Chapter VI

The Ingenious Monster: Cocksure

“. . . Now, going back to the thirties, the nineteen thirties I mean, those were the days of the colossal, the big studios, . . . Now the giants are dead. I, of course, still own and run Star Maker Studios, among other ventures . . .” (C, 144).

One of Canada’s most outspoken writers, Mordecai Richler is arguably the greatest author that Canada’s produced. Richler examines topics such as Canadian society, Jewish culture, the adverse effects of materialism, and the relationship between individuals of different backgrounds.

Apart from being a novelist, Richler was a prolific writer of film scripts. He remained a popular and critically acclaimed screen writer, even winning a plaque for his screen play of his own novel, The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz. Being a screen writer for movies, they feed his creative imagination, a fact which Richler candidly admits: “I think like any novelist in my generation I’ve been enormously influenced by film, and it’s a large part of our culture experience, so that we’ve absorbed certain film techniques into our novel writing . . .” (Gibson, 271). Many of Richler’s novels either directly deal with filmy themes or carry cinematic scenes.

Richler is an exponent of humour and satire. Through his Cocksure, he emerges as a black humourist. Leslie Fiedler finds in Richler, “. . . a lust for surreal exaggeration and the grotesque, and an affinity for the atrocious—the dirty joke turned somehow
horrific, the scene of terror altered somehow into absurdity—which made him, before he himself knew it, a member of the group later to be labeled Black Humorists”(103).

Kerry McSweeney in his “Revaluing Mordecai Richler” emphasized his statement about the black humour in the novel:

The black humour strain in “Cocksure” is principally found in one of the novel’s two narrative lines: that involving Richler’s most fantastic invention, the Star Marker, the malign demiurge of the film industry who aspires to divine status through self-reproduction, who is destroying humane literary values, and who—in the high point of the novel’s dark exuberance—recalls how Jewish Hollywood entrepreneurs of the 1930s came to perfect the manufacture of handsome WASP robots for the screen, mechanical images of desire for the masses.(2)

The novel opens when the reader is introduced to the Star Maker in his customary wheel chair. He wants Tomasso, who is designated as Star Maker’s heir, to go to London and look after his interests there in a publishing house. Tomasso who was expecting to become the crown prince of the empire was disappointed. It was worse than a demotion. He also calls it banishment. Richler personifies monstrous evil in the Star Maker. The setting of Cocksure is London in the swinging sixties. Tomasso having let out his anger gets a second chance from Star Maker, who is simply unknown to forgive. We find out later that he is going to be deprived of his eyes and it is replaced for Star Maker’s eye infected by cataract.
Mortimer, the senior editor of London’s most distinguished publishing house, finds out that Star Maker has made a successful takeover of the Oriole Press. Star Maker is seen as “the ageless undying Star Maker” (C,2) about whom almost nothing was known; almost everything was rumour, vile rumour whose very sex had recently become a hotly debated issue. Some said he was a man, other’s insisted he was turning into a woman; astoundingly enough, whispered that something even more sinister was in offing”. Mortimer dislikes that the press is passing into such obscene hands. After Star Maker takes over the press, Cameron, a likable sale chief is released because of his mild heart condition. Star Maker does not tolerate ill health among his people. For those who work for him, however, good health is definitely unhealthy. Tomasso had contributed his one eye for Star Maker’s wellbeing. He has been willing to sacrifice-personal pleasures, moral principles, body parts-all for the prospect of ultimately inheriting Star Maker’s kingdom. Polly Morgan is needed because she had the blood type as Star Maker which was very rare. Mortimer himself was chosen, because of his “marvy lymphatic system” (C,184). The new owner initiates a series of biographies on contemporary personalities. Mortimer and Hy were not allowed to commission biographies for the new series. The first biography was of a labour politician and the second was of a once-well-known film star who hadn’t worked since 1945. The timely deaths of the first two subjects assured fantastic sales. The third is a young politician, a junior minister in the Labour Government who was at present campaigning. “But he’s too young” (C,127) Dino protests when he is told he will be the next subject of the biography. When Mortimer will not take over Oriole Press and attend to business as required he simply becomes the first subject of a new series.
Vices are present in the episodes of Star Maker. Richler satirizes the Star Maker’s vicious, cannibalistic exploitation of his underlings and his cruel disregard for human life in achieving commercial success. Tomasso left the “Our Living History” file out, and Mortimer reads it. Immediately he wanted to meet Star Maker. Tomasso warns not to go against Star Maker and reveals his artificial limb. Speeding towards the studio to meet Star Maker Mortimer wonders, “Surely the Star Maker was no longer capable of producing an heir unless the cunning old bastard had test tubes full of his semen stored away in a deep-freeze somewhere. He invites an unsuspecting, beautiful young girl, say Polly Morgan to his suite, then when she’s least expecting it – artificial insemination….“ (C,136).

