A Thematic Study of ‘St. Urbain’s Horseman’,
‘The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz’ and
‘A Choice of Enemies’

Norman Ravvin in his Critical essay ‘House of Words’ says that there has been a startling lack of scholarship about Jewish Canadian literature that pays attention to the cultural and contextual specificity of Judaism. Outstanding Jewish Canadian writers like Mordecai Richler and Leonard Cohen have inspired sustained critical attention, ‘but largely as nomads divorced from the broader background of Jewish culture and writing in Canada’ (qtd. in McCullough, 193).

In his 1989 study of Jewish Canadian writing, Michael Greenstein describes the early invisibility of Jewish writing in the Canadian literary scene. Ravvin, similarly but more specifically points at Canadian literary criticism, which historically has tended to ignore Jewish specificity while excavating and acknowledging other literary ethnicities. Ravvin’s another critical essay ‘What sort of Home is the past?’ focuses on Holocaust awareness and memory in the writings of Eli Mandel, Leonard Cohen and
Mordecai Richler. Ravvin says that the literary efforts of these writers are sophisticated attempts to bring the ongoing impact of the Holocaust into words.

'They do so not by directly representing the horrifying events of the past but by indirectly conveying a shock of recognition’

(qtd. in McCullough, 194).

Mordecai Richler's protagonists are dominated by the wish to redress the tragic injustice of the Holocaust and restore self-respect and potency to the Jewish people. They also experience an overpowering impulse to dissociate themselves from their heritage, to sever their ties with their tradition and escape persecution and suffering. Richler's sympathies lie with minorities and his novels reveal his great concern for his own people. Most of his novels embrace themes of persecution, escape from the ghetto, feeling of alienation, fear of survival, a bitter sense of isolation and the archetypal search for identity. An attempt is made in this chapter to analyze the thematic structure of Mordecai Richler's three novels - St. Urbain's Horseman, The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz and A Choice of Enemies. The problems and prospects of a minority community, namely the
Jewish immigrants in the changing Canadian society focusing on the theme of search for identity are discussed in this chapter.

Jake Hersh, the protagonist of *St. Urbain's Horseman* fears and hates the Nazis. He is obsessed with the twin dreams of victimization and revenge, allow him to escape it. The impact of Holocaust is reflected in this novel. Richler makes an attempt to confront the moral issues produced by the Holocaust in Jews who did not experience the Holocaust directly. Jake Hersh, the mediocre film director has settled down with his beautiful wife Nancy and three children in London. In spite of his happy marriage with a gentile, his mind revolves round his cousin Joey the Horseman, the trial going on at old Baily where Jake is charged for rape, his mediocre career, his suspicion about Nancy's infidelity and his nostalgia about his thwarted trip to New York. How he overcomes his mental trauma forms the story of the novel *St. Urbain's Horse Man*. However Jake establishes his identity, discovers his own self after encountering with the realities of life.

Richler takes up 'Canadian anti-Semitism' in *St. Urbain's Horseman*. Jake Hersh cannot overcome the trauma of anti-Jewish atrocities in Montreal. He recalls his childhood experience.
On St. Urbain, stores shut down early and hardly anybody went out after dark. A special prayer was said at the Galicianer Shul, people sat by their windows waiting

(St. Urbain’s Horseman, 126).

In Jake’s nightmare,

they came into his house. The extermination officers seeking out the Jewish Vermin, but seizes by the legs like a chicken and heaved out of the window, his brains spilling to the terrace. Molly raised in the air .......to be flung against the brick fireplace. Sammy is dispatched with a pistol

(Ibid, 67).

With his cousin Joey to protest against anti-Semitism and directs the Jews to fight against the haters of the Jewish community, the Jewish leaders betray him to the anti-Semitic group. Jake holds uncle Abe responsible for this and soon discovers that the terrible tragedy of the Holocaust has not changed uncle Abe’s response towards the haters of the Jews. On the other hand, uncle Abe thinks that any confrontation with the French Canadians will seriously affect the Jewish immigrants. He is sad that the younger generations have severed ties with the Jewish tradition and alien themselves with various liberal groups. He wants an understanding between the Jews and the
Jew-haters. The alliance of the younger generation with various liberal forces in Canada seems to reflect a desperate need to belong to form a part of a group which will define their identity.

They believe that their relationships with the liberal intellectual gentiles, based on their mutual interest in liberal causes, will eliminate racial hostility and hatred towards Jews, American liberalism becomes an attractive model for the young Jewish intellectuals, such as Jake Hersh who emerge from the ghetto (Brenner, Assimilation and Assertion, 76).

Jake's dream about his conquest of America is shattered when he has to face a trial in London for sexual indecencies that he has not committed. He is refused entry to the United States and is sent back to Canada. He is very much disillusioned with the American Liberalism.

