CHAPTER III

A Thematic Study of Joshua Then and Now,
Son of a Smaller Hero and Solomon Gursky was Here:

Mordecai Richler takes up Canada’s famous identity crisis and rather than trying to resolve it, converts it into the stuff of fiction. His men and women come alive against the background of his own peculiar Canadian reality. Jews in Canada are faced with an identity crisis. They are struggling to be accepted, to be recognized and even to be appreciated within the society. Richler’s protagonists continuously cope with their failures and insecurity and want to prove to the world that they are not alien people but have the capacity to climb up the top-position in the society. They want themselves to be recognized as full – fledged citizens. Richler’s protagonists, Jake Hersh, Joshua Shapiro, Noah Adler and Duddy Kravitz are people searching for wealth and status and thereby want to establish their identity.

Richler published Joshua Then and Now in 1980, nine years after the publication of his St. Urbain’s Horse Man. Both the novels have the same thematic structure. Like Jake, Joshua has a lovely wife and children. He
loves his family. Both Jake and Joshua are Montreal born Jews, have married the gentiles which is against the rules of Judaism. Jake Hersh is portrayed as a mediocre film director whereas Joshua is pictured as a journalist cum television personality. Richler has positioned the protagonist Joshua in the aftermath of the Spanish civil war. Like all Richler's artist - heroes, Joshua tours most of the literary centers of Europe at a very early age. He is drawn towards Spain by his admiration for the heroes of the Spanish civil war. He stays in Spain for sometime where he befriends the local Spaniards, gains experiences in the whore-houses and has his first love affair. Joshua provokes a German resident Dr. Mueller whom he presumes to be a Nazi on the run. With great malice, Joshua destroys Mueller's house and he is forced to leave Ibiza by the authorities.

Joshua takes shelter in London. He marries Pauline, a Canadian Senator's daughter. They leave for Montreal after seven years and Joshua establishes himself as a popular journalist and television script writer. He authors The Volunteers a book on the Spanish Civil War. A devoted father and a husband, Joshua lives a contented life, with his family. In Montreal, he moves closely with his old friends who are
in high status in the society. The story revolves round Pauline’s brother Kevin, her childhood friend Jane and her husband Jack. Joshua’s mental trauma begins when Pauline leaves her home after Kevin’s suicide and when she falls bed-ridden in the Montreal hospital for a nervous breakdown. Joshua’s past life and the present one are presented to the readers in a zig-zag manner by the author. Joshua’s state of mind in this novel sums up that of a number of Richlar’s characters. Characterisation and theme are interrelated in Richlar’s novels in general and *Joshua Then and Now* in particular.

Canadian-born he sometimes felt as if he were condemned to lope slant-shouldered through this world that confused him. One shoulder sloping downwards, groaning under the weight of Jewish heritage the other thrust heavenwards, yearning for an inheritance, any inheritance weightier than the construction of a transcontinental railway a reputation for honest trading good skiing conditions.’

*(Joshua Then and Now, 190-91)*

As in Richlar’s dualistic confusions and cultural hyphenations (Canadian-born, slant-shouldered) and in response to an unstable inheritance,
Jewish Canadian literature mediates between marginal man and his discourse.

The theme of *Joshua Then and Now* focuses on psychological isolation of the protagonist in the midst of his dear-ones, breaking of the ghetto walls, feeling of exile, and searching for identity and depression all combined to give a shape to this novel. Joshua is very ambitious. He is carried away by the sharpness and smartness of uncle Oscar in the field of business under whom his father Reuben is working. Though Joshua is irritated at the beginning, he is captivated by his uncle's business strategy and deep vision. The novel suggestion given by uncle Oscar to advertise on hotel ceilings motivate Joshua to do something new and concrete in some field or the other to establish his identity. Uncle Oscar suggests the advantage of advertising in the hotel ceiling, which is not welcomed by Reuben.

“There's all this wasted space, see? A drummer checks in, he's lonely, he lies down on the bed, and there it on the ceiling for him. Restaurants, night clubs, strip joints, lists of movies..... what do you think” (Ibid,61).