During the meeting with Star Maker, Mortimer finds out how Star Maker produced or manufactured his own stars. He comes out with his plan, “the idea was to kill two birds with one stone. By manufacturing our own stars, no more than one model to a mold, we would be liberated from or contract troubles and so forth…” (C,146). We find out how his “Operation Goy-Boy” began and Goy-Boy III which brought him triumph. He manufactured plenty of stars and also the women to play opposite them. Mortimer finds out Star Maker is pregnant and he asks, “Are you a man or a woman?” for which Star Maker replies, “Am a modern miracle”. He himself further confesses that “whatever you decide you must say no to the prosthesis” (C,209). Star Maker’s character here becomes repulsive and nauseating when he talks about artificial body replacement and reproducing himself. The Star Maker says: “Mortimer, I am now able to reproduce myself. I will have a son” (C,211). At this point there is an aversion towards this character. We find the perverted nature coming out of Star Maker. Mortimer having
learnt about Star Maker does not want to work with him. Having known all the secrets of Star Maker he is followed by him. Star Maker orders his assassination, an assassination that is imminent as the novel ends.

Margaret Gail Osachoff in her essay “Richler’s Pastoral of the City Streets” observes:

*Cocksure* is a satire about (amongst other things) the cult of youth, organ transplants, and especially, the film industry. The connection between these apparently disparate subjects is cleverly managed; and the conservatism of the author’s views is clear, although, as usual, what Richler is against is more evident than what he is for. Because of the influence of Hollywood, youth and good looks have the glamour and desirability that middle age, old age, and ugliness at any age do not.(36)

“The ageless, undying” thus goes the introduction for the “movie mogul” Star Maker who wanted Tomasso to go to England, but he was unwilling to go because he considered it as punishment. When Tomasso said, “Go fuck yourself”(*C*,3), the consequences of it were very worse. Tomasso wanted to commit suicide; he was tortured by Star Maker. This is well highlighted by the following lines of Star Maker. “We’ll take it from the top. I said, quote, I want you to go to London and look after my interests there, unquote. You said, quote, I’m not going, unquote, I have no heir. You are my son, Dino, unquote. Then you said, quote…?” (*C*,4).

We also find out that “it was simply unknown for the Star Maker to give anyone a second chance, to forgive;” (*C*,5)Then the reader is introduced to Goy-Boy II operation
and both Tomasso and the reader are shocked to identify the Star Maker-model inside the cupboard. “Tomasso pondered the Star for a long time, poking, pinching, and looking him up and down. Finally, satisfied, he shut the cupboard door softly”(C,6).

Though extremely repulsive, Star Maker was a man of multiple talents. He lived his life to its full. He was proud of what he had achieved in life and he was a self-made man. He liked to learn new things, and willing to examine the unusual, and was highly curious. To fulfill his wants he was behind a publishing firm Oriole where two senior editors, Hyman Rosen and Mortimer Griffin were working. To quote from the novel:

Oriole Press, where Mortimer was an editor, was still one of London’s most distinguished publishing houses; that is to say, it had yet to be taken over and transmogrified by the hope that he was Mortimer enjoyed his work and had reason to hope that he was being considered as the next editor-in-chief, the penultimate step toward a seat on the board of directors, his initials carved into the two-hundred-old round table(C,10).