He realizes now that the American dream which has shaped his life is false, and that his faith in American justice and equality is as insane as that of the old sick survivor of the Holocaust (Ibid, 95).
At once Jake embarks upon creating a new myth out of the raw material of the life of his Cousin Joey, who is a superhuman figure of authority and heroism and a Jewish avenger who will right wrongs and punish evil doers. The fantasy of Jake Hersh originates in an irreconcilable emotional conflict. He is dominated by the wish to redress the tragic injustice of the Holocaust and restore self-respect to the people of his community. He experiences an impulse to sever his ties from his tradition and escapes persecution and suffering. Metaphorically, the journeys that Richler's protagonists undertake are the quest for the resolution of their conflicting emotional needs. Once the quest is completed and the Holocaust is avenged they will be able to assume an identity totally distinct from that of the Jewish impotent Victim.

In St. Urbain's Horseman Jake's aborted trip to New York symbolizes the futility of the Jewish Fantasy to become an all-American Liberal. Jake's trip to Israel in search of the Horseman becomes an example of his inability to make his fantasy come true. Jake's journey to Israel resembles the search of the narrator for uncle Melech in A.M. Klein's The second scroll. The nephew in Klein's novel follows his uncle to Israel hoping that the journey in Melech's foot steps will lead him to a new understanding of himself as a Jew in the post-Holocaust world. Melech leaves a posthumous
message of hope for the rebirth of the Jewish people in the wake of the dreadful incident in Israel. But the message left by the Horseman for Jake is entirely different. Unlike Melech, Joey finds Israel as complacent and indifferent about the Holocaust as the rest of the world.

At the age of twenty, Jake Hersh tells his father that he must leave Montreal for New York since “It's time I found out who I am” (St. Urbain's Horseman,89). He feels that he must be transplanted to a new place to establish his own identity. Jake bubbles with self-confidence that he would certainly shine as a man and a film Director in New York, a heaven on earth. He has a fire in him, which is fuelled by his parents who are longing to send their son to the neighbouring giant America. On the day of departure, Jake proudly says that he is leaving for his spiritual home. Though Jake's father briefs about the advantages of going to New York, it is really Jake's dream to become popular and rich by directing films. But destiny plots against Jake's desire and he could not even enter New York, the empire of his dreams and ambition. In Jake's blissful fantasy life, New York is the answer to all his needs; not only is New York the fabulous center of arts where he will be discovered as an artist and establish himself as a famous movie producer but, also the big city will provide an escape from his present life in the Montreal Jewish ghetto.

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Jake wants to escape from the Jewish ghetto because he could not tolerate the suffocating atmosphere of the world of his parents and grandparents. He resembles the protagonists of Richler's other novels who have a thirst for liberation from the ghetto and a longing for proving their own selves by unfolding their talents. This self-confidence or over-confidence to say makes the heroes march on the road of success. Some succeed and some fail in their endeavour but Jake Hersh's desires and dreams are shattered to pieces when he is denied entry into New York. He had the perception that Canada is an alien country where his people have resorted to so many tactics in order to make a survival in a hostile world. They should endure the bitter reality of anti-Semitism, which excludes them from Canadian society and enclosed them within the invisible walls of the ghetto. Jake is totally carried away by the stories narrated by his family members about America. He always dreams of the United States. 'Across the border, to the sources of light' (Ibid, 97). Jake honestly believes that his future prosperity, his source of livelihood, the prospect of becoming a number one director.... all depends on his undertaking a journey to New York. He can establish his identity and stand on his own legs as per his father's advice only in that dreamland. He is totally broken down, when his trip to New York
is thwarted on the way by the immigration officers. Right from Jake’s college days at McGill, he has nurtured hopes of settling down at New York. The search for identity spirit was sprouted in Jake’s heart even as a student and never a minute passed without the thought of New York.

New York, New York was my heart’s desire.

If only he thought, lying on his bed smoking,

I can raise the fare. And money to keep me for a month (Ibid, 86).

Jake Hersh begs for money from his father and uncles and finally uncle Abe lends him two hundred Dollars. But nothing could help him to fulfil his heart’s throbbing desire. He is suspected as the black listed Joey Hersh. He tries to convince the immigration officers that he is not the ‘Hersh’ they are looking for: But they turned a deaf ear to what all he says. His dreams are shattered when he is interrogated sarcastically and he is forced to return to Montreal by the next train. Though Jake wants to free himself from the ghetto, he is very much a Jew in all aspects. For him, ‘Judaism is more than a religion. It is a way of life (kolatch,1). When the immigrant officer enters his religion as ‘Hebrew’ in the quintuplet, Jake retorts,

“It says here..... religion ‘Hebrew’.

I clearly remember saying Jewish” (Ibid, 104).
The officer however makes correction in the statement. This shows Jake’s faith and affinity towards his religion. He wants to establish his Jewish identity here. But before leaving the immigration office, he answers to a sarcastic question of the officer.....

“Canada’s no Joke. We’re the world’s leading producer of Uranium. Walter pigeons was born in this Country” (Ibid, 109).

Jake Hersh is proud of saying that he is a Canadian. He says that he admires things Canadian and always listens to C.B.C. Jake Hersh, though ventures to go to New York, for his better future, he is very much a Canadian. The amalgamation of Canadian and Jewish identity is seen in Jake’s character. Jake’s searching for the dual identity forms the theme of St. Urbain’s Horseman. The ambivalent feeling of the author who wants to be a Jew as well as a Canadian is reflected in Jake’s character.