Joshua admires uncle Oscar who owns a car and who is also the executive of the synagogue. Further he is graduated from commercial High and plays
golf with gentile customers. Joshua is inspired by this gentleman to climb up the top-most position in the society. He does not want to follow the footsteps of his father who is not of a good make except for the fact that he has an extra-ordinary knowledge of Bible. Joshua is taught by his father about the morals found in the Bible as well as about sex. Joshua’s mother, who performs striptease in hotels has never impressed Joshua and he feels ashamed when she strip teased during his Bar-Mitzvah in front of his friends. Just to escape from the bitterness of his childhood, the mysterious activities of his father, the immorality of his mother who poses for pornographic books, his ignorance of his father’s occupation, the mediocre life of his parents, Joshua tries hard to establish himself in the field of mass-media seeking a decent identity. Joshua, even at the age of ten, desires that his father should establish his identity but in vain. He could not tolerate the fact that uncle Oscar dominates his father. But he himself takes uncle Oscar as a role model to become popular in the society. He lands on journalism for his livelihood as well as to gain popularity.

"Although it had never occurred to him that he might be able to write, really write, he figured out that if he was going to get to Spain, he would need a craft to sustain him and he settled on journalism" (Ibid,118).
Joshua's hard work pays. One of his stories is accepted by the 'Saturday Evening Post', provided he agrees to make the place-names American. But Joshua replies that it would be a violation of his integrity. His oneness with the Canadian society wants him to be loyal to its heritage.

He would rather accept less money from a Canadian publication (Ibid, 120).

Any how the story is accepted and earned him 300 Dollars. Then Joshua is asked by a Montreal editor to go to Cambridge and write an article on Canadian students for an educational supplement not exceeding 750 words. He accepts the offer. When Joshua is flying to Montreal in Air Canada flight 274, after successfully finishing a television assignment, he hears a co passenger asking his wife, "Isn't that Joshua Shapiro? (Ibid, 112).

Joshua is recognized by everybody because of his Media-popularity. With great industry and perseverance he achieves this. In Joshua Then and Now two integrated but separate plots are set in the present, another in the past of Joshua, the most important figure of the novel. Joshua gets recuperated from a serious car accident. As the novel opens, he is introduced to the readers as a person admitted in the orthopedic ward of a Montreal Hospital who has a miraculous escape from an accident. The
story revolves round the problems faced by Joshua in the past as well as the newly generated problems like the disappearance of his wife Pauline who is admitted in a hospital for some neurotic problem. Pauline is deeply affected by the suicide of her playboy brother Kevin. She feels responsible for his miserable end. Meanwhile Joshua's profession is endangered by media reports of his presumed homosexuality with his colleague Sidney Murdoch. The very rumour thwarts the progress of Joshua's career. Joshua is also scared of Mc Master who knows about Joshua's past. Joshua gets a solution for all his problems in the end. The rumour that Joshua is a homosexual subsides since there is hardly any proof to substantiate it. Pauline returns home. All the problems of Joshua fizzles out. Joshua is once again in the entangles of love and affection of his dear ones.

Joshua follows his father's footsteps initially, shop-lifting and stealing cars. He spends some time in the reform school. He has indulged in Vandalism in Ibiza. As he grows, he develops interest in journalism and sets about educating himself and trying to acquire the necessary experience. His venturing into another trip to Ibiza in the present makes things more complicated than making his motives clear. Like Jake Hersh, he is affected with nightmares in which he underestimates himself.
Two recurring nightmares bit into his sleep in those days. In one of them Pauline was leaving him for a Golden goy. Captain clean cut. “Now that I’ve found out what you are really like”. She said, “Intellectually bankrupt. A political frand. Peddling yourself on T.V. unable to even turn out a Column any more without leaning on your thesaurus. Telling the same tired old stories at dinner parties again and again. Jew to a fault, over tipping wherever we go. No fell in bed. An inadequate father I’m leaving you” (Ibid, 184-185).

In Joshua’s sub-conscious mind, he could hardly see any compatibility between himself and Pauline. She is a gentile and he is a Jew. He feels that he has created a monotony and boredom in Pauline’s life. Hence these recurring nightmares. But Pauline is all love for him and she is loyal to him. But Joshua with a complexed mind suspects his wife’s infidelity.

“The lawn smelled sweetly….. Pauline’s perfume. She would have Dabbed herself behind the ears, ..... I married a whore!