Margot Northey interprets Star Maker in the essay, “Satiric Grotesque: Cocksure” in the following way:

Richler obviously regarded as evil—a category centering upon the Star Maker and his cohorts. The Star Maker is as truly a gothic creation as Frankenstein, and his plans to perpetuate himself by taking new body parts from people around him and to ensure the popular success of his biographies by killing the subjects are sinister in the extreme....
It is as a possibility rather than a probability that the Star Maker is the source of the greatest terror in the book. He goes beyond the distortion of a human trait or attitude, and comes to represent the evil of all superhuman and yet inhuman manipulative forces in the modern world....”(2)

George Woodcock has to say this on The Star Maker: “The Star Maker carries a heavy burden of possible meanings. At the primary level, his synthetic stars recall the procedures of reputation-building in the classic age of Hollywood and suggest what can still be created out of nothing by the mass media”(52).

In the words of Arnold Davidson, “Star Maker, Blessed Be His Name,” is the god this shabby time deserves. He/she raises narcissism to hitherto undreamt of heights”(133-34).

Mortimer finds out that Star Maker has taken over the Oriole Press, the London publishing house and this is flashed in TV where the emblem of his had been shown on the screen. Mortimer does not like this and this is revealed by the following lines.

THE AGELESS, UNDYING STAR MAKER, ABOUT WHOM almost nothing was known, almost everything was rumor, vile rumor. Whose very sex had recently become a hotly debated issue. Some said he was a man, others insisted he was turning into a woman; a few, astoundingly enough, whispered that something even more sinister was in the offing. The Star Maker. Imagine, Mortimer thought, Oriole Press passing into such obscene hands(C,31).
Mortimer was scared because Star Marker had many other international businesses and that he was bound to take no notice of Oriole Press. Here the Star Marker is shown as a person who holds a dominant or superior position within the field, and is able to exercise a high degree of control or influence over others. It can be seen as ambition which leads to determination and an unconditional desire to achieve.

The Star Maker, his interests global, swooped out of the sky one day to settle a strike on a Malayan opium farm and the next day flew on to Rome, perhaps, to fire the director on one of his multimillion-dollar film productions. His interests were so vast and all-embracing, taking film and TV production companies, airlines, newspapers, diamond mines, oil refineries and gambling casinos, that he was bound to take no notice of Oriole Press(C.31-32).

Star Maker has become super-successful in all his businesses. He took the time to analyze his life, to look closely at his vision and his purpose in life. No matter what the obstacle came his way he kept going and it is because he had extraordinary clarity on the outcome. He was able to develop the ability to focus and concentrate to maximize his resources and forces. Many such people can be found on earth and undoubtedly they would be successful. Darren L. Johnson says: “We all talk to ourselves. A major key to success exists in what we say to ourselves, which helps to shape our attitude and mindset”(Online article). The first exhaustive work started in Oriole Press by Star Maker is the “Our Living History” biographies. Exhaustive medical checkup was done to all the employees in the press.
“Tomasso began to process existing staff and hire new people, applying the Star Maker’s seemingly wayward methods. This meant that Mortimer, like everyone else who worked for the Star Maker, had to submit to an exhaustive health check. Fortunately, he passed. So did Hy Rosen. But John Cameron, Oriole’s likable sales chide, was released because he had a mild heart condition. “But Cameron’s been with us for years,” Mortimer protested, outraged. “His condition doesn’t interfere with his work.”

“The Star Maker,” Tomasso said, “cannot tolerate ill health among his people.” (C,36-37)

Mortimer was totally bewildered when he finds out that Tomasso was hired only because his color of the eyes and he also finds out that Polly would be headed for big things in the press because she has Star Maker’s same blood type, a very rare group. Whenever Star Maker went an emergency medical unit, unrivaled for excellence, had to be accommodated. Further,

The Kidney-cleansing technicians had first to check the power plugs and establish themselves with batteries in the event of a power failure. The cardiologists and their awkward pump, complete with artificial valves and mechanical heart, had to be similarly catered to. So did the blood plasma boys and nurses. The Star Maker’s irreplaceable urinologist had to be satisfied, so did the sexologist, a Danish fusspot, newly arrived, and looked down upon as kinky by the rest of the unit. Then one of the guards had to establish a clear run to the refrigeration truck and interconnecting
operating ambulance that always waited on the boil within five minutes of the Star Maker, the spare-parts men and their priest ready for any sacrifice in the Austin Princess immediately behind(C,76).