Jake tries to free himself from his fears by adopting the gentile way of life and settles down in London. Yet in spite of these efforts, his conflicting attitude towards the non-Jewish world stops him from total assimilation into the gentile society, and intensifies his anxiety and uneasiness about his position in the non-Jewish environment. He has the feeling that he is an
alienated Jew in spite of his happy marriage to a gentile woman. The experience of the trial enables Jake to understand himself and Harry. The magistrate points out Jake's restlessness thus.

"Through folly, and sheer egoism, perhaps, you have formed an association with a man of obvious disreputable character, placing your family, and your property in jeo parody. How in god's name could you form an association with Stein in the first place?"

(Ibid, 420).

Joey, the Horseman dies during the trial. Jake's experience of the trial together with Joey's death leads Jake to understand that the fantasy of the Horseman avenging the Jewish victims of the Holocaust actually reflects his own need of potency and security and his own need to avenge the 'betrayals' that he has suffered. The depression prevailing in the mind of Jake Hersh is revealed on many occasions in the novel

Young too late, old too soon.......the plaintive story of his American generation. Conceived in the depression, but never to taste its bitterness first hand, they had actually contrived to sail through the Spanish Civil War, World War II, the holocaust, Hiroshima, the Israeli War of Independence, McCarthyism, Korea,
and latterly, Vietnam and the drug culture, with impunity. Always the wrong age. Ever observers, never participants. The whirl wind else where

(Ibid, 80).

Jake Hersh feels sorry for the children of his community who are forbidden to play soft ball on Hatcher's field because of roaming gangs of French Canadian toughs. Richler's advocating of his own community, and the depression of the Jewish youth are brought to the fore. Jake who fails in his attempt to migrate to Canada, escapes to London. He feels that he cannot shine in Canada which has a culturally barren environment. He is sure that he cannot establish his identity in Canada. His settling down in London with his beautiful wife and three children does not bring him satisfaction. He constantly compares himself with Luke and suffers from an inferiority complex. He feels alienated in the midst of his dear ones. He mars his reputation by his involvement in the stein's matter who has raped a German girl. He is tried at the old Bailey and the mental trauma of Jake is such that he cannot be consoled by anybody. The sense of alienation is revealed through Jake's words.

"All the same I've managed to remain

an alienated Jew (Ibid, 14).
He suffers from an identity crisis too. His unconscious identification with the history of Jewish persecution generates the feeling of isolation in Jake Hersh. Though he is united to a gentile woman in a happy wedlock, he pleads guilty for not preserving the Jewish tradition by violating its rules and regulation. A conservative Jew should never marry a gentile. Though Jake feels lonely in the midst of his loving family members, he feels confident about his survival in the sophisticated Canadian society.

"...I paid 15,000 not to direct a fun film, made love to my wife on crisp clean sheets, sent my progeny to private schools, worried about corpulence gained through over indulgence and play hours lost though over infirmity ... While the rich got richer and the poor poorer, I survived nicely' (Ibid, 82).

Jake Hersh has self-satisfaction about his present state of survival but at the same time he feels that he is missing something in his life. In the closing chapter of the novel, Jake realizes that he has confused between good and evil. He feels so much for his association with Harry who is the sole cause of humiliation in the court during the trial. Jake thinks that he has abandoned the authentic image of Joey, the avenger, for the false and corrupt image of Harry. Jake considers the trial at Bailey, a penalty for
abandoning truth and clinging to images of decency and false hood. He compares himself to the Biblical character Aaron, the brother of Moses who betrayed the latter by making the golden Calf, the image of evil for the Children of Israel to worship.

Jake is desperate in waiting for the Horseman whom he considers as his conscience, his mentor, his moral editor. Aaron was forgiven by Moses who allowed his brother to serve him. In the same way, Jake continues to identify himself with his cousin, the Horseman. He hears of the Horseman’s death, which he hardly believes but he himself becomes the Horseman in his dreams.

‘In his nightmare he was the Horseman now.

It was Jake who was St. Urbains rider on the white stallion’ (Ibid, 435).

Jake goes to the extent of correcting the information written in the journal about Jake’s year and date of death. He crosses it out and writes in over it ‘Presumed dead’ (Ibid,436). The psyche of Jake Hersh never accepts the fact that the Horseman is no more in the world. He feels himself the Horseman, the avenger of the Jewish Community.
"The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz" is the story of a Jewish youth who is ready to stoop to any level to achieve his goal. One of Richler’s memorable characters, Duddy Kravitz, at one point perceives how differently his life might have unfolded had his grand father possessed the few extra Dollars it would have required to take him as far as Toronto. This novel of Richler is a picturesque one written in a classic manner. It deals with the growing up of a young man to the point where he is on his own, alone, feeling lonely, ready to strike out in life, freed from his ties of his youth. His solitary condition is the result of long thought and much self-examination. He has made a choice and consciously accepted the responsibility of his own life. How an ordinary boy of sixteen metamorphoses into a businessman, buying the land he is dreaming of, forms the story of this novel. But he does not opt forth right ways to achieve his goal.

