoes in his ears: "'What are you going to do about it?'" (113, 217, 309, 381). The repetition of this rally cry taunts Jake's inability to act on his professed hatreds.¹⁵ In response, Jake fashions, from the memories of his cousin, a doppelganger that embodies his desire to enact revenge for the horrors of the holocaust.¹⁶ By repeatedly summoning visions of the Horseman--embellishing a little each time--Jake creates the avenger he needs to temper the guilt and fear which threatens to overwhelm him. In a sense, Jake writes, directs, films, edits, and privately screens this fantasy action-adventure movie. As he replays it in his imagination, the Horseman reaches epic proportions in Jake's life. In his mind's eye, Jake often sees Joey "cantering on a magnificent Pleven stallion. Galloping,

¹⁴ Ofelia Cohn-Sfetcu, "Of Self, Temporal Cubism, and Metaphor: Mordecai Richler's St. Urbain's Horseman," International Fiction Review 3:1 (1976) 33.

¹⁵ When he bumps into a middle-aged lady in Germany, he apologizes "instead of following through with his shoulder and stamping on her. Hatred was a discipline. He would have to train harder, that's all" (218).

¹⁶ Joey's function as a doppelganger is emphasized by the fact that Jake is often mistaken for Joey since they share the same initials. Furthermore, Jake can never catch up to his cousin and when, finally, he no longer needs him, he learns of his death.

thundering. Planning fresh campaigns, more daring maneuvers" (36, [217], 257). Jake is convinced that Joey is stalking Mengele. He repeatedly envisions the Horseman straining to find the "unmarked road in the jungle, between Puerto San Vicente and the border fortress of Carlos Antonio Lopez, on the Parana River" (11, 36). Later, he embellishes the scene:

Neighing, the stallion rears, obliging the Horseman to dig his stirrups in. Eventually he slows. Still in the highlands, emerging from the dense forest to scan the scrub below, he strains to find the unmarked road that winds into the jungle, between Puerto San Vicente and the border fortress of Carlos Antonio Lopez (147, [380]).

The design strategy of repetition gives readers access to Jake's private fears and the means by which he deals with them. It also develops a key aspect of Jake's--indeed, of modern society's--moral dilemma: how can one fashion a moral conscience in a post-Holocaust world? The numerous contexts of Jake's action and inaction become increasingly difficult to reconcile; readers find that, in making their judgments, they must factor in a consideration not only of modern society, but of personal circumstances and world history. As Neil Besner notes:

in Richler's postwar landscape, the moral climate is so charged with contradictions that his characters are confounded in their attempts to make choices or to live by their values. Richler always challenges his

characters to define a moral stance and live by it, and he always indicts them if or when they fail to do either. But his characters' morality is also tested within a larger social vision, and Richler is never afraid to create a world that is more complex and more ambiguous than any of his characters can understand.¹⁷

The repetition of Jake's Horseman fantasies also underscores the importance of weighing all evidence equally in the attempt to reach the truth. Jake does not. Cude remarks that in order to discover the difference between Jake's fantasy of a defender and the reality of the golem--a clay creature, a "body without a soul" (224, 309)--"we must examine the facts that Jake left behind on his mental cutting-room floor."¹⁸ Readers witness as, time and again, Jake ignores evidence against Joey in order to cast his cousin in a favourable light. For instance, Jake believes that Joey was run out of Montreal by Uncle Abe or by a gang of thugs avenging the beating of a French-Canadian boy; he cannot accept the more probable explanation that Joey was driven away by a jealous husband. Later, Jake champions Joey, insisting, on the slimmest evidence, that, in addition to stalking Mengele, Joey fought in the Spanish Civil War and helped to liberate Jerusalem (211). Meanwhile, others accuse Joey of brutality,

¹⁷ Neil Besner, Afterword to A Choice of Enemies by Mordecai Richler (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-NCL, 1993) 263.