Star maker is a megalomaniac and we find him in a delusional state where he believes that he is superior to others. He believes himself to be a god, a famous person. Wikipedia shows out the connotation for megalomaniac: “Megalomania is a psychopathological condition characterized by delusional fantasies of power, relevance, omnipotence, and by inflated self-esteem”(Megalomania, Wikipedia).

Star Maker feels that he has great powers. He has a delusional belief of superiority, delusions of greatness, delusions about his own power, and delusions about his own importance, omnipotence and superiority. Delusion of being superior to others, lack of empathy for anything, egoistic, violent tendencies, self-centered, want others to be afraid of him, belief of being a god like figure, mood swings are everything which suggests him as a megalomaniac person. Mortimer is yet to find out the devilish character of Star Maker. He does not realize that the Labour politician is killed by self-centered psyche.

Mortimer stayed up for the news, which was how he first found out that the dreary Labour politician, who was the subject of the first biography in the our living history series, had killed himself, with publication day only ten days off. The politician had been found dead in his Hampstead flat. He had hanged himself with a black silk stocking from a chandelier in a
room replete with two-way mirrors, rhino whips, dildos, and other erotic paraphernalia.

God damn it. Dino Tomasso, stupidly lucky, Mortimer thought, had obviously got himself a best seller, but he was bound to burn his fingers with the next title in the series, the faded film star’s biography. (C, 109).

“Our Living History” series is a biography which is a written account of the series of events that makes up a person's life. The second in this list was a film star and Mortimer perceives that he is dead before the publication of the series.

The following morning Mortimer discovered, to his consternation, that Dino Tomasso had hit it lucky again. Three days before the second title in the Our Living History series, the biography of the faded film star was to be published, the star died from an over-dose of heroin. He left a note saying he had got a fifteen-year-old girl with child, his grandfather as a matter of fact. (C, 127)

Some questions came rushing to his mind when he discovered that whoever comes in the “Living” series become “Dead”. Moreover he finds out that the third victim in the series is a Labour minister: “…next title in the Our Living History series was to be a biography of a most attractive political crusader. A junior minister in the Labour Government, who was at present campaigning for a new and possibly punitive tax on gambling casinos.” (C, 127)

Mortimer is shocked to hear about how the person whom the society is interested in is found out, the basic facts of their personal life, their personal details are gathered
and their death day been arranged earlier even before the biographies are written. Tomasso reveals his artificial limbs and warns Mortimer about Star Maker, he adds “don’t let the Star Maker talk you into anything.” Mortimer wonders that Star Marker might go for artificial insemination when Tomasso also warns Polly Morgan to guard herself. “Surely the Star Maker was no longer capable of producing an heir. Unless the cunning old bastard had test tubes full of his semen stored away in a deep-freeze somewhere. He invites an unsuspecting, beautiful young girl, say Polly Morgan, to his suite, then when she’s least expecting it, whamo! Artificial insemination. Nonsense” (C, 136).

While commenting on Star Maker’s survival and reproductive abilities, Margaret Gail Osachoff in her essay “Richler’s Pastoral of the City Streets” says: “And as part of this pattern he (with the help of various medical technologists and spare-parts men) has himself constantly made so that he is ageless and undying. In order to produce his own heir, he undergoes hormone injections and countless operations and transplants. Besides God, the Star Maker is the “first self-contained creator” (36).

He is looking forward with desire and usually with a measure of confidence in the likelihood of gaining what is desired is seen in Star Maker when he is waiting expectantly and with certainty about his child. This is exposed when Mortimer sees “On the Star Maker’s lap there were knitting needles, a ball of blue wool, and the beginnings of a baby’s blue sweater.” (C, 142) Here moving further we find Star Maker finding erotic pleasure derived from contemplation or admiration of his own body especially towards the end of the novel. To quote from the conversation between Mortimer and Star Maker,
“Couldn’t you marry?”

“For money? I have more than I can count.”

“For love, then?”

