Chapter III
Persecution and Displacement

The Holocaust was a dreadful blow for the Jewish people, more savage and inhuman than anything they had ever suffered—both in numbers and in agony. All the achievements and innovations of modern science and technology had been enlisted for the extermination of an entire nation; Nazi propaganda had endeavoured to reduce the Jews to the status of vermin, to exterminate them by gas and fire in order to purify the world. The Holocaust destroyed European Jewry, which until the outbreak of the Second World War, had been the largest concentration of Jews in the world. The Nazi atrocity was a phenomenon unparalleled in the annals of human brutality. The Holocaust was, for writers like Richler, a fundamental reality of the present, as well as the immediate past. The harsh reality of the Holocaust could not be denied or altered; the only way to deal with it was to speak out the pain and expiate themselves and their successors.

The consciousness of mass murder of Jews in Europe destroyed the liberal humanist faith in brotherhood of men. Many Jewish Canadian writers have responded by reasserting the particularity of Jewish suffering in the Holocaust and reaffirming
their ties with Judaism. Other Jewish intellectuals have adopted a universalist perspective whereby the Holocaust is seen as one of the cataclysmic events in the recent history of mankind. Richler’s depiction of racial hatred and discrimination of the Jews reveal an empathetic attitude towards the Jewish victim and a sense of belonging to the Jewish heritage. However, the Jewish passivity in the confrontation with a hostile world produces in Richler a dissociation from the Jewish tradition.

Mordecai Richler’s novels explore the psychological and ideological implications of the Holocaust. *The Acrobats* (1954), *A Choice of Enemies* (1957), *The Incomparable Atuk* (1963), *Cocksure* (1968) and *St. Urbain’s Horseman* (1971) reflect this concern. Richler’s response to the Holocaust is conditioned by his rooting as a Canadian Jew in the Canadian environment. His paradoxical reaction relates to the issue of his identity as a Jew and as a member of the liberal Western society. Despite his identification with Canadian society, his perception of his people’s tragedy in Europe as his own, rouses an attitude of deep suspicion and distrust towards the gentile world. He places the genocide of the Jews in Europe in the context of universal human suffering and perceives it as another expression of the human propensity towards brutality and oppression.
Modern Jewish thinkers write under the shadow of the Nazi slaughter of six million Jews—bearing the burden of the Holocaust. Earlier generations of Jewish writers and thinkers felt comfortable articulating eternal values, affirming ideal truths and trusting in a divine plan for the Jewish people. The experience of a nationally planned genocide made many modern Jewish writers revalue the validity of those earlier certainties. Jews have not only witnessed, but also experienced the terrible potential that human nations possess for destroying life, for undermining moral commitment and for cultivating violence and hatred. While former Jewish writers recognized a human propensity towards waywardness, they did not envision a socially sanctioned and legitimised national demonism such as that carried out by the Nazis. The world of human existence looked irreparably altered from a perspective that took the Holocaust seriously (Boyarin 38). The universe in which moral choices were made no longer seemed supportive or confirming as was supposed earlier.

Jewish thought usually found theories to decode why God would bestow suffering to the Chosen people. The Holocaust challenged these theories not because it exhibited extraordinary evil, but because it showed how human attitudes and philosophers could justify that evil. The Nazis justified their brutality by
rationalizing these. They legalized and justified these deeds as politically and ethically imperative. Using their own definition of humanity, the Nazis claimed that they had not violated human rights—that they had remained within both legal and moral justice. The Nazi experience suggests that ideas of right and justice which arise in human minds are not ideal absolutes but fictions of society. The failure that led to Nazi atrocities was not that of justice or philosophy, but a failure of imagination, of human thinking. Not that people failed to live up to certain eternal ideas, they failed to create those ideals that would protect certain groups in their power.