(Ibid, 48).
Calling such a wonderful girl a whore reflects Joshua's crooked mind and his sense of guilt which continuously haunt him. The ambivalent mind of Joshua Shapiro, which at once loves and despises Pauline, perplexes the readers.

Joshua's inferiority complex torments him. He feels that he is not a good match to Pauline, the daughter of a rich Canadian Senator. During a party hosted by Pinsky, the Dentist, Joshua's sentiments are wounded by the question raised by her,

"And how, ..... did a guy like you manage to catch such a lovely wife? (Ibid, 127).

Pauline immediately retorts saying, 'why, thank you' (Ibid, 127) She drives her elbow into Joshua's ribs. Pauline, an embodiment of goodness, beauty and loyalty always wants to keep her husband in good humour. Joshua does not understand this. But he realizes her goodness in the end.

Joshua's affinity for his religion and his concern for his people who died during the World War II are revealed through several episodes in the novel. Once Joshua obliged his three children to watch a T.V documentary about World War II. As Hitler did his
notorious victory Jig in the campaign after the surrendering of the French, the children started giggling. On seeing this, Joshua's blood boiled and he lost his temper. "It isn't funny. Now be quiet and watch (Ibid,114). He felt as if he had burdened the kids boorishly with his own past. On another occasion, Alex, a model 'airplane' enthusiast innocently brought home a Messerchmitt to construct, Joshua made him take it back to the shop at once. Such incidents make the readers feel that Joshua is very much conscious of his Jewish identity.

The story of Joshua's obsession with the civil war introduced by the poster on the wall of his study and continues through his pilgrimage across the battle fields of the civil war.

For Joshua, as far so many this was an event that haunted his imagination, the last time and place when poets and writers died in defence of an idea, a time and place of honour: When Joshua decides not to write a new introduction to his old book about the war, the journey is over. Now he sees that the best of all possible world is at home, and he vows to become the honest fisherman, casting out his net to gather fish for his loved ones (Wright, 439).
Joshua's search for identity is fulfilled when he is reunited with Pauline in the end. He wants to be identified not only as a popular television personality but also as a lovable father and husband. Moreover Joshua is immensely happy over the fact that he is the son-in-law of the Canadian Senator who is a highly recognized figure in the Canadian Society. He also loves his father who has taught him morals from the Bible in his childhood. Joshua is at once a Jew and a non-Jew who seeks for dual identity in the pluralistic Canadian Society. Like all Richlerian heroes, Joshua is sure that assimilation will certainly help him to lead a peaceful life in Canada.

As a Jew Joshua does not have any exposure in the field of sports and games. He admires his darling Pauline playing tennis, serving the ball very efficiently and he does not mind his ignorance of the game, until he sees Pauline playing tennis with her brother Kevin with a great involvement. Joshua does not know the ABC of Tennis and this provokes him. Once Pauline asked him to play with her but Joshua has immediately said 'No'.

I'd only embarrass you, Pauline.
I probably couldn't even hit the ball

(Joshua Then and Now, 42).
But Pauline persuaded him to play with her. Joshua tried to serve the ball but in vain. His children started squealing at his every pratfall. Joshua is disappointed at his failure in learning the game. Joshua is very desperate and so does Pauline.

Alas, the greater his ambition, the more inept he became even more baffling Pauline didn't seem to be hauling fun any more. She was flushed, agitated, and the next time he flubbed badly, she suddenly snapped, "Had enough"? (Ibid, 43).

Joshua stupidly missed her distress signal and continued to play. Joshua suddenly felt the change in her. "Damn" was all she sad. Pauline saw her brother Kevin approaching them. Now Kevin and Pauline started playing. The game took a poignant turn, settling into a kind of intimacy, the ball flowing between brother and sister, both of them playing superbly. Joshua is irritated and feels jealous about the siblings' efficiency in the game which a Jew lacks. This incident is nothing but a parallel to Jake's shooting complex on noticing his wife Nancy's discussion about gardening with the gentile gardener. Jake feels complexed because of his incapacity to converse with the gentiles about gardening whereas Joshua feels infuriated on seeing the Canadian siblings playing Tennis,
a sophisticated game, which his community could not play at all.