“But, my dear child, I only love me.” (C.210-11)

Victor J. Ramraj in his book *Mordecai Richler* comments on the Star Maker in the following way: “The Star Maker is indeed a repulsive, nauseating, obscene, Tiresias figure, whose self–impregnation is the perfect satirical image of the narcissistic tycoon who plays god with the lives of his underlings” (75).

Star Maker is referred to as a “Narcissistic Tycoon” and a “Tiresias figure”.

“Wikipedia here tells clearly about Narcissism and its origin.

Narcissism is the pursuit of gratification from vanity or egotistic admiration of one's own attributes. The term originated from the Greek mythology, where the young Narcissus fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool of water... The term "narcissism" comes from the Greek myth of Narcissus, a handsome Greek youth who rejected the desperate advances of the nymph Echo. These advances eventually led Narcissus to fall in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Unable to consummate his love, Narcissus "lay gazing enraptured into the pool, hour after hour," and finally changed into a flower that bears his name, the narcissus. (*Narcissism, Wikipedia*)
Star Maker definitely resembles Narcissus and is boastful, a person who looks down on people as inferior, and a person who takes advantage of others or exploits them to get what he wants. We find him behaving in an arrogant or haughty manner. Star Maker is seen slowly transforming into a woman and he engages himself in making love to himself. “There is inner space as well as outer, you see. And it’s fun, oh it’s such fun. In all my years, I have enjoyed nothing more than making love to me,” the Star Maker said, embracing, nuzzling upper arms, kissing, licking”(C,211)

Here Star Maker is related to the Tiresias, in Greek mythology and Britannica provides information about the Theban seer who turns into a woman for seven years.

Tiresias, in Greek mythology, was a blind Theban seer. In the Odyssey he retained his prophetic gifts even in the underworld, where the hero Odysseus was sent to consult him. At Thebes, he played an active part in the tragic events concerning Laius, the king of Thebes, and his son Oedipus. Later legend told that he lived for seven (or nine) generations, dying after the expedition of the Seven Against Thebes, and that he had once been turned into a woman as the result of killing the female of two coupling snakes; on killing the male he regained his own sex.(Brittanica, Online)

Hollywood is able to exert an amazing amount of influence on our society, culture and civilization. It is like life imitating art and it is really true. Hollywood had influenced human lives tremendously and it is more than mere entertainment. The main objective and goal of Hollywood has always been to entertain and it has done so for
years. Hollywood didn’t come to such a powerful status without having influencing society in America in several ways. Hollywood’s impact on society is undeniable because of its ability to entertain, influence and continually make profits forever. Hollywood may be a absolutely different world where the biggest movies come to life and celebrities live as over-glorified human beings.

Margaret Gail Osachoff in her essay “Richler’s Pastoral of the City Streets” speaks about the movie stars:

The Star Maker, the focal point of Richler’s satire, makes movie stars who will appeal to American audiences and influence their values and lives….For Richler, he/she is an example of technology gone mad. Perhaps working with movies – where singing can be dubbed, stunts done by stunt riders, and physical appearance changed by cosmetic surgery – enlarged and distorted his idea of what is possible. The moral vacuum in which such scientist-technologists work is indicated when the Star Maker laments that his group of scientists discarded the film industry and went for unethical but more profitable fields” (36).

Star Maker comments on the difficulties and issues he had with the actors. Through Star Maker, Richler presents the contemporary film industry:

Well now, at the same time, to be honest, the stars we had under contract were beginning to give us trouble. This one was a queer, that one a nympho, and the next a shithead. Suddenly names we had made big –
former waitresses and ditch diggers – wanted script approval, if only to show they could read. Things were getting messy, Mortimer(C,145)

Actors interpret others' words in order to bring a script to life, and to put flesh and blood on the characters they portray. Theirs is the public face of a production, representing many others' work and efforts. It is odd for the public to see the scriptwriter, the producer, or the director - their perception is what the actors portray on screen. Actors are highly adaptable, as they portray many different characters over a short period of time. Actors fully transform into a character, to be truthfully and emotionally connected. They work hard. But movie actors were criticized by Star Maker.