The enormity of this tragedy raises the issue of the appropriateness of a literary treatment of the event; the uniqueness of the event questions human ability to find proper devices for its literary representation. “The challenge to the literary imagination is to find a way of making this fundamental truth accessible to the mind and emotions of the reader” (Langer 19). The relationship that the Holocaust writer creates in his reader is invaluable. The combination of the reader's historical knowledge about Holocaust and his exposure to the particular depiction of the horror turns him into a “collaborative witness to the events” (Ezrahi 9) and into a vicarious participant in the drama of the Holocaust. “Not to transmit an experience is to betray it; this is what the Jewish
tradition teaches us" (Wiesel 200). The act of writing constitutes an attempt to comprehend this experience; rather than repress the past, it is relived consciously through writing. The writer knows that complete understanding of the terror will escape him forever. Yet writing about it enables him to touch the bottom of madness and thus amounts to certain cathartic release which helps him to fight off despair.

The literary treatment of the Holocaust atrocities by the writer represents not only a testimony of the Jewish tragedy, but also the evidence of his total identification with his people's fate. The task of keeping the memory of the victims of the Holocaust alive manifests his intense concern about the continuity of Jewish existence. The palpable danger of annihilation of European Jewry has evidently strengthened his emotional bond with Judaism. Mordecai Richler does not respond to a direct experience in his treatment of the Holocaust. For him, the terror of the Holocaust can also be a motive for assimilation. He sets out to examine the ways in which the consciousness of the Holocaust has changed the relationships between the Canadian Jew and his social environment.

The Holocaust has invalidated the Canadian Jewish writer's identity as a liberal Jew. The hope cherished by one who
subscribed to the ideals of liberal democracy according to which "the bond of society is universal human morality where a religion. . . is a private affair" (Strauss 226), have been shattered forever with the savage outburst of anti-semitism in the enlightened Germany which destroyed European Jewry.

Mordecai Richler's emotional urge to identify with Jewish suffering prompts him to redefine and reassert his bonds with Judaism. At the same time, his strong ideological affinity with liberal humanism is manifested in the desire to sever emotional bonds with the Jewish history of suffering and to integrate into the gentile world. In Richler's works, the Holocaust constitutes a focal point of reference in his attempt to resolve his conflict of Jewish identity. Richler's adolescence coincides with the tragedy of European Jewry. The consciousness of the terrible expression of anti-Jewish hatred in Europe intensified his rage and mistrust of his own country which openly exhibited its strong bias against Jews in the 1930s and 40s. On the other hand, the overriding sense of helplessness and impotence of the Jews in the face of the anti-semitic world, engendered the desire to flee anguish and suffering through the assimilation of the liberal humanist myth of a tolerant society and the brotherhood of men.
Richler's childhood was affected by the growing political power of Quebec fascists. In the years before the war, the fascist movement intensified its anti-Semitic activities gaining even stronger support from the Quebec population over the issue of Jewish refugees from Europe. They vehemently opposed the asylum given to the persecuted German Jews by French Canada. The anti-Jewish sentiments in Quebec were by no means an isolated phenomenon on the pre-war Canadian scene. The pre-war Canadian government carefully manipulated the immigration policy by literally barring Jewish victims of the Nazi threat from entering Canada. The political aim of the Canadian government regarding Jewish immigration from Europe reflected the society's perception of a Jew as an unwanted element in the Canadian society. The traditional attitude of keeping a low placatory profile practised by the Canadian Jew was reinforced in view of the anti-Semitic terror directed at Jews in the Nazi Germany. Betcherman suggests that the Canadian Jews, "horrified at events in Germany were afraid of stirring up a backlash that could endanger their own security [and] were ready to overlook social discrimination, even that verging on ostracism" (Betcherman 99-100). Their passive endurance of anti-Semitic incidents and propaganda was rooted in the consciousness of total vulnerability and fear for physical safety.
The Canadian Jew refused to be drawn into a direct confrontation with the anti-Semites even though there was an increase in anti-Semitic incidents. They would not object openly and forcefully to the anti-Semitic measures implemented by the Canadian government. In this respect the Jewish community in Canada continued to practice the old European tradition of 'shtadlanut'. The policy of "shtadlanut" consisted in preserving good relationships with Gentiles at any cost, be it through bribery, flattery, intercession or appeasement. Significantly, the "shtadlonim" condemned any attempt on the part of the Jewish community to protest openly against the inhuman Canadian immigration policy. Richler’s childhood and early adolescence in the later nineteen thirties, the virulent anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews by the Nazis coincided with his own experience of anti-Semitism in Canada. The terrible tragedy of millions of helpless European Jews is associated to some extent with the helplessness of the Canadian Jews at the same time. The overbearing sense of Jewish helplessness in the face of anti-Semitism shapes the consciousness of the Jew as a perennial victim. In this respect, therefore, identification with the Jewish tradition implies the internalization of the image of the victimized Jew at the mercy of the hostile world.
In Richler's works, Holocaust also represents in a most concrete way, the vulnerability of the Jew in society. The unopposed destruction of the European Jewry community reveals not only the evil of the anti-Semitic, but also the passivity of its victim. Identification with the Holocaust amounts to corroboration with the inherent weakness and impotence of the Jew in his relationships with the world. The exploration of the representation of post-Holocaust Jewish consciousness in Richler's works indicates a deep identity crisis of the (Canadian) Jew. In effect, Richler's sense of being unwanted as a Jew appears to be even further exacerbated by the event of the Holocaust. The spectre of concentration camps can no longer be banished from the consciousness of a Jew whose childhood was permeated with anti-Semitic menace. Although Richler does not write directly of Holocaust, his response to Nazis and their crimes, acknowledge the inevitability of extreme reaction to extreme events. In an essay entitled "The Holocaust and After," he writes:

The Germans are still an abomination to me. I do not mourn for Cologne, albeit decimated for no useful military purpose. I rejoice in the crash of each German starfighter. No public event in recent years has thrilled me much more than the hunting hours of
Adolph Eichmann. I am not touched by the Berlin Wall. (1)

Richler’s four novels, The Acrobats, A Choice of Enemies, The Incomparable Atuk and Cocksure have Gentile heroes as the protagonists. In none of these novels does the gentile hero function in his natural environment. André, the Canadian painter lives in Valencia, Spain; Norman Price, the Canadian blacklisted professor is an émigré in London; Atuk, the newly discovered Canadian poet chooses to move to Toronto and Mortimer Griffin, the Canadian World War II veteran, works as an editor in a publishing house in London. In his new environment, the displaced gentile protagonist invariably encounters Jews who have long endured exile. The interaction that evolves between the gentile exiles and the Jewish exiles reveal an unusual situational shift.

This takes us to a closer examination of the term ‘exile.’ Exile is a condition characterized by dislocation, alienation and dispossession. Physical exile is the outward confirmation of moral or spiritual estrangement, and can also afford the perspective necessary to come to terms with that estrangement. Like his characters, Richler also journeys through complex patterns of family, location and culture which explore the possibilities of articulating in terms of cultural and historical determinants.
The strategy of boundary-crossing in Canadian fiction turns the condition of displacement into a powerful tool of intervention. Expatriation out of Canada has been essentially a solitary undertaking: only John Glassco (1909-81) and to a far lesser extent, Morley Callaghan (1903-90) belonged in spirit to the lost generation group of the 1920s comprising Henry James (1843-1916) and Ernest Hemingway (1899-1960). After World War II, individuals like Mavis Gallant (b. 1922), Norman Levine (1923-2005) and Mordecai Richler found their way independently to the European continent. But, by that time, both the world and the spirit behind expatriation had changed.

Richler comments about the absence, in the early 1950s, of a large, unifying cause behind their expatriation: “It would be nice, it would be tidy, to say with hindsight that we were a group, knit by political anger or a literary policy or even an aesthetic revulsion for all things American, but the truth was we recognized each other by no more than a shared sense of the ridiculous” (“We Jews” 79). What Richler is implying here is that the expatriates of the 1920s were sufficiently homogenous to be categorized as a fairly exclusive generation; except in a chronological sense, no such labels could be applied to those of his own day.
Ironically, what had to come to pass for this group of writers was precisely the state of affairs reflected in Amory Blaine’s famous lament near the end of Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise*: “Here was a new generation . . . grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in men shaken” (27), but with the significant difference that this situation was a verifiable reality for Richler’s generation. Richler may, like Fitzgerald, have left the “faint stirrings of old ambitions and unrealized dreams” (29), but that lament did not move his generation either to admiration or to pity, as it once had done. Writers of Richler’s time found they could no longer take refuge in popular causes of clichéd responses to their problems, and increasingly they assumed positions of psychological exile from their world.