Some critics opine that *Joshua Then and Now* does not make the grade as a serious fiction. Readers may feel it hard to understand the structure of the novel. Kerry McSweetney says in his essay 'Richler's Fireworks' that,

Richler has made things too easy for himself, that he has not faced up to the problems of structure, theme and characterisation presented by a long novel, but has settled for getting much mileage as possible out of his material. Fireworks looks spectacular in the immediate darkness, but morning reveals a mess of wire and cardboard (McSweetney, 162).

The readers with great alertness coordinate the happenings in the life of Joshua's past and present and observe the main theme of Search for identity. In short, whatever might be incidentally asserted about Joshua's thoughts and feelings, the reader is never shown that the protagonist has an inner life. The depth of trouble in his mind alone is made aware to the readers. His consciousness and his crisis, his past and present, are only nominally the center of a novel which is essentially a collection of professionally presented character types, incidents and
observations. Kerry Mc Sweeney quotes the remark of John Fowles’ comments about the post-war American novelists who

“have much more skill at describing at cutting, at dialogue at all machinery and then at the end one takes the sunglasses of and something ‘s gone wrong.
One hasn’t a tan” (Ibid, 160).

This statement is right as far as Joshua Then and Now is concerned.

Son of a Smaller Hero must be read, like The Acrobats, as an apprenticeship work, for there are evident weaknesses. Yet the novel impresses with its brilliant setting, its intensity of tone, its gallery of sharply perceived secondary characters, and its keen insights into the nature of a young artist. The novel was well received in London. Walter Allen spoke highly of it, stating that with it the Canadian novel emerges for the first time.

‘The Times Literary Supplement’ said that “there can be no doubt of his prodigal talent”. Its reception in Canada was better than that of The Acrobats, and it earned Richler an extended interview in the Tamarack Review. Victor Ramraj, in his The Montreal Novels says...

Son of a Smaller Hero tries to shed the derivativeness of The Acrobats and to achieve characterization that is psychologically more credible (Ramraj, 127).
Mordecai Richler shows a lot of concern for the Jewish youth in Canada who struggle to escape the limitations of the Jewish ghetto by breaking the family ties. The tension between the assertion of the Jewish heritage and the rejection of the Jewish roots constitutes the spectrum of Richler’s exploration of the Jewish survival in the post war Canada. In most of his novels, Richler is preoccupied with the problems of relationship between the Jew and the gentile, the struggle for freedom and survival, the conflict between love and power struggle and the disappearance of old values in the modern world. His protagonists try to break the Jewish ghetto and fight with determination against all oddities to establish their identity. Like Duddy Kravitz, Noah Adler the protagonist of Mordecai Richler’s sensational Novel Son of a Smaller Hero, tries to break the Jewish ghetto and embarks on an independent world of his own. In his study of Noah’s complicated involvement with his Jewish community, the author concentrates on two related problems. The first is Noah’s painful ambivalent attitude towards his social surroundings and the other one is his awareness in resenting his zeyda’s severe morality. His love - hate relationship with his community remains constant through and through in the Novel.
He does develop away from his grand father's absolutism and inflexibility and gradually becomes more tolerant. The book captures well the anguish he experiences when caught between his acceptance and rejection of his family, and between his tendency to judge others sharply and his desire to be more understanding than his uncompromising grand father (Ibid, 20).

In *Son of a Smaller Hero*, Richler mounts a nihilistic attack on current moralities by creating an interesting character Noah Adler, a Jewish idealistic youth who attempts to free himself from the Jewish ghetto. Richler has experiences of growing up in the working class Jewish neighbourhood and some of his experiences do find artistic expressions in this Novel. Since he has witnessed the political turmoil – the Spanish civil war and the Second World War- they do figure prominently in this novel.

Noah Adler has an aesthetic sense of beauty, which does not belong to his community at all. His dissatisfaction with his community, its rigid customs and inherited prejudices makes him create a garrison mentality. He feels alienated, isolated and in exile in his own community. He is not able to fit into his family. He is attracted towards the gentile way of life, their interest in music and their sophistication. So he searches for Canadian
identity. He wants to establish himself in the Canadian society. As a fresh
Man in the college, he discovers the rhythm and harmony in music.