I retreated to Las Vegas to ruminate. There was, I decided, nothing more vacuous, no shell emptier, than a movie actor. They speak the words writers put in their mouths. Any writer. If it’s a woman and her legs are bad you shoot somebody else’s legs for her. If she’s got no tits you build her some, borrowing fat from her thighs. If she can’t sing, you hire somebody to dub for her. If it’s a man, somebody does his stunts for him. If he can’t remember his lines you hold up an idiot card out of shot for him and do one line at a time, over and over again, maybe twenty-five times, until he gets it right. If he has no hair you stich some on to him. If he’s too short, you stretch him. You handle his women and money for him. You rewrite his past life for him….Was I, the Star Maker, going to be dependent on the whims of such fleas? In a word, no.(C,145)
Arnold E. Davidson’s essay “Popular Culture, Black Comedy, and Cocksure” points out that “The setting is also transplanted as a kind of rank weed throughout the world. Again Richler attacks, on many different levels, the producers, directors, writers, and actors of merchandized fantasies that pervade the mass media” (120).

Star Maker has imagination. He pulls his imagination, and then defines his vision and then goes to work Night and Day! The Star Maker postulates about arranging the group of scientists.

I returned to Hollywood and shared my thoughts with other studio heads and at long last they began to take a positive interest in my nonprofit science foundation. Mortimer, you should have seen my lab in those days! What a bunch of scientists I had! They came to me from the Vienna Radium Institute and Gottingen; from Rutherford’s lab at Cambridge; from the University of Munich and Tokyo; from M.I.T. and Princeton and Breslau. The cream of the cream. I read them Edward Gordon Craig’s piece on the uber-marionette. I brought in von Sternberg to tell them what he thought about actors. I told them about the contract troubles we were having with the stars and how we had to suppress the squalid details of their personal lives. Gentlemen, I said, each one of you here is a genius. You can have anything you want. Now get into that lab and don’t come out again until you’ve made me a Star. (C.145-46)

Star Maker says about his Goy-Boy operation and its beginning. In Goy-Boy I the “first man–made star” was not a success. It had its draw backs. The star moved well,
but had only one expression on its face and during shooting it started melting due to the hot lights produced by the camera. It was an eight million dollar project and it leaked through the studio. His second operation, Goy Boy II there were extensive improvements. The star had two expressions and its memory was perfect. Though it cost twelve million dollars to make one it did not survive because there were scratches on it and they were not able to make a new one because the mold was broken. Star Maker was so excited and enthusiastic when he started to describe the Goy-Boy III because it was a great victory for him.

The Mini-Goy. What a piece of work! Three expressions, Mortimer. Three. Walked very, very nice. Talked in sentences as long as twelve words each. He couldn’t read actual books or scripts, making him almost human, hah? But he could understand and remember synopses. Mortimer, among actors Mini-Goy passed for an intellectual. Why, women were crazy for him,”… Between the pictures we let the air out and locked him in a mothproof box. Maybe all that inflating and deflating?(C, 147-48)

By this Goy-Boy III operation Star Maker made plenty of stars including Roy Rogers, American singer and cowboy actor during 1935 and he made women to play their role, and one among them was Susan Hayward who was actress and singer during 1937. Star Maker also laments that the scientists in his group went commercial: “They left us for germ warfare or H-bomb production. More money for them and security, but gone forever production. More money for them and security, but gone forever were the
joys of craftsmanship. After all, one H-bomb is very much like another, isn’t it?” the Star Maker asked with a sneer”(C,149)

The scientist went and the Goy-Boy operation was not able to develop further. Star Maker’s profit through Hollywood shrunk and he was in short of money for the research and development. So they settled for TV-size models, and the most successful one in them was a doctor in the series who came in black-and-white and colored.

The Star Maker here resembles or even could be compared with the famous director Josef Von Sternberg during 1930s. Scott Eyman in his “The Unhappiest Man in Hollywood” comments: “Josef Von Sternberg’s prideful, obsessive nature made him a great director—and an impossible individual.” He further adds:

In the early studio era, when many film directors adopted imperial pretensions and ruled by fear, nobody had more pretensions or was more feared than Josef von Sternberg. He was a man who kept large, aggressive dogs, who avoided direct eye contact, who presented his opinions as incontrovertible fact and who treated everyone with unconcealed disdain or contempt. On the set, he had a blackboard; if crew members or actors wanted to talk to him, they had to write their names on the blackboard, and he’d schedule an appointment. “The only way to succeed,” he once said, “is to make people hate you. That way they remember you.(Eyman, Online article).