Richler portrays many characters in constant movement within and across countries and cultures. The condition of the exile in Richler’s fiction dramatizes the relation between the individual and the cultural patterns he must choose from. *Son of a Smaller Hero* is a novel about escape, about flight in the first instance from the claustrophobic ghetto world which determines conduct and attitude. It is also about the escape from the facile and ultimately futile psychological strategy of attempting to establish one’s own identity merely in opposition to one’s background. Richler is
profoundly aware of the paradox that the effort to define one’s identity or culture in deliberate contrast to another is often to create nothing more than a shadow or mirror-image of the original. The crippling relation of dependency remains intact, even if the relation has been converted into a negative one, and the individual runs the risk of becoming indistinguishable from what he professes to deplore.

Thus the expatriate artists with whom Richler associated in Paris in the fifties were not so much non-conformists as subject to their own peculiar conformities. Similarly, left-wing writers and film producers living in London resort to McCarthyite tactics to enforce their own cherished orthodoxies in *A Choice of Enemies*. Noah Adler in *Son of a Smaller Hero* becomes conscious of this peril only after partially succumbing to it, and the novel is accordingly structured around not one but two partings, two phases of exile, beginning with the young man leaving home and culminating in his abandoning Canada altogether.

While in Richler’s other works, it is the insecure and ambivalent Jewish protagonist who wishes to define himself in relation to the gentile world, in these four novels, Richler presents a situation where both the gentile and the Jew must redefine themselves in relation to each other in the context of the often
hostile and incomprehensible reality of the post-war world. While
the Jewish protagonists view the post-Holocaust world from the
perspective of victimized people, the gentile protagonist takes
stock of his accountability in the world that has been traumatized
by II World War and the event of the Holocaust. The experiences
of the exile and the desperate, continually thwarted, need to
integrate into an unfamiliar reality represented on the symbolic
level.

This throws up another facet of exiled life—“diaspora.” There
is a fundamental difference between the concepts of “exile” and
“diaspora.” The people in exile, banished from their homeland
produces no culture, but gradually either dies out through
assimilation, or stagnates by reverting to a nomadic existence. The
Diaspora produced new Jewish cultures. Though the inner core of
each diasporic culture always remained distinctly Jewish, each
took on the dominant traits of the host civilization. It was always
Jehovah and monotheism, no matter how each such Diaspora
culture was packaged.

Diaspora means a “scattering” or “scatter about” and
signifies that body of Jews scattered about in the gentile world
outside Palestine. From the time of the expulsion of the Jews from
Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the sixth century B.C. to the
liberation of the Jews from the ghettos in the present century was the era of the fragmentation of the Jewish people into small groupings, dispersed over tremendous land areas and among the most divergent cultures. Today Diaspora has come to signify that body of Jews scattered outside the boundaries of Israel. Actually Diaspora means far more than this. Diaspora is both a way of life and an intellectual concept, a state of being and a state of mind.

When a civilization was philosophic, like that of the Greeks, the Jews became philosophers. When it was composed predominantly of poets and mathematicians, like that of the Arabs, the Jews became poets and mathematicians. When it was scientific and abstract, like that of the modern Europeans, the Jews became scientists and theoreticians. When it was pragmatic and suburban, like the Americans and Canadians, the Jews became pragmatists and suburbanites. Only when a culture or civilization contradicted the basic ethnical monotheism of the Jews were they unable to adopt or be adapted to it. The Jews were part of, yet distinct from, the civilization in which they lived. This paradoxical relationship is the root cause of tension in Richler's works.