It is interesting to note that Duddy’s Montreal is a bi-cultural city populated by Jews and non-Jews. The two-culture theme of ‘Two Solitude’ takes on a new dimension in Richler’s novel. Richler is aware of the flaws in his society. This novel is the revelation of the vulgarity and raw materialism of the middle class Canadian life. Richler deals with the sufferings of the Jews, their problems, persecution and social alienation in his fiction. The protagonist of "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz" is a young dreamer
who struggles to escape the Jewish ghetto by asserting his individual supremacy. Duddy is obsessed with a passion for acquiring land in order to escape the ghetto and considers the words of his grand father – 'a man without land is nobody' (Ibid, 49) as the one and only motto of his life.

The first part of the novel deals with the school life of Duddy Kravitz at F.F.H.S, under Mac Pherson, who is an anti-Jew. Duddy joined the Talmund Torah Parochial School at the age of eleven. At the Parochial school until he was thirteen he met many boys who came from families that were much better off than his own. He teaches them all vices and fraudulence. Duddy's other Parochial school activities are commercial. Duddy's eagerness to come up in life, his resorting to crooked methods to achieve his goal and his frustration to free himself from the ghetto are well depicted by Richler. 'The search for identity' theme could be very well traced in The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz. One can establish his identity by becoming famous in some field or the other; or he should be rich. Duddy, the protagonist tries his hands in all sorts of jobs to earn money. He takes up stamp business and invests the profits in the comic book market. He even buys contraband American comics and rents them out. He steals hockey sticks from the players and sells them for large sums. He takes up
his first job at the age of thirteen in his uncle Benjay’s dress factory for sixteen Dollars a week. He gives up the job after some time and becomes a waiter in a big hotel. He watches the way the businessmen staying at the hotel avoiding their wives and talking about the market and the readers are introduced to an ambitious but fraudulent protagonist even at the beginning of the novel. Duddy’s other endeavours are picturised in the remaining three parts of the novel.

The second part of the novel is chiefly concerned with Duddy’s attempts to produce an art novel in collaboration with Mr. Friar, an expert in the field of vediography. Without knowing what he has been doing he helps Dingle man smuggle heroin. He gets the acquaintance of Virgil who seeks Duddy’s help in publishing his poems. Then, he comes across a young girl called Yvette who falls in love with him.

The third part of the novel is about Duddy’s initial success as a movie producer. Mr. Friar has succeeded in making something of the Siegel Bar-mitzvah movie and Duddy is profited out of it. Then he starts making commercial films for television and establishes an office with a studio of his own at Toronto. When Virgil meets with an accident, Yvette stays with him and nurses him. Soon a misunderstanding arises between Duddy and
Yvette. When he learns that Dingleman is arrested for smuggling heroin he is shocked that he has been deceived by Dingleman so long.

The fourth part of the novel deals with Duddy's various tricks to obtain the land. His grand father's words that 'a man without land is nobody' continue to haunt him. He blackmails Dingleman. A situation arises that he cannot clear his bills in the hotel. He comes to know that Dingleman has the idea to buy the land. He goes to the extreme of forging Virgil's signature and withdraws money from the bank. When the truth is out, Virgil is shocked and upset. Yvette cuts her acquaintance with Duddy once for all. Virgil is so generous that he refuses to sue Duddy in the court, for his act of forgery. Yvette calls him 'rotten' and informs his grand father of his forgery and leaves him. Duddy tries to convince her by saying that he has done everything for her welfare and promises that he will repay the money he has taken from Virgil. When Duddy feels that he is desolate, the waiter at the hotel hands him over the bill and asks,

"Are you the Mr. Kravitz who just bought all that land round lake St. Pierre?" "Kravitz replies; yeah, Em, I haven't any cash on me.. Daddy can you...." The waiter politely says, 'That's all. We will mark it' (Ibid, 319).
There occurs a sudden change in Duddy. He grabs his father Max and shouts in joy. “you see, you see...” (Ibid,319) He acquires the land in the end and feels that he is ‘a real somebody’, with a status. Duddy’s morals perplex and shock the readers but he has a sense of fulfillment in whatever he has done to reach the ultimate goal. He has achieved what he desired. Perhaps this will give him a status in the society. He feels that he is no longer the son of a taxi-driver but the owner of a big hotel. But in this process, he has alienated his friends Virgil and Yvette. Duddy suffers from a loose sense of isolation and alienation, which he wants to overcome by acquiring wealth and power. Richler presents the experiences of his immigrant community in this novel by using certain literary modes like the motif of escape, ambivalence, irony, isolation and the most important of all is the search for identity.

Duddy who wants to establish himself by becoming rich and owning a vast area of land as per his grand-father’s wish, becomes a butt of ridicule among his relatives. When he calls on uncle Benjay who is in death bed, the latter charges him that Duddy is madly in pursuit of money. He says to Duddy, “....you're a pusherke. A little Jew-boy on the make. Guys like you make me sick and ashamed” (Ibid, 244).
Duddy is vexed with his uncle who does not show any concern for him. His uncle has a soft corner for his brother Lennie, who is a medico. Duddy retorts by pouring out his feelings.