¹⁸ Cude, "Golem", 64.

thievery, lying, polygamy, extortion and blackmail, drug smuggling and trafficking.¹⁹ Although most of the evidence against Joey--like the evidence for him--is circumstantial or hearsay, it provides grounds for a reasonable doubt that readers are likely to concede long before Jake does. However, in the final pages of the novel, Jake recognizes that he, like Aaron, worships a false god when he asks himself: "what if the Horseman was a distorting mirror and we each took the self-justifying image we required of him?" (382). The fact that Jake learns to evaluate and to adjust his perspective of the Horseman suggests to readers that the process of gathering and weighing evidence, factoring in social, personal, and historical contexts, arriving at a judgment based on these deliberations, and acting upon it, is not as impossible a task as it may seem. In fact, another narrative device, mirroring, indicates that although the line between moral and immoral behaviour can be a fine one, it is unmistakably drawn.

Harry, like Joey, is a distorting mirror--a real-life doppelganger who is the epitome of Jake's bad qualities taken to an extreme. Zailig Pollock observes: "over and over again we see aspects of Jake reflected in Harry in an ugly, distorted manner. Things which in Jake seem neurotic, selfish, foolish, but

¹⁹ In this regard, Joey Hersh is a precursor to Solomon Gursky of Mordecai Richler's Solomon Gursky Was Here (Markham: Penguin, 1989).

basically likeable, become completely repulsive in Harry."²⁰ Significantly, the incident which led to the criminal charges laid against the two was a result of Harry impersonating Jake to lure a girl to the Hampstead house. The link between the two men is made through the design strategy of mirrors which reveals that Jake and Harry perform similar actions.²¹ Both Jake and Harry take petty vengeance on the people they resent. Jake takes action against a neighbour: "pretending to water the dahlia bed on his side of the fence, he directed a spray of murdering lime solution at Old Lady Dry Cunt's rhododendrons.... He'd teach her to write snotty notes about the noise his brash American children make in the garden" (22). The newly planted, unsupervised flower bed is mirrored in the unattended Silver Cloud Rolls Royce Harry spots late one night: "drifting past, ostensibly without purpose, Harry opened the knife in his mac pocket and ran it the length of the Rolls, walking on some distance before wheeling around to slash the body paint on the other side" (62). Similarly, both Jake and Harry intrude upon the private lives of associates. Jake, when invited for dinner at the Ormsby-Fletchers', snoops through their bathroom, scrutinizing the contents of the medicine chest and looking through the laundry hamper to find "Pamela's smalls. Intricately laced black panties, no more than a peekaboo web. A

²⁰ Zailig Pollock, "The Trial of Jake Hersh," Journal of Canadian Fiction 22 (1978) 100.

²¹ Jake calls Harry by his Yiddish name, Hershel, which is also a version of his own last name, thus confirming his role as doppelganger. Note that the similarity in names echoes that between Jake and Joey Hersh--the other doppelganger relationship.

spidery black bra, almost a filigree. You naughty thing, he thought" (153). Harry mirrors Jake's actions, rooting through the drawers of the house while Jake and Nancy are away:

It was a giggle, coming across Nancy's love letters in Jake's bottom desk drawer. ('...I never did that before, darling, not with any other man...') Oh, wasn't she the grand duchess!... Such transcendental thoughts! Such high-flown sentiments! As if she wasn't made like all the others, with the answer between her legs. (340)

Although these mirrors are designed to draw Jake and Harry into close association, still other mirrors prove that the two are worlds apart in terms of their motivation and the scope of their actions. Telephone calls form part of the repertoire of mischievous and selfish pranks of both Jake and Harry. When, early in their relationship, Nancy dates another man, Jake's jealousy overwhelms him and he telephones to interrupt the sexual encounter he fears is taking place. Nancy's date answered the phone, "listened, blanched. And hung up. 'Don't let it worry you,' Nancy said. 'It's a local pervert. He usually gives me a tinkle at this hour'" (182). Jake's embarrassing obsession is mirrored, with great distortion, in Harry's telephone calls. He harasses an innocently condescending actress by badgering her with obscene phone calls (187). He once phoned a bomb threat into a boat show at Olympia, explaining in a Latin accent that it was "a protest against the government's Cuban policy" (300). He pulls the same trick when Jake flies to Cannes, forcing the plane to