The episode which introduces the conflict between the Jews and the Gentile in *The Acrobats*, occurs long before the actual plot of the novel, which takes place during the three day long, festival in
Valencia. The episode which takes place in Montreal describes the love affair between André Bennett, and the Gentile protagonist in the novel and his Jewish lover Ida Blumberg. André’s past is at one with his present. The product of a fabulously rich family, he is also the evidence of the failure of riches. His parents were estranged from each other and from their son. The father made money; the mother had affairs. André tells Toni that he was deemed one of the products of one of those affairs by his father, because he was “unbalanced” i.e. rebellious. From that dubious childhood he grew up to face disasters of his own.

At university, André takes up with an iconoclastic and somewhat neurotic Jewish girl, Ida Blumberg. She plans a rebellious marriage but she becomes pregnant first and insists on an abortion. When after the operation he does not hear from her, he visits her parents, only to be told by the grieving hysterical father that she is dead. The most frightening aspect of the encounter between André, the Gentile, and Blumberg, the Jew, consists in the complete lack of personal contact between them. The two adversaries look and act as stereotypes rather than individuals. While Blumberg plays the part of the perennial Jewish victim, André finds himself responding as a brutal anti-Semitic.
Blumberg looks like a typical East European ghetto Jew who lives under constant terror of pogroms and persecution. His appearance complements his conduct as an injured, eternally victimized Jew:

Old Mr. Blumberg was seated at the supper table reading from a prayer book by candlelight. He was old and wizened. He rocked to and fro as he read. He had long side curls which made him look very sorrowful and wore a skull cap. He scrutinized me for an instant without saying anything. Suddenly he began to weep. It wasn’t the sound of a man crying or even of an animal. He looked up at me as if he was afraid that I might whip him. (115-6)

Blumberg has been conditioned by his life’s experience to see every “goy” as a potential threat of persecution and suffering. André is no exception to that rule. He instantly realizes that Blumberg sees him as yet another murderer of Jew. The old Jew clearly refers to the history of the pogroms and to the Holocaust when he addresses André impersonally as a representative of mob persecutions: “Why can’t you leave me alone? Haven’t you had enough amusement with us? Will you always murder us for your enjoyment?” (116). Though, physically Blumberg is the victim, the
integrity of his perception makes him emerge as the morally stronger adversary in his confrontation with André. Acting on his unshaken conviction that all Gentiles are anti-Semitic persecutions, he defiantly calls André “murderer”. Blumberg’s manner becomes ultimately hateful when he describes the baby that Ida tried to abort as “your filth inside her” (116).

Ironically, André’s behaviour fulfills Blumberg’s expectation of every “goy” being a persecutor of Jews. As André recounts himself, he was drunk when he came to see Blumberg on that Friday night. Both his timing and drunken condition manifest contempt for the holiness of the Jewish Sabbath, as well as lack of respect for the people whose son-in-law he had wished to become. Moreover André’s insensitive choice of time and his drunkenness also evoke the association with the East European anti-Semitic whose custom was to attack Jews on Friday nights. André is enraged by Blumberg’s perception of him as a murderer and a rapist; he is also deeply insulted by Blumberg’s disregard of his feelings for Ida and their aborted baby. Therefore André hits Blumberg out of an impulse which, as he later admits, he could not control: “I couldn’t help it. I just couldn’t help it! I hit him. You don’t know how an old man can look at you, how. . .” (116). Like a typical
anti-Semitic persecutor, André recurs to violence, thus validating Blumberg’s view of “goyim” as murderer of Jews.

Leslie Fielder discusses the roots of the psychological trauma of the oppressor in relation to the oppressed: “The intelligent Whiteman’s burden of guilt consists not merely in knowing himself as oppressor but in knowing the oppressed know it too” (297). André’s outburst of rage against Blumberg constitutes a projection of his shame and dismay at the exposure of his exploitative treatment of Ida. Not only is he forced to acknowledge his egoistic abuse of Ida, but he must also admit to himself that Blumberg’s stereotypical view of the gentile as an anti-Semite applies to him as well.