You lousy, intelligent people'. You lying son-of-bitches with your books and your socialism and your sneers. Your give me one long pain in the ass. You think I never read a book?.. I've read books..... If you're so concerned, how care in real life you never have time for me?.... You think I should be running after something else besides money? Good, tell me what? Tell me, you bastard. I want some land, uncle Ben jay. I am going to own my own place one day. King of the castle, that's me. And there wouldn't be any superior decks there to laugh at me or run me off (Ibid, 244).

Duddy says that he is the king of the castle. The self-confidence of Duddy is amazing. The word 'own' is used in two places to stress the craving of Duddy to own a vast area of land. Uncle Ben jay realizes his fault now. He says,

My God, it never occurred to me before.

You're the only one. Duddy, I've been unfair to you (Ibid, 245).

Duddy's great concern for his uncle Ben jay in spite of the latter's hatred for him reveals the fact that a true Jew is bonded in family ties and he could
never come out of it very easily. Duddy asks the doctor to save the life of uncle Ben jay at any cost. This shows his love and care for him. When Duddy leaps into the car and drives off, uncle Ben jay thinks, ‘Run, run, always running... (Ibid,245) yes, Duddy is running towards his goal, he is running towards wealth, running towards the very establishment of his identity. In the search for identity, he is prepared to run to the very end of life. His perseverance, his bubbling with life, his tactics, his longing to have a high status, his desire of becoming rich and his sense of achievement makes Duddy an admirable character. If Duddy had accepted the financial assistance offered by Ben jay, he could have made the final payment for the land on Lac St. Pierre. But Duddy coolly rejects it. This refusal shows Duddy’s self-confidence that he could raise the funds elsewhere. He wants to see his uncle who is in death bed. That’s all. He doesn’t expect a single pie from him. Duddy’s rejection of the financial offer might be a great blow to the ego of uncle Ben jay. But the latter understands that Duddy wants to become a real ‘some body’ one day or the other climbing up the social ladder. The fountain of love and concern in Duddy’s heart drenches uncle Ben jay’s dry image of his nephew. He sees an ambitious Duddy running towards prosperity and feels happy that his father’s perception of Duddy is
absolutely true. The Characterisation of Duddy blends with the thematic structure of the novel. His refusal of accepting the property from his uncle - is crucial when establishing Duddy's character and motivation, for it forces a recognition of the strong possibility that Duddy's desire is not just to secure land but to do so on his own is an expression of his overwhelming need to prove himself to his belittling community (Ramraj, 35).

Right from the beginning, Duddy Kravitz has been aiming for a high social status. In F.F.H.S, he tells his friends cock and bull stories about his imaginary brother, Bradley, a romantically heroic figure who is supposed to have married an affluent woman. Duddy further reels on, that, but for his brother's heroic deed of rescuing her from drowning, she could not have survived in this world. Duddy is influenced by his father Max who has spun stories about the Boy Wonder. The seeds of ambition and the search for his own identity have sprouted in Duddy's heart even at a very young age when he happened to listen to the fantastic stories about the Boy Wonder. The seeds are sown by Max himself. The darker side of the Boy Wonder (Dingle man) is totally concealed by Max, the irresponsible father.
"......, the satiric effect is achieved mainly through the incongruity in Max's romanticized, defying account of Dingle man and the grim Ogre he turns out to be when he appears in the novel.

(Ramraj, 40).

Duddy Kravitz who has no mother and not much of a father yearns for the love of his dear ones. The one and the only soul in the family who has predicted Duddy's bright future is his grand-father. Duddy is deeply affected by the fact that he has no mother. He constantly asks his relatives about his mother and whether she loved him or not. But he could not find an answer to it. He can be compared to Tom Jones in this regard, 

He is almost as much an orphan as Tom Jones, 

and like Tom he sets out to find his place in the world. More over Duddy's search for himself has strongly picaresque overtones

(Bevan, 1).

Duddy Kravitz ranges through a very broad spectrum of his society, exposing to the readers, the vices and follies of the cunning world in which he is forced to sail through. Though everything seems to work out for Duddy
initially, he is a total wreck in the end. He learns that there is no place for him in the gentle, loving and kindly world of his grand father or even in the world of Yvette, his lady love and Virgil, his close friend.

   His frantic head long search ends with his discovery

   that he fits too well into a vulgar and raucous world

   devoid of understanding and love (Bevan, 5).

   In his search for identity, Duddy causes the destruction of too many people, earns the displeasure of his dear grand father who refuses to accept a part of the land since he is unhappy over the means by which his grand son has acquired the land. It is an irony that the grandfather who sowed the seed of ambition of owning a piece of land in Duddy's mind, prefers to stay in his old cottage. He refuses to step into the land bought by his grand son. Duddy's grandfather spits out words of hatred and agony on Duddy....

   "She told me what you did", Simcha said

   'And I don't want a farm here'. 'So you couldn't even wait to hear my side of the story?

   Is that right? "I can see what you have planned for me, Duddy, you'll be good to me. You'd give me everything I wanted. And that would settle your conscience when you went out to swindle others" (The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz,315).
The word ‘Swindle’ arouses in Duddy a sense of guilt. But he wipes it off. He feels angry that there is nobody including his dear Simcha to hear his part of the story. He slams the car door. He says to Simcha.

A man without land is nothing. That's what you always told me. Well, I'm some body. A real somebody (Ibid, 315).

