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## Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!: Requiem for a Divided Country

*Mordecai Richler*

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**Mordecai Richler : Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!: Requiem for a Divided Country** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!: Requiem for a Divided Country:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Two languages, one headache By AspieVegan Most Americans pay little attention to Quebec, but the issue never really goes away. The absurd language laws merely embolden secessionists. I do not think Canada would survive a divorce. This has implications for the United States. We would gain several new States, but what if Florida, for example, announced it was now bilingual? 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By Barbara Lockwood Love Mordecai Richler's style of writing. This is more of a documentary of sorts 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Quebec for properly thoughtful beginners By ((Marco Buendia))) This book is now over twenty years old, and Mordechai Richler, better known for his novels, is dead. But it's an informative account of what it has meant to be a Canadian and a Quebecker, and a thoughtful one, during the postwar period. With an occasional referencing of Ashkenazic Jewish identity in the same labile circumstances. It's very much a personal account, written in a colloquial style, with no attempt to be scholarly, no attempt to be a professional pundit. Richler knew his native land well, and he clearly takes it very seriously without becoming humorously obsessed with it. Like so many Canadians who have become noised abroad, he's spent a lot of time in the USA, a necessary premise for explaining Canada to Americans, I'm afraid. He's sympathetic and skeptical of the various players. Nothing is glozed over: not the hypocrisy and snobbishness of many or most of the Anglo-Canadians as they perpetrated a low intensity Jim Crow assault on the Canadiens, not the rancor and Antisemitism

displayed by some of Gallic. I rarely laugh when someone is trying to be funny, but I laughed frequently, and hard, while reading this book. Of course, I'm not sure that Richler always meant to be funny, in the usual American sense. It was, and is, a bad situation. Now, with Trump and his Republican followers about to take over the USA, readers may be even gloomier about this sort of thing than we've been for a long time.

A humorous look at Quebec's movement toward independence from Canada, remarking upon the Draconian language laws imposed on English-speaking Quebecois, the economic problems posed by the movement, and the troubles with blind nationalism.

From Publishers Weekly  
Novelist-screenwriter Richler, a native of Montreal, predicts a mass exodus of English speakers if a majority of Quebecers opt for independence from Canada in an October 1992 referendum, creating a separate, debt-ridden, predominantly French-speaking nation. If the separatists win, it will be a sad day for Canada, he asserts in this scathing critique of the Francophone Quebecois nationalist movement. Far from being oppressed, he declares, the French-speaking Quebecers constitute a privileged, xenophobic group that promotes divisiveness and imposes absurdly restrictive laws designed to preserve French as the language of the workplace and public discourse. Recalling his upbringing in a working-class Jewish community, Richler charges that from its inception French-Canadian nationalism has been tainted by racism and anti-Semitism. This is a profound, disturbing look at a crisis that could give birth to the world's 18th-largest country. BOMC alternate. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Kirkus  
Quebec-born Richler (Solomon Gursky Was Here, 1990, etc.) undertakes a backgrounder to that province's independence movement, with several large flashes of illuminating absurdity about the passionate Quebecois. A referendum will be held this October to determine whether Quebec should ask for independence from Canada. The province has already added a raft of debatable laws to its books, such as one that forbids English-language or bilingual commercial signs on Montreal's streets. Today, Richler tells us, wary shopkeepers welcome customers "in a fail-safe combination of English and French, singing out, 'Hi, bonjour.'" Moreover, zealots who run Montreal's French Catholic school board shocked even separatists "with a demand that immigrant students who were caught shooting the breeze in English in the schoolyards should be severely punished." And so it goes, with even intellectual Francophones as blinkered and narrow-minded as peasants in a Marcel Pagnol comedy. Actually, Richler explains, 40 percent of Canadians are of neither French nor English extraction; they are of Polish, Greek, Ukrainian, and Italian descent, with growing Chinese, Sikh, African, and Central American enclaves, who will soon form a majority of Canada's populace. Richler also laments Canada's "functional but nondescript" cities, the demolition of its oldest buildings and their replacement by entrenched ugliness of "the utmost banality." He offers a lively description of the Mohawk Indians' uprising against the incursion of a golf course into their burial grounds--an uprising that forced a mortified Quebec to call in the Canadian army--and he sees independence as diminishing Quebec into "being a folkloric society. A place that people come from. Ireland without that country's genius or terrible beauty." Unlike most of Richler, largely for Canadians; for a look at Canada that's more accessible to those south of the border, try Jan Morris's *O Canada* (p. 307). -- Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.