André’s outburst of rage against Blumberg constitutes a projection of his shame and dismay at the exposure of his exploitative treatment of Ida. Not only is he forced to acknowledge his egoistic abuse of Ida, but he must also admit to himself that Blumberg’s stereotypical view of the Gentile as an anti-Semitic appears to him as well.

When Ida gets pregnant, André instantly reneges on his rejection of his social status. Out of condescension which originates in his self-image as a superior member of society, he offers to marry her, “expecting her to be anything but delighted.
After all, even if I was such a fine socialist, I was still André Benett of the Canadian Benetts. And who was she? Just a frivolous little Jewess born of Polish immigrant parents" (115).

In his discussion with the Spanish communist Guillermo, André ideallistically equates humanity and beauty (68), realizing that from the moral point of view he has failed to live up to his ideal. It is in the person of Colonel Kraus, a Nazi, that André identifies the ugly aspect of himself. Structurally, the connection between André and Kraus is established through their rivalry for the Spanish girl Toni. But André in his own fantasy, sees Kraus as his evil alter-ego whom he must find the courage to destroy. In his last encounter with Kraus, André has a vision of actually becoming the Nazi in those moments of his life when he has been most untruthful to himself and to others:

André looked hard at Kraus, and he remembered him striking old Blumberg. He remembered him in bed with Toni (while he himself, André, sat stupid in a chair, listening to time passing) or Ida who was dead, his filth inside her. (In that chair, rocking on a cloud perhaps, being unused and unknown). Yes, it was Kraus. It had been Kraus always. (162)
The Acrobats concludes with a vision of a better world echoed by Chaim’s affirmation of his hope for a better world: “There is always hope Always. There has to be” (189). Toni’s baby is obviously a symbol of hope. Fathered by Kraus and named after André, the child will appear to represent a future in which brutality is controlled by humaneness and obsessive contemplation is balanced by will and action. The novel leaves the reader with a vision of a world in which social order and harmony are about to be restored.

In A Choice of Enemies the confrontation between the Gentile and the Jew becomes more prominent. The Gentile protagonist struggles to establish his moral position in relation to the Jewish characters. At the same time he becomes aware of his inherent anti-Jewish feelings. Like The Acrobats, A Choice of Enemies also examines the experiences of various political émigrés in postwar Europe, but while the earlier novel is set in Valencia, the second novel is set in London. Norman Price, the protagonist of A Choice of Enemies is a former Canadian pilot who fought with the Allies in the World War II. He had to flee from his teaching position at an American university because of his refusal to collaborate with the Mc Carthyites. When the novel opens, he has been residing in London where he makes a living writing
thrillers and film scripts and keeping close friendship with other American émigrés who are also victims of McCarthy’s witch hunt.

Though outwardly Norman appears to embody idealism and personal courage, his noble code of values is not sustained in his relationship to two of the Jewish characters in the novel—Hornstein, the Jewish pilot who fought with him against the Germans, and Karp, the concentration camp survivor, who as a hospital orderly took care of Norman during his bouts of amnesia. Both the pilot and the concentration camp survivor make desperate efforts to establish friendly relationships with Norman and both get rebuffed.

Like André, who tends towards self-analysis, Norman tries to understand the reason for his loneliness and dissatisfaction:

There was the weight, the crippling weight of all the things he had omitted to do. Like being too tight to befriend Hornstein, then watching him die. Like not telling Charlie he was a sensational writer, when such a small lie would make him so happy. Like avoiding Karp. So many little kindnesses withhold. So much bastardy. If only, he thought, I could be a better, warmer man. (84)
Ironically, even in this personal and private reckoning with himself, Norman unconsciously omits to confront himself truthfully. What Norman is trying to conceal from himself is the fact that his insensitive treatment of Hornstein and Karp reflects his anti-Semitic bias against Jews, especially against those who wish to integrate into the Gentile society. A Jew who claims the right to be treated like a Gentile stimulates the immediate response of tremendous resistance. Norman’s anti-Jewish sentiments are clearly reflected in his own version of the Hornstein episode. Hornstein demands respect as one of the numerous Jewish soldiers taking part in fighting the Nazi enemy: “One evening in the mess he read us a Bnai Brith pamphlet which proved that in proportion to the population of Canada, there were more Jews than Gentiles in the armed forces” (46). The Gentile pilots’ unanimous response of rejection, ostentatiously demonstrated in leaving Hornstein “alone at the table with his pamphlet” (6) clearly indicates their anti-Jewish feelings.