Duddy has proved to the world that he has established his identity by owning the vast area of land. He succeeds in his endeavour some how. Duddy is a real Jew who has love for his family members. He is the only soul who calls on uncle Ben jay in his deathbed. He helps his brother Lennie when he was caught into trouble for performing a wrong abortion. Duddy’s father Max who fails to inculcate moral principles in his son says that his son is slated for fame right from the time of birth. Duddy does not mind solitude because he will overcome the bitter feelings by acquiring more wealth. Duddy has established his identity. He has got recognition.

In A Choice Of Enemies, the confrontation between the gentile and the Jew becomes very prominent. The gentile protagonist strives hard to establish his moral position in relation to the Jewish characters. Simultaneously, he becomes aware of his inherent anti-Jewish feelings. This novel, which was published in 1957, scrutinizes the experiences of
various political emigres in the post-war Europe. This novel is a remake of Richler's *The Acrobats*. The theme, Characterization, the ambience of politics and the ambiguous protagonists are similar in both the novels. In

**A Choice Of Enemies**

The theme is not shouted at the reader. But Richler has not succeeded in ironing out all the wrinkles of 'The Acrobats,' and like that novel, 'A Choice Of Enemies' belongs to Richler's novitiate or perhaps to the transitory span between apprenticeship and maturity (Ramraj, 54)

The theme of search for identity can be traced in this novel because almost all the characters yearn for establishing their identity.

The thematic structure of the novel *A Choice of Enemies* is governed by the motif of social isolation. The characters in the novels, both the Jews and the gentiles feel the pangs of isolation and the socio-cultural condition of Europe. The American Jewish exiles Sony and his friends reject Norman and Ernest. Norman severs his contact with his sweet heart sally. The latter who experiences a bitter isolation in spite of her father holding a high post in Canada commits suicide in the end. Thanks to the irresponsible and unconcerned men-folk of the novel.
Norman Price, the protagonist of *A Choice of Enemies* is a former Canadian pilot who fought with the Allies in World War II. In the early 1950s, Norman had to quit his much-coveted job of a professor in an American University. He does this to escape McCarthy's inquisition. He refuses to collaborate with the McCarthyites. At the same time, the novel unfolds the experiences of Norman who is living in London as an expatriate, earning his bread by writing thrillers and film-scripts. Norman is at the far end of his thirties and he shares his father's beliefs in Marxism for which he has sacrificed his secured job. Norman who has also worked as a Canadian pilot meets with a plane-crash resulting in amnesia. Norman suffers from this disease, which lands him into trouble often.

He is even-tempered, a contemplative man,

who, to prevent lapses into amnesia......,

must keep his life from disturbances (Ibid, 56).

Norman carefully avoids any confrontation or verbal quarrel with his dignified behaviour. His idealism and friendly nature help him to keep away such situation. Norman believes that.

There are such things... As dignity,

honour and love (A Choice of Enemies, 223).
Norman’s noble code of values is not sustained in his friendship with two important Jewish characters Horn Stein and Karp. The former is a Jewish pilot and the latter is a concentration camp survivor. Norman tries to establish his identity in London by becoming a great writer. But Karp and Horn Stein want to establish their identity by becoming close to Norman who is a gentile. They make desperate efforts to establish friendly relationship with Norman but get ruthlessly rebuffed. Horn Stein commands respect for his unique act of sacrificing his life for the sake of the people. He is a Jewish soldier taking part in fighting the Nazi enemy; He feels proud in saying that the Jewish soldiers out number the gentiles in the army.

Norman’s statement to sally...

One evening in the mess he read us a Bnai Birth pamphlet, which proved that in proportion to the population of Canada, there were more Jews than gentiles in the armed forces (Ibid, 46).

But his colleagues turn a deaf ear to the pamphlet. He is left all alone at the table with the pamphlet. This indicates their anti-Jewish feelings. Norman describes Horn Stein as a Jew with all the unfortunate characteristics the anti-Semite attributes to his people (Ibid, 46).
But the Jewish pilot's unfortunate characteristics consist in his aggressive attempts to ingratiate himself with the other pilots in order to gain their approval and acceptance. Horn Stein yearns for the friendship of the gentiles but he does not want to cast off his Jewish identity like Karp, the landlord of Norman. In his attempts to push himself into the gentile society, Horn Stein resembles Barney Larkin in *The Acrobats*. Barney; the rich American has an obsession of assimilating himself into the gentile society. He spends lavishly to win the love of a gentile woman but in vain. The gentiles reject him. Barney is desperate that he could not win the hearts of the gentiles. But Horn Stein is indispensable to the gentile pilots who arrange liquor and money for them. They use Horn Stein but refuse to give due recognition to him. Even Norman, an embodiment of friendliness says, "Horn Stein wasn't a bad pilot" (Ibid, 46). The tone of Norman and the negative way of endorsing the efficiency and goodness of Horn Stein as a pilot bears testimony to the fact that Norman too is an anti-Semite who looks at the Jews wishing for assimilation with askance and hatred. Horn stein is looked upon as an enemy and Norman himself admits that he 'avoided him like the plague' (Ibid, 46). Norman who avoids Horn Stein as a dreadful disease, witnesses the heroic act of his colleague during the air-battle. Norman watches Horn Stein 'climb in again and crash his machine into the
Thames' (Ibid, 47). Horn Stein whose aircraft was hit, decides not to bail out over a populated area; hence this sacrifice of his very life. Norman says that his stomach burns on seeing his colleague's chivalry and this shows his jealous nature. The self-less act of Horn Stein is a blow to the ego of Norman price who looks down upon the Jewish community. Horn stein has established his identity through his death.