In the novel, Polly Morgan lives life as if it were a film script. Mortimer feels that she is “highly skilled and most knowledgeable about films”(C,37). Mortimer finds out
that Star Maker’s men have come to kill him. Polly Morgan is instructed by Mortimer. We find that she lives in imagination and so Mortimer says, “Polly, listen to me. This is no movie. This is real. Understand?” (C,224) He tells her to run to a public telephone to phone the police.

“Polly ran. She ran and ran. The first telephone booth she came to was empty, which wouldn’t have done at all. She continued, breathless, to the next booth where, fortunately, a long-haired teen-ager was chattering endlessly, unaware that a man’s life was at stake. Rat-tat-tat, Polly went, banging her sixpence against the glass. Rat-tat-tat. The teen-ager was done, just in time, Polly sensed, and she entered the booth. Polly deposited her sixpence and dialed nine nine nine.”

“Metropolitan Police here. Yes?”

Polly smiled warmly.

“Hello! Hello? Is there anyone there? the officer asked.

Gratefully, Polly hung up, hung up without speaking, and on the wide screen that was her mind’s eye, sirens sounded, police cars heaving into Beaufort Street in the nick of time.” (C,225)

Her addiction to movies is well described by Margaret Gail Osachoff in her essay “Richler’s Pastoral of the City Streets”. She says:

In addition, movies have modified our perception of reality in another way. For some people the distinction between life and movies becomes
blurred. In “Cocksure” Polly Morgan is so addicted to movies that her life has started imitating art – especially bad film art. Her apartment is a movie set, her corny lines come from a third-rate script, and the people in her life become characters in the movie of her life. Most of the incidents that involve Mortimer and Polly are comic, but in the last “scene” of his life her “movie-mindedness” ensures tragedy for Mortimer is killed by Star Maker’s henchmen because she did not say anything to the police officer on the telephone. What her reactions would be when she returns to her apartment, finds no police with their cars and no crowds to cheer, finds Mortimer either dead or gone, is impossible to predict.

In the novel, Margaret Gail Osachoff has identified a message/warning of Richler:

Richler is pointing out that, in a general way, people who watch movies and TV are in danger of having those entertainment technologies usurp their lives to the extent that those lives are lived (if that is the right word) in a moral vacuum. His moral point is not that movies and TV programs – or film technology itself - are harmful and, thus, should be banned; rather, he points out that the viewer must know the conventions of film art and, unlike Polly Morgan, must keep them separate from life.

Thus, this chapter focused on the character Star Maker who is unscrupulously indulging in various business schemes. Star Maker a Hollywood super-tycoon is irretrievably immoral. He resembles Citizen Kane in his ruthlessness and creativity! After
further exploration into the novel, it is found that he transplanted organs and limbs, making himself androgynous and impregnating himself. Star Marker is a character who indeed is repulsive and nauseating. This chapter brings out the business exploits and dark side of Star Maker and the somewhat perverted interior that rests within beautiful Hollywood exterior. The novel also brings out the London during the sixties, revealing a diseased country being stained by corruption, hypocrisy, greed and rage.

Victor J. Ramraj in his book *Mordecai Richler* focusing attention on the Star Maker, comments: “Equally fantastic, but more fanciful than grotesque, are the images of the Star Maker’s actors who hang limply in closets when not needed to act in films. Such grotesque and fantastic images are not restricted to the Star Maker’s episodes…” (75)

Also, Ramraj points out many cinematic techniques employed by the writer in *Cocksure:*

Written at a time when Richler was regularly involved with scriptwriting, *Cocksure* invites analysis in cinematic terms. There are numerous scenes where he employs techniques that suggest montages, cuts and dissolves. And the pervasive dialogue, which at times contributes incrementally to the narrative and at others explodes with appealing wit, could quite easily have been lifted from a film script(*from the Biocritical essay on Richler*).

Thus, in its theme and technique, *Cocksure* remains a Hollywood-Novel.