The first time Noah had been to a concert the Orchestra had played The Four seasons of Vivaldi and he had been so struck by it that he had felt something like pain. He had not suspected that men were capable of such beauty. He had been startled. So he had walked out wandering into the night, not knowing what to make of his discovery. All those stale lies that he had inherited from others, all these from others, all these cautionary tales, and these other dreadful things, facts, he collected like his father did stamps, knowledge, all that passed away rejected, dwarfed by the entry of beauty into his consciousness,

(Son of a smaller hero, 69-70).

Noah’s hatred for his parents, siblings, his uncles and his very community make him search for an identity in the gentile world. Richler who focuses his attention on the life led by the people of his community in the Jewish ghetto gives a portrayal of the identity - crisis suffered by them. Noah, the hero of Son of a Smaller Hero too suffers from a sense of identity crisis. Son of an orthodox Jew, he could not withstand the hard realities of the Canadian Jewish life and its conventions. He tries to escape from it. Noah ‘s identity crisis
is well explained by Prof. G. Dominic Savio in his **Identity crisis in Mordecai Richler’s Son of a Smaller Hero and Mulkraj Anand’s ‘Coolie’: a comparative study**...

Identity crisis ..........is a psychological problem having at the bottom a sense of spiritual disorientation as its cause. Its peculiar kind of spiritual inadequacy, normally arising in a man who is not at home anywhere or who has lost his moorings in his cultural tradition. A feeling of not being at home with anything leads to a person to experience a cultural alienation.....The identity crisis by Noah in Mordecai Richler’s ‘Son of a Smaller Hero’ offers solid illustration (Savio, 154).

Noah who is not loved by the society or his family, quits his home at a very young age. The Jews believe in brotherhood; they respect their tradition and rituals. But Noah is against these established systems of thought which makes him alien to his own society. After leaving his house, Noah stays in Mrs. Mahoney’s house at Dorchester street. One day he calls on his grand father Melech Adler with a genuine concern for him. But Noah is turned out of the house since he does not adhere to the Jewish customs. His grand father is enraged because Noah works on the **Sabbath** day which is totally against the rules of the Jewish community. The rebellious Noah retorts...
"Your sons are Canadians. I am not even that...I can't be something..... I'm sort of between things. I was born a Jew but somewhere along the way ..........you can't go back, zeyda”.

(Son of a Smaller Hero, 34)

Noah’s individuality and his trying to assimilate in the Canadian Society are quite obvious. More over he is prepared to cast off his Jewish identity. In the eyes of the Jews, he is a prodigal son. As G. Dominic Savio says...

A good son of a Jewish family respects his father and grandfather He respects marriage and family system. Noah Cares for none of these (Savio, 157).

Noah’s search for identity can be traced throughout the novel, from the first page to the last one.

In his search for an individual identity, Noah attempts to join communism, takes to college studies, participates in political demonstration and loves women (Ibid, 159).
Richler’s novel, **Son of a Smaller Hero**, is divided into five parts. An outline of the story may enlighten the cause for Noah’s perversion and his going astray from the right path of his community.

The Jews living at the diminishing end of the ghetto, on streets called St. Urbain, St. Dominic, Rachel and City Hall work in textile factories. Some are orthodox and others are communists. Melech Adler who is an orthodox Jew is residing at St. Dominique street with his ten children. He is a coal merchant and is assisted by his eldest son Wolf Adler. Noah is the son of the latter and he goes to the coal shop everyday to see his grandfather. One day Noah, noticed a fraud committed by his father Wolf in the coal shop and he brought it to the attention of his grandfather. He was shocked when his grandfather slapped him for coming out with the truth. Things had never been very good between the old man and the boy ever since that day. Noah starts looking at his grandfather as an enemy. The frequent quarrels between his parents had already affected him seriously and Noah had no regard either for his father or grandfather. After the lapse of some years, he becomes a taxi-driver and leaves the house in utter rage.

The first part of the novel ‘Summer 1952’ deals with Noah’s life at Wellington
College. Most of the students of this College are Jews who could not get admission in Mc Gill, a prestigious institution, because of the quota system.