make an emergency landing in Paris (297). But while Jake acts to avoid losing someone he loves, Harry lashes out against what he cannot have--an actress who does not offer respect, people who can afford yachts, and Jake who will not repay Joey's "loan". Jake's desperation endears him to Nancy; the outcome of his prank is marriage plans. Harry's phone pranks have serious, wide-reaching consequences. He brags about the reaction to his boat show prank: "'They took it seriously, you know. Old Khrushchev waving his shoe at the U.N. Castro in New York, raising hell. They didn't take any chances. Police cars. Fire trucks. The lot" (300).²²

The attitudes which Jake and Harry appear to share prove to be grounded in two very different philosophies. Both men feel that they have missed out on something that the people around them have enjoyed. Jake feels that his generation was "always the wrong age. Ever observers, never participants" (75). Harry expresses a similar discontent: "Yes, yes indeed, everybody else, everywhere else was getting his.... Harry, born too late" (59). The difference lies in the things they want. Jake wants a moment in his life when he is forced to set his allegiances, to fight for something he believes in: he laments that his generation had lived through "the Spanish Civil War, World War II, the holocaust, Hiroshima, the Israeli War of Independence,

²² Ambulances and fire trucks await Jake's plane at Harry's second bomb scare. They immediately determine the hoax, but, as the stewardess says (as Harry observes of the boat show officials): "'we can't take chances'" (294). Harry obviously can.

McCarthyism, Korea ... Vietnam and the drug culture, with impunity" (75). Harry, in contrast, wants a crack at "girls with the longest legs imaginable, lubricant girls, rolling nylons on like condoms. Girls snuggling into bras and rising from the bath, towel ready to drop" (59). When each gets the wished for--albeit modified--opportunity, it is Jake who is able to act. He sees the trial as his moment to act and he believes that he did not behave badly, that he remained a friend to Harry (378). In contrast, when Jake takes Harry to a party, "Harry, once thrust on the girls he longed for, could not stitch together a coherent sentence. He was either gratuitously coarse without any redeeming wit or stunned into silence. Finally, Jake rescued him" (313).

Pollock concludes that, through the design strategy of mirrors, "Richler is telling us that the seeds of everything Harry has become are already present in Jake."²³ However, as well as suggesting how similar the two characters' actions and opinions may be, these mirrors stress that the differences between Jake and Harry are instantly recognizable. Furthermore, readers recognize that while Harry's upbringing and environment may help explain his behaviour, it can never excuse it. So, although they stand side by side in the prisoner's dock in Number One Courtroom at the Old Bailey, Justice Beal clearly sees the distance between the moral characters of Jake and Harry. He chastises Jake for what he terms his folly in forming an association with Harry: "'You have been a confounded fool,

²³ Pollock, "Trial" 100.

Hersh'" (369). Then he berates Harry: "'You are a humbug, Stein, and a troublemaker of the most reprehensible sort.... you are a menace, a persistent public menace'" (370). Jake is fined; Harry is jailed. The design strategy of mirrors reassures readers by illustrating that although there is often a fine line between the essentially good and the essentially bad, it is not impossible to draw.²⁴

As the narrative unfolds, readers are led to see that despite the fact that one must be conscious of the social, personal, and historical contexts of all actions, defining and acting on one's moral position is not, in Richler's view, an overwhelming task. The overall structure of the novel suggests that for all the chaos and absurdity of Jake's public and private contexts, his own path to self-knowledge is a deliberate and systematic journey. The complicated, often disjointed, flashbacks, which range from Jake's recollections of his recent escapades in London to his memories of youth and adolescence in Montreal, are bridled by the design strategies which control the overall structure of the novel. Jake believes that the trial neatly pulls the episodes of his life into relation: "Jake's past

²⁴ Recall Moey Hanover's twisted truths: years ago his zeyda assured him that if a man holds a sword out of a third floor window and flying past comes another man, and he stabs him, the swordsman is not necessarily guilty of murder. This "enabled Moey to grasp at an early age that truth was a many-splendored thing; it had nuances" (246). He uses these nuances to pardon his transgressions, technically sidestepping the precise definition of adultery. He may of course be fooling himself and his wife; however, he does not fool readers. Yes, the truth has nuances, but some lies are glaring.