An exactly opposite Portrayal of Chaim of *The Acrobats*, Karp wants to cast off his Jewish identity and become one among the gentiles. His search for Canadian identity sounds ridiculous as he is prepared to stoop to any level to achieve it. Karp's concentration camp experience alienates him from the gentile society. Even Israelites refuse to accept Karp; they do not trust him because he has survived the Holocaust. Feeling lonely and isolated, Karp seeks asylum in the Companionship of his tenant, Norman price. Karp is a hospital orderly and has taken care of Norman during the latter's attack of amnesia. But Norman does not reciprocate Karp's love and feels it beneath his dignity to accustom himself with Karp, not only for his being Jewish, but also for his unwanted qualities like hatred and envy. The most inhuman expression of Norman's hatred towards Karp is during the end of the novel, when the latter suggests to Norman that Nicky's death
should enlighten him to get rid of Ernest and win back his sweet – heart sally. The infuriated Norman slaps Karp hard. Then he says

"The best ones were killed, Karp. Only the conniving, evil ones like you survived" (Ibid, 178).

Karp's rejection of his heritage as a Jew coupled with his dependence on the gentiles for survival makes the readers despise him. There is nothing wrong in craving for Jewish as well as Canadian identity but Karp's desire to purview his past and embracing totally a new religion is highly deplorable. Karp's attempts to free himself of his Jewish identity and to integrate into the gentile world perpetuate the helplessness he experienced in the concentration camp. He considers that his friendship with Norman price alone will help for his very survival. But Norman exerts tremendous power over Karp. Karp could not tolerate even a tinge of indifference from Norman. He is upset when Norman does not respond to the invitation for the lunch hosted by Karp. The latter is unhappy that Norman has failed to bring him any gifts from Spain. He says

"You're my old friend, Norman,

You're the only person, I care about" (Ibid, 177).

He Strives hard to unite Norman and Sally initially. But when Karp learns about Norman's indifference to him, he strengthens the friendship
between Ernest and Sally advising them to run away before Norman comes back to London. This childish nature of Karp makes everybody hate him. Karp never lets Norman down and he feels it an honour to have contact with him, which he feels that it would enhance his status. He does not want a Jewish identity but craves for a Canadian identity. Karp is happy in assimilation and wants to forget his past. He is proud to say that he doesn’t want to speak his own language. He says with an emphasis to Graves, “I do not speak Yiddish” (Ibid, 42). This is the character of Karp who shamelessly expresses his hatred for his mother tongue. It is said that Jews are remarkably deficient in the knowledge of nature. Though they are intelligent and business – minded people, they lack the aesthetic sense of beauty.

With that the whole world structure of Karp’s plan for survival had toppled. No good books on plant life, the acquired taste for sea food and cultivation of gentiles. You were always a Jew….. (Ibid, 205).

Karp’s trying to adopt the gentile way of life and to throw off his Jewish identity do not work out at all. His search for Canadian identity makes him a laughing stock and nothing else.

Karp, whose concentration camp experience alienates him from gentile society, continues to suffer the fate of the ironic character in Israel.
Strangely, the Israelites refuse to accept him or trust him for having survived the Holocaust. Thus even in Israel, Karp is condemned to relieve the terror of his part in isolation and loneliness.

(Ramamurthy, Malgudi to Montreal, 81).

Karp is an implausible character belonging to the world of fantasy. He is inspired by evil and reflects it in his action.

Ernest Haupt, the second hero of A Choice of Enemies is an exile who defied the German society, gains recognition in Montreal for his heroic act of saving an old Jew from under the crumbling wall. The very opening of the novel is highly cinematic. Ernest Haupt drops down from a truck and disappears in the heavy down pour. By the time Ernest disappears in the rain he has already been presented as a character living in a world that makes him not merely possible but necessary.

....Ernest is driven by the simple but lethal struggle to survive, without country or community family or friends without the luxury of a system of values and beliefs, on the other hand painful filament of conscience and consciousness connect him to a dark past in which shifting borders and allegiances have capriciously destroyed countless lives....

(Besner, 264).

During Nicky's birthday party, his friend Malcolm expresses his displeasure on Nicky's friendship with the ex-Nazi, Ernest Haupt. Malcolm's childish
anger ends in the murder of Nicky by the innocent Ernest Haupt, which is purely an accidental one. He becomes a victim of circumstances. Even in the winkle man’s party, Ernest is humiliated.

“Those who joined the Nazis to get privileges are now members of the SED for some reason”.

Ernest said “you took of your Hitler Youth and put on an FDJ one” (A Choice of enemies, 104).

Both Nicky and his brother Norman support Ernest and this reveals the humanism in the blood of the brothers. The American Emigres do not want to hear anything said by Ernest and they humiliate him during the party which wounds Norman’s sentiments.