Noah comes into contact with Theo Hall, a young Professor of Literature which changes the course of his life. He gives up his job as a taxi-driver and works in the college library and corrects papers for the English department. He stays with Mr. Theo Hall in his apartment and Miriam, the wife of Theo, falls in love with him. The blunder committed by Theo Hall is to allow the young Jew to stay in his apartment permanently when he has a beautiful but promiscuous wife. A slight misunderstanding with Miriam makes Noah leave Theo’s house. Miriam meets Noah after sometime and expresses her desire to leave Theo for ever and live with him. Theo is shocked at the happenings and he is scolded by his mother for neglecting his wife Miriam. Both Noah and Miriam decide to work for six months and make enough money to undertake a journey to Europe. Noah is sad that his grandfather is a hypocrite, his father a dishonest man and his father’s younger brother Shloine a thief and a blackmailer. He gradually loses faith in the Jewish tradition and religion and becomes a sort of an atheist. He rejects his mother’s wish to stay with the family and decides to break the Jewish ghetto.
Noah's life with Miriam at Montreal is described in the Third part of the novel. Though Miriam knows that it is difficult to get a divorce from her husband, she persuades Noah to marry her. But very soon she realizes that Noah's attachment to his mother and his family is more than his love for her. A serious misunderstanding arises. Death of Noah's father in a fire accident shocks Noah and he immediately rushes to his house. The fourth part of the novel deals chiefly with the Jewish customs and rites at the death of Wolf Adler, Noah's father. It was found out that he had a box in his hand at the time of his death which contained some scrolls and it was thought to be an act of faith in religion.

Wolf Adler, a simple man, died for the Torah..... He died a Jew. His family has reason to be proud as well as sad... Today the freedom-loving nations of the world are locked in a life – and – death struggle with the octopus monster Communism..... there is a conspiracy against God... The tentacles of Kremlin reach into the darkest corners....How many of our brethren behind the iron curtain have been imprisoned, their only crime being that of having worshipped the God of their fathers.....

(Son of a Smaller Hero, 149)
As per Jewish custom, the members of the Adler's family should observe 'Shivah', a Hebrew term that means seven days of mourning. A light is kept burning in the house in memory of the soul of the departed. It is customary for the mourners, parents, brothers and sisters, wife and children to wear dark coloured clothes. They sit on low stools and wear cloth slippers. All the mirrors in the house are covered and the men do not shave. Noah detests all these rites and he is branded a faithless son and a sinner for not following 'Shivah'. His mother advises him against marrying Miriam who is a Christian. When Miriam compels Noah to marry her, he asks her to wait for sometime. Miriam mistakes it to be an excuse on the part of Noah to desert her. She thinks that it is difficult for a Jew like Noah to break the family ties and the Jewish ghetto. Meanwhile she learns that Theo is willing to forgive and accept her. Though Miriam has no love for her husband, she decides to return to her husband. She tells Marg of Noah's mother and her hold on Noah Adler.

She is dreadful... and She's got a tremendous hold on him... I don't know if you understand how strong Jewish family ties are (Ibid, 160).
She reminds the readers of Rosie in R.K. Narayan’s *The Guide*

In the final part of the novel the mystery surrounding the death of Wolf Adler is solved by Noah. Though his father Wolf is thought to be a real hero who died for the sake of religion, the irony was that he had died only for the sake of money. Shloine, the greedy younger brother of his father had set fire to the shop to steal the money box thinking that the old man Melech Adler had hidden all his money in the box. Wolf had walked into the fire to recover the box but died in the fire. When Noah happens to open the box and read the scrolls and letters he sees a photograph and understands the whole truth. Those were letters written by his grandfather to a lady whom he could not marry. He had kept these letters in a box and hidden it in the shop. It was mistaken for a box containing money. The old man had hidden the truth from his sons. He narrates everything to Noah and admits that the woman in the photo was the one whom he had loved once but could not marry, for, she had refused to become a Jew. He had kept the matter a secret, for he thought that it would affect the honour of the family. Noah had earlier misunderstood him once when he slapped him. If he had not slapped
him at that time, he would have been terribly beaten and probably killed by his father for uttering the truth. When Noah's grand father asks Noah to stay with him and not to leave the family and strengthen the Jewish community, Noah replies...

"I can no more leave you, my mother, or my father's memory, than I can renounce myself. But I refuse to take in this... I've come to tell you that I have rules now, I'll be a human being" (Ibid, 199).