... assumed nifty contours. A meaningful symmetry. The Horseman, Doktor Mengele, Harry, Ingrid, all frog-marching him to where he was to stand so incongruously, stupefied and inadequate, on trial in Courtroom Number One at the Old Bailey" (56). The controlling structure allows readers to perceive, as Jake does, the nifty contours, meaningful symmetry, and sense of progression towards an ultimate judgment.

A sense of definite progression is achieved by the closing lines of each of the novel's four sections--a design strategy used effectively in The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz. Like an attorney attempting to build a case from fragments of testimony, evidence and documents, Jake draws conclusions from his disjointed flashbacks. The final lines of the first section confirm readers' suspicions that Jake is preoccupied not with the happenings at the Old Bailey, but with his inner tribunal. He reads from Samuel Johnson's Diary:

' "When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of the body and disturbances of the mind very near to madness, which I hope He that made me will suffer to extenuate many faults and exercise many deficiencies.' " (78)

This quotation signals the end of opening remarks and the beginning of the true trial.²⁵

²⁵ In this sense, this line functions in much the same way as Cuckoo Kaplan's declaration "'I was just going to get this show on the road'"--the closing line of the first section in The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz.

The closing lines of the following three sections underscore the significance of the Horseman to Jake's private life. By capping each set of recollections with an observation about his relationship with Joey, Jake recognizes his dependence on the Horseman. Section two ends with the observation that "without realizing it, Jake had become Cousin Joey's advocate" (144). The third section closes with Jake's recognition that Joey "had become his moral editor.... he tried above all to please the Horseman. For somewhere he was watching, judging. Once Cousin Joey's advocate, he was now his acolyte" (258). The final section of the novel suggests that Jake finds a median position between becoming the Horseman and letting him die in his mind's eye:

Once in his attic aerie, he retrieved the Horseman's journal from the cupboard, found the page where he had written 'died July 20, 1967, in an air crash,' crossed it out, and wrote in over it, 'presumed dead.' Then he returned to bed, and fell into a deep sleep, holding Nancy to him." (384)

Unlike Duddy, Jake overcomes his blindness and sees how his life has been dominated by the Horseman and, through the trial at the Old Bailey, relinquishes his dependence on him. He discovers that "his private destiny is not to seek revenge, but to reaffirm his commitment to moral values infinitely fragile, yet viable: justice, conscience, honour, dignity, accountability."²⁶

²⁶ Taube 186.

The progression suggested by the part divisions is tempered by the circular narration. The novel begins *in medias res* and moves full circle, "presenting over the last four chapters the circumstances that engendered the frantic situation introduced at the first."²⁷ This circularity is emphasized by framing devices. The narrative opens with Jake waking in the middle of the night and climbing to his attic aerie and closes with him descending from the aerie and going back to sleep. Metaphorically, the interim development takes place in the attic aerie, that symbol of Jake's troubled mind. His private deliberations keep pace with the proceedings at the Old Bailey. He climbs to the aerie on the evening of the first day of trial and descends after both Justice Beal's and his own verdicts are rendered. This circular format is significant on several levels. First, it symbolizes Jake's recapitulating state of mind and his inability to proceed in his life until he has resolved the tensions between his past and his present.²⁸ Taube notes that the "spiritual quest incorporates a circular structure ... implying the cyclical rhythm of eternal search."²⁹ Scrutinizing his life, Jake recognizes this circular pattern. For instance, he sees a connection between himself and his son. "Circles

²⁷ Cude, "Golem" 66.