The extreme resentment of the pilots towards their Jewish colleague becomes even more poignant in view of their common struggle against the Nazi enemy. In times of war, when one is constantly in danger, it would seem natural for the values of brotherhood, camaraderie and racial tolerance to prevail.
However, as Norman’s story about Hornstein clearly implies, it is the anti-Semitic sentiment among the Gentile pilots that determined their reaction to the Jewish fellow-fighter.

Norman’s own sentiments towards Hornstein are so intense that they bring about a physical reaction on his part. When describing his resentment towards Hornstein, Norman admits to having Hornstein being “avoided like the plague.” In what turned out to be their last mission, Norman recalls that Hornstein’s good luck thumps up sign “made my stomach turn” (46). Clearly Norman experiences Hornstein as a disease which has to be eliminated from his system. The reflex response mentioned here indicates that Norman’s and other pilots’ hatred for Hornstein is not predicated upon intellectual or moral consideration; the involuntary aspect of the Gentile reaction towards the Jew represents an attitude which makes the proposition of accepting the Jew as an equal member of the Gentile society’s intolerance.

The term “avoid like the plague” can be regarded as a conventional expression of dislike. However, in this context of anti-Semitism, together with Norman’s physical reaction to Hornstein, the expression cannot help but remind us of the Nazi term of the Jewish word—plague. Lucy Davidowicz, a noted historian of the Holocaust, makes the observation that “the depiction of the Jews
as the carriers of filth and disease and hence, of death and destruction goes back in the history of anti-Semitism to the Middle Ages, when Jews were accused of spreading the plague and poisoning the wells” (18).

The totally insignificant statistical data that Hornstein quotes about the Jews outnumbering Gentiles in the armed forces has proven so threatening to Norman that, figuratively speaking, he could not digest it. Norman is not a Nazi, but a left-wing liberal; he views himself as a man of conscience, subscribing to the humanistic concepts of morality, honour and justice. The realization of the prejudiced nature of his conduct strikes home when Norman becomes the witness of Hornstein’s unparalleled act of courage. During the air battle, Hornstein, whose aircraft is hit, consciously decides not to bail out over a populated area. From his cockpit Norman watches Hornstein “climb in again and crash his machine into the Thames” (46). The effect of Hornstein’s courageous act proves to be devastating for Norman. Although Norman has never consciously acknowledged his anti-Semitic sentiments, the profound concern for mankind manifested in Hornstein’s act confronts him with his own cruel lack of concern for another human being.
Hornstein’s courage leaves Norman with the undesirable evidence of his bias against the Jew, with the insight that he would never be able to match Hornstein’s disinterested heroism. This painful self-knowledge proves too much for Norman. Like André, the enormity of guilt generates the wish for self-destruction in Norman too. André’s nervous breakdown, his excessive drinking and bouts of depression serve as vehicles for repression and denial. He finally confronts his problem in a suicidal fight with Kraus. For Norman, the courageous death of Hornstein triggers a tremendous feeling of guilt which he describes as temporary insanity. The despair that he experiences causes him to embark on an aimless, desperate flight over France which ends in the crash which causes his injury. Norman’s retreat behind the protective screen of his bouts of amnesia conveniently provides him with an escape on other occasions of moral self-confrontation.

Norman’s strained relationship with Jews is also manifested in his attitude to Karp. Karp, the castrated survivor of the concentration camp is the other Jew who desperately wishes to establish friendship with Norman. Karp’s characterisation is significant because the concentration camp experience is seen as the source of unmitigable evil which has affected not only Nazi victimizers but also their Jewish victims. Karp, the victim is
symbolically presented as the element which works against the potential rebirth of the post-Holocaust world suggested in the youthful love of Sally and Ernst. The victimized Jew thwarts the materialization of the hope of a better world.