Before leaving he gets a scroll from him and walks out.

Noah has already met his mother and informed her of his plan to go to Europe the next afternoon. He has told her that he has decided not to marry Miriam, not for the reason that she is a Christian, but he has understood that it is impossible for her to forget her husband Theo. He tells her that he has not observed the Jewish rites at the death of his father because he has lost faith in them. He tells her that he wants freedom and the free will to do whatever he finds right to do. Melech Adler becomes sad at his grandson's decision of leaving Montreal. He becomes introspective.

Each man creates God in his own image. Melech's God, who was stern, sometimes Just and always without mercy would reward him and
punish the boy. Melech could count on that. He picked up his prayer book and began to read. And why not? hadn’t the Angel of death passed over Kind David because he was at his prayers? (Ibid, 201).

Melech Adler constantly meditates of the sorrows and sufferings of the Jews and their plight. But he wants to preserve the Jewish tradition at all costs. He is aware of the fact that he is an immigrant in an alien land. He is proud to hear the creation of Israel, a Jewish state and tries to seek his identity by following faithfully the Jewish tradition. But Noah is ready to cross the boundary. He does not hesitate to abandon the old values and break the family ties. He is a clear contrast to Melech Adler. Noah who has regards for his grandfather and follows him like his shadow, moves away from him, his Judaism and his narrow world of hypocrisy. To Noah, such hypocrisy is intolerable. He cannot identify himself with his family’s religion and his problem is that he feels neither Jewish nor Canadian, the result is, that he is spiritually devoid of roots. Noah’s rebellious nature and defiance springing from a yearning for a clear identity will free him from his inner anxiety and doubt and reconcile him to the two fundamental facts of existence - his Jewish ness and his growing up in Canada.
Noah who is caught between two ‘identities’ sets off to Europe to establish himself. Unlike Jake Hersh and Joshua, he does not yearn for a dual identity. Noah craves for Canadian identity when he was a fresher in the college attracted by the gentile way of life. In the end of the Novel when he sets off to Europe he wants to survive in this vast world with respect and decency. Richler portrays Noah as a man who has jilted his Jewish identity and his craze for Canadian identity as well. He says to his mother before leaving for Europe...

“You said 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.....”

(Ibid, 199)

Yes, Noah Adler has established his identity not as a Jew or a Canadian but as a human being who is bothered about the very survival of his life.

Mordecai Richler in his novel Solomon Gursky was here deals with the Jewish community’s search for origins. Solomon Gursky, the hero of the novel, springs from an ill-reputed family of bootleggers. But he chooses a path different from that of his two brothers, Bernard, the greedy business man and Morrie, the weak willed one.
Taken by his energetic grandfather Ephraim to the Polar sea when he was young, Solomon learns and practises survival and strange mystical rituals of the North based on Jewish rites and customs. Moses Berger, the son of a poet narrates the story of Solomon. He is obsessed with uncovering the facade of lies the Gursky family has constructed around itself. He is also keen on finding out the secrets of Solomon’s mystical life. His discoveries lead him to uncover the adventures of Solomon’s grandfather Ephraim, a cunning forger of documents, an experienced explorer of the Arctic, a charismatic religious leader and a strong and powerful personality who manages to seduce both men and women. In this novel, Richler deals with the Jews who had left Europe at the turn of the last century. They were washed on to the shores of a cold country. That was as different to them as they to it.

Sleep walking through the day they grudgingly rendered unto Canada what was Canada’s but at night they wakened to their real life of the soul (Solomon Gursky was Here, 12).

When Solomon Gursky meets Mr. Horace Mac Intyre, the Deputy Minister of Immigration, he is shocked when he openly declares...
Let's not hide behind euphemisms' Mr. Gursky. By refugees you mean Jews... Jews tend to be classified as non-preferred immigrants... This endless agitation to flood the country with Jewish relatives and friends must stop (Ibid, 379).

This is widely discussed by the Jews in their circles. Tova Clark, a critic raises a question...

There is an ambivalence, an ambivalence that constitutes the eternal Jewish dilemma; if Jews themselves think of Canada as a country of exile, then how can they expect to be recognized as full fledged Canadians?