²⁸ This pattern recalls Noah's movement in meaningless circles, unable to overcome his entrapment without self-knowledge that is mature enough to accept the community that stifles him.

²⁹ Taube 184.

completed, he thought" (13), upon realizing that he once mocked his parents' accent the same way his son mocks his. He also recognizes his father's actions in his own. As his father had when he was young, Jake loads up his car with treats and goes to meet his family at the summer cottage, thinking: "You know what life is, Yankel? Tell me, you're so smart. A circle. A little *kikeleh*" (314). Obviously, the circular pattern is evident to readers only when the novel is complete. In this respect, the novel's structure mimics a trial situation: it is only upon the conclusion of the proceedings that the jury is closest to its fullest possible awareness of the truth; and it is only after the defense and the prosecution summarize their cases in their closing remarks that the jury is free to deliberate the verdict.

When Jake tells Nancy about the criminal charges that have been laid against him, he prefaces his account with an analogy: "'When I was in university, we used to play something called the Values Game. We set ourselves moral dilemmas'" (346). For example, he explains, you ask yourself and one another whether or not you would risk your life in an attempt to save a drowning stranger: "'there is nobody else on the bridge. So if you choose to walk away and pretend you haven't seen him, nobody will know but you. What do you do?'" (347). Earlier, when Nancy had protested Jake's involvement with Harry, he had defended his actions with a similar metaphor: "'Harry's a street accident and I just happen to be a witness. What should I do, flee without handing in my name?'" (306). Jake's questions--What do you do?

What should I do?--are, for him, no longer hypothetical. For the first time in his life, his moral predicament is actual and he must act on his convictions: "the trial, by giving Jake the opportunity to act, for which he has been waiting all his life, gives him the opportunity to define himself as well."³⁰ As jurors, readers are playing the Values Game, attempting to decide what they would do given Jake's predicament. The other verdicts are in: Justice Beal pronounces Jake guilty of indecent assault but does not sentence him to jail; Jake finds himself guilty of inaction and agrees to direct Luke's latest script, in essence placing himself on parole.

Finally, readers must respond to Jake. The design strategies have led them to understand both the enormity of the task--not only of establishing a code of moral values but also of situating a particular character, a fictional life, within it--and the relative ease with which it can be accomplished. When faced with the defendants, it is enough for Justice Beal to call Jake a fool and Harry a menace and to penalize each accordingly. When Luke asks Jake what he believes in, it is enough for Jake to say "'I believe in theirs and ours. Dr. Johnson, yes. Dr. Leary, no'" (251). And, in the last analysis, readers too may simply respond guilty or not guilty, yes or no to Jake Hersch, to Harry Stein, and to St. Urbain's Horseman. But the experience of the text has shown readers that this simple rendering of a verdict must be supported by the weight of conviction. And this conviction must

³⁰ Pollock, "Trial" 93.

be grounded in a personal code of moral values that is by no means easy to achieve.

CONCLUSION

Wayne Booth asserts that modern novelists "feel an inseparable connection between art and morality ... their artistic vision consists, in part, of a judgment on what they see, and they would ask us to share that judgment as part of the vision."¹ When questioned about the serious themes underlying his comic satires, Mordecai Richler insists that "'there are moral judgments made in all these books and it's not frivolous'."² However, Richler does more than declare a vision of modern society and invite readers to embrace that vision. His novels are less concerned with the ultimate judgment--the final moral approval or condemnation--than with the method of deliberation, the process of formulating a fair and viable moral code in modern society.

In Son of a Smaller Hero, The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, and St. Urbain's Horseman, Richler provokes moral responses from his readers while repeatedly indicating that stock replies and ready, simplistic categories fail to classify the vast range of complex human behaviour. This, according to Norman Friedman, is truly a moral undertaking, for "exploring the

¹ Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1961) 385.