The theme of absolute hesitation on the part of the Jews to have any contact with a German is revealed during Nicky’s birthday – party. When Malcolm teases Ernest, Nicky tells....

“(Ernest) didn’t shoot your Zeyda or – Ernest probably had it tougher than either you or I can imagine” (Ibid, 27).

Both Nicky and his brother Norman price sympathize with Ernest and they never look at him as a German, the enemy of the Jews. Ernest is a human being. Nothing more than that. This humanitarian feeling of the brothers
initiated them to befriend Ernest and rescue him from their Jewish friends.

Norman met with a plane crash, when he was an RCAF pilot during the
Second World War. He was afflicted with amnesia and this disease of the
nerves so often landed him into trouble. His chasing the balloon in the
Waterloo Air-terminal and the incidents that follow, turn the very direction of
Norman’s life.

Sally introduces Ernest to Norman and the latter develops a close
friendship with him. He takes Ernest to the party hosted by winkle man.

Richler uses this scene in particular to underline
the ironical parallel between McCarthy’s treatment
of those suspected of being communist sympathizers
and their treatment of Ernest (Ramraj, 57).

In the party hosted by winkle man, Ernest Haupt is humiliated to the
core by a McCarthy victim. He unsympathetically interrogates Ernest with
the encouragement of his friend. Norman is provoked by this and he is very
unhappy to see his friends wounding the sentiments of Ernest, a fellow
refugee. Norman retorts....

“Look” Norman said, “Most of us were on the
hot seat at home. Don’t you recognize certain
technique of questioning?” “Really”, Horton said
“this is too much .Are you accusing me of being a
McCarthyite? "That's just what I mean. Remarks like that" Norman said "Twisting my words to his own purpose" (A Choice of Enemies, 105-106)

Norman is very much upset when his friends refused to converse with Ernest just for the reason that he is a German. Norman is ostracized by his friends for defending Ernest, who is a German. He seems to be humane initially but in the course of the novel he turns violent against Ernest over Sally's matter as well as about Nicky's death, which was caused by Ernest.

Sonny emphatically refuses to deal with Ernest on account of his Nazi past.

"Are you seriously asking me, a Jew to be tolerant of a little Nazi punk?.... you want money, you want a lay, you want I should get you the best head shrinker in London, just ask me. But if you want me to play a Son-of-a bitch Christian, book a run for your own place kid. This house is one hundred percent an American Jew land. (Ibid, 98)

Norman price's character is wonderful. His love for his brother Nicky and his pride of his father's past are excellent traits in his character. Richler gives a noble picture of the protagonist. Norman has been very supportive to Ernest, who is a destitute in London. Each and every reader sympathize with Norman price when he loses his memory in the waterloo Air terminal,
thinking the woman and the child who get down from the flight as his wife and child respectively.

Norman’s championing of Ernest, his silent editing of Charlie’s screen play, his attitude towards Horton at Winkle man’s party—all gestures that proceed from disinterested and heartfelt loyalties and beliefs – intersect uncomfortably with his new career of writing thrillers, with the down ward course of his misplaced love for Sally, and with the bathos of his marriage to Vivian Bell. Norman is unable to confront the dilemma Richler places squarely before him. He does not know how to deal with Ernest, who is his younger brother’s Killer. But he doesn’t take any revenge on him. One can say that Norman price is a decent man trying to do the right thing. He stands up for his political convictions when questioned by Mc Carthyites in protecting Charlie Lawson from the truth about Joey or about the editing of Charlie’s script. But Norman, without his knowledge becomes the cause of Sally’s suicide. He drives Bob home from the party. Had Bob been to Sally’s place directly from the hotel, Sally’s life would have been saved. Norman’s flight from Sally and London are the reasons behind the suicide of Sally, an innocent girl. Norman is destined to marry Vivian Bell, totally a stranger. He couldn’t identify his enemies but destiny has played a vital role in Norman’s life.
The experience of isolation undergone by the characters in the novel is caused by certain socio-cultural condition. Because of his contact with Ernest, Norman is ostracized by his own community. At the end of the novel, he agrees to marry a woman whom he does not love and to satisfy her social ambition makes up his mind with his former Jewish friends. Norman price is the ironic hero who in Frye's terms is 'guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society' (Assimilation and Assertion, 107).

Ernest Haupt happily settles down in Montreal with an American widow with enormous wealth. His ambition is to become very rich. He says to Sally,

“I want to go to America
I would like to be rich”

(A Choice of Enemies, 73).

A pauper landing on the English soil with no papers progresses to this level, after undergoing extreme hardships and humiliation. He establishes his identity by becoming a wealthy man and becomes popular among the Jews for his chivalrous act of saving a Jew from the debris of a building. Thus Ernest settles in his life.
In *A Choice of Enemies* each and every character acts in a different way. Karp's continuous search for 'Canadian identity, Ernest's search for Jewish identity, Horn Stein's establishment of Jewish identity by sacrificing his life for the sake of the people, Charlie's search for popularity in the field of script-writing, Sally's search for a secured life and Norman's search for his own self form the theme of this novel.