(qtd. in. Ramamurthy, Malgudi to Montreal,?)

When once Solomon was told in a hotel that it was against the hotel’s policy to serve this kind, he told them that he has already bought the hotel. When the hotel manager asked him if he had enough money to buy the hotel, Solomon grabbed the fellow by the throat slamming him against the wall. Solomon, in fact, is a different kind of Jew who could really fight back in order to establish his rightful place in the civilized world. Becky Schwarz, in the novel is a lady with ambition who wants to climb up the social ladder and she succeeds. Diane, the Gentile girl, is a contrast to her. Solomon falls in love with her but cannot marry her owing to social obstacles. This terribly
upsets him. He is rich and runs an aeroplane service. Unfortunately, on one of his trips to Arctic, his plane crashes and disappears. The reader is left to reach his own conclusions. A question is raised about his death. A man like Solomon cannot admit defeat. The only way out was self-destruction. The second part of the novel deals with sir Hyman Kaplamsky who seems to be a reincarnation of Solomon Gursky. He takes revenge strangely on those who are prejudiced towards him.

Ephraim’s escapades in the Arctic provides the entire Gursky clan with Canadian credentials. Mr. Bernard, the brother of Solomon says…

“The Gurskys didn’t come here steerage fleeing from some dirty village. My family was established here before Canada even became a country. We are older how about that? Ephraim’s first job was a coalminer” (Solomon Gursky was Here, 227).

Mr. Bernard tries to acquire the social skills to establish his identity. Throughout his successful career as a liquor smuggler and salesman, Mr. Bernard never felt that he had really made it up the social ladder. After his death his brother Morie eulogizes..
“You know what my poor brother really wanted, he never got: What he wanted was to be accepted by them may be appointed as Ambassador like Joe Kennedy” (Ibid, 261).

He is sad that Jews are not duly recognized and they are ill-treated. Bert-smith-a customs clerk in the novel, took it upon himself single-handedly to prosecute and persecute Mr. Bernard for liquor trafficking. He says...

Those who do not accept Jesus can never enter the kingdom of Heaven (Ibid, 336).

He invites them to a seder party. He provides them with 'Matzopt', unleavened bread. He has engineered it in such a way that the 'Matzopt', will appear to bleed at every bite, causing red-stained starched shirt fronts. Fright turns into panic and his party turns into a nightmare with his guests fleeing in horror. Sir Hyman then proceeds to get drunk with his servants and laughs all the way. It was reported later that the mysterious dish was drowned in the sea. His revenge is bitter sweet, as are the bitter herbs and the 'charoset' (Sweet, mixture of apples, wine, nuts and Cinnamon in the place of bricks without mortar that the Israelites were obliged to use) as his Cedar table. The question here is...
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"Is the Jewish quest for recognition totally futile?  
Will it never succeed?" (clark,342).  

It is certain that Sir Hyman would never have been totally accepted no matter how hard he tried. In Solomon, as narrated by his biographer Moses-Bergher, he turns to alcohol for comfort because he realizes that the desperate search for status is totally futile. The search for recognition is really a quest for a home to the Jews. Mordecai Richler, in this novel, attempts to create origins and legitimize Canadian credentials through a new Arctic tribe made up of some members of a Jewish family and native women who consort with them. The novelist manages to capture the attention and imagination of the readers by amalgamating Arctic, Jewish, financial and alcoholic histories.

The Gurskys are scoundrels, alternating between a seedy underworld and a normal world in which they yearn for acceptance, recognition and respectability (Ibid, 347).

From the underworld of the 19th century London, through the Franklin expedition and to the Arctic, to the prohibition years to the prairies and the eastern township of Quebec.
Richler's men and women seem to be real
and come alive against the background of his
own peculiar Canadian reality

(Ibid, 336-337).

In this novel, Richler tries to fuse the Jewish and the Canadian historical experiences. By incorporating part of the Gursky family into the Canadian Arctic, he attempts to create a ‘fait accompli’. Not only are they Canadians, but they are to be considered as part and parcel of the original authentic inhabitants of the land. Their Canadian credentials are thus established and their marginality is to become neutralized.

But the world continues to turn and the
Jews continue to seek their place in it
and above all recognition (Ibid, 336).