² Earle Toppings, Canadian Writers on Tape: Mordecai Richler/Sinclair Ross 3. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, cassette tape, 1971.

complexities honestly is more moral than making rigid categories."³ Mark Schorer concurs, stating that "the technique of modern fiction ... achieves as its subject matter not some singleness, some topic or thesis, but the whole of modern consciousness. It discovers the complexity of the modern spirit, the difficulty of personal morality."⁴ Richler's novels do not simply tell stories; they create textual experiences through which readers are urged to explore the complexity of the modern spirit and the difficulty of personal morality and thereby to learn something of themselves. Wolfgang Iser explains that

the need for discernment stimulates a process of learning in the course of which one's own sense of judgment may come under scrutiny. Here we have a clear outline of the role of the reader, which is fulfilled through the continual instigation of attitudes and reflection on those attitudes.⁵

This process of instigating attitudes and urging continual reflection upon them is accomplished through Richler's skilful crafting of various design strategies. By emphasizing the choices available to the characters, by facilitating comparison with others in the fictional milieus, and by suggesting the sources of

³ Norman Friedman, Form and Meaning in Fiction (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1975) 165.

⁴ Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1948) 28.

⁵ Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns in Communication From Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 31-32.

the protagonists' failures, these strategies manipulate readers' imaginations and provoke them to formulate a moral position in relation to the text. When readers recognize these design strategies and become aware of their intellectual and emotional responses to them, they may draw conclusions about their own deliberation processes. Iser explains:

the reader is meant to become aware of ... his own tendency to link things together in consistent patterns, and indeed of the whole thought process that constitutes his relations with the world outside himself.... This means that the novel ... deliberately reveals the component parts of its narrative techniques, separating material to be presented from the forms that serve its presentation in order to provoke the reader into establishing for himself the connections between perception and thought.⁶

By deciphering the structural codes of the texts and recognizing the significance of their responses to them, readers--as Booth terms it--"collaborate" with the author. This, he declares, can be one of the most rewarding of all reading experiences: "To collaborate with the author by providing the source of an allusion or by deciphering a pun is one thing. But to collaborate with him by providing mature moral judgment is a far more exhilarating sport."⁷

⁶ Iser, Reader xiv.

⁷ Booth, Rhetoric 307.

Successful collaboration results in the realization of the intentions of the text by readers who accept their implied roles: "As the reader is manoeuvred into this position, his reactions-- ... prestructured by the written text--bring out the meaning of the novel; it might be truer to say that the meaning of the novel only materializes in these reactions, since it does not exist per se."⁸ Readers who seek to extract meaning from the text that is independent of their own reading experiences, or who read only to glean Richler's moral code, will be continually frustrated by their failures. Recall, for instance, Philip Toynbee's comment, quoted in the Introduction to this thesis: he complains that it is "quite impossible to detect the moral platform on which Mr. Richler is standing and from which his darts are launched."⁹ Richler's novels are not moral manifestos; they do not preach a particular moral stance. Rather, as stated earlier, they are designed to encourage readers to consider the necessity of factoring morality into the equation of success in the modern world. By becoming aware of their moral positions in response to the fictional worlds they engage and then by realizing that the author has manoeuvred them there, readers certainly may make assumptions about Richler's own moral code: however, such speculation on authorial intention remains secondary to the

⁸ Iser, Reader 31-32.

⁹ Philip Toynbee, "Cocksure," rev. Mordecai Richler, Critical Views on Canadian Writers 6, ed. G. David Sheps (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1971) 108.

primary task of creating moral conscience and meaning in the text.

Wayne C. Booth concludes his study, The Rhetoric of Fiction, with the observation that the author, if he has performed his task well, makes his readers: "that is, makes them see what they have never seen before, moves them into a new order of perception and experience altogether."¹⁰ Similarly, it may be concluded that the function of the design strategies in Richler's texts is to draw readers, through fiction, into a new order of perception and experience.

¹⁰ Booth, Rhetoric 397-398.

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