Karp's unusual personality and appearance result from his concentration camp experiences. The horror of Karp's sufferings transcends the grotesque representation of his character, revealing the extent of the effects of the concentration camp. When Karp is shown in interaction with other characters, his motives and deeds reflect manipulative viciousness. However, when the narrator's point of view penetrates Karp's consciousness and relates his inner thoughts and inexpressible feelings, the character assumes tragic dimensions of an individual hopelessly caught in his terrifying past. The portrayal of Karp's consciousness outlines not only the terrible burden of the victim's suffering, but also the tremendous emotional and ideological gap between the victim and those individuals who did not experience the Holocaust directly.

Kraus is haunted by memories and guilt, and constantly terrified by the advent of another Holocaust. Like a child, Kraus feels the need to ingratiate himself with Norman and to please him in order to secure his friendship. Friendship with the liberal Gentile becomes indispensable to Karp; it constitutes the proof that the
guilt ridden, physically and mentally deformed survivor can be accepted by the liberal world. Kraus does not conceal his total dependence on Norman, and claims his right to Norman's friendship in a desperately aggressive way.

Norman wishes to win back Sally from Ernst, the young East German refugee. When Norman's expatriate friends give him a party, he invites Ernst hoping to incriminate Ernst's political part in public and thus making Sally reconsider her feelings for Ernst. At the party, Kraus orchestrates Ernst's rejection by the Jewish American expatriate friends of Norman. At the same time Norman realises his own duplicity in relation to Ernst and grandiosely denounces his fellow expatriates thus making them also his enemies. However Norman's façade of liberal gesture is broken when he finds out that, though in self defence, it was Ernst who killed his brother. Though Norman swears to take revenge on Ernst, he remains passive and never executes his threat. Instead, he makes Ernst retreat and thus irrevocably destroys the happiness of the two lovers.

Norman's choice of enemies focuses on those individuals who are instrumental in exposing his moral double standards. His hatred of Hornstein continues even after the death of the Jewish pilot. Norman deeply resents the fact that Hornstein's act of
courage has exposed his own ineptitude and deficiency which causes tremendous injury to Norman's ego. Norman himself admits that the evidence of his inferiority in relation to Hornstein made him hate the Jewish pilot. The most immoral and brutal expression of Norman's hate is manifested in his final treatment of Kraus. When Kraus suggests to Norman that his brother Nicky's death should offer the opportunity to get rid of Ernst and win Sally back, he in fact, verbalizes Norman's unconscious wish. It is, precisely the unconsciousness of his own falsehood that Norman cannot bear and so he strikes back at Kraus. He slaps Karp hard. "The best ones were killed, Karp. Only the conniving, evil ones like you survived" (73). The effect of Norman's terrible revenge on Karp for having exposed his moral corruption is totally devastating.

Finding him morally unworthy of being alive, Norman awakens in Karp the haunting spectre of guilt for having survived. In Karp's terrified mind, the whole world becomes a concentration camp and the Gentile becomes once again, the omnipotent camp commander who rules over life and death:

With that the whole intricate structure of Karp's plan for survival had toppled . . . You were always a Jew . . .

Norman, as sure as fire, had branded him again . . .

And there, in the outer darkness, was the gaunt face
of Obersturmführer Hartmann. Karp shut his eyes . . .

and the face becomes Norman's face, smiled and was Hartmann once more. (94-5)

Given Norman's anti-Semitism exhibited towards Hornstein and his brutal rejection of Karp as a worthy human being, the survivor's terrifying fantasy about the perpetual Holocaust becomes tragically plausible.

The appearance of Ernst, the Hitler Youth member and a disillusioned communist from East Germany undermines the foundations of the friendship between Norman and his Jewish compatriots. In fact Norman's invitation of Ernst to Sonny's party marks the end of the relationship between Norman and Sonny, his best friend and successful film producer who provides Norman with the means to make a living through commissions of various script writing projects. Eventually it brings a definite rift between Norman and the expatriates. Sonny emphatically refuses to deal with Ernst on account of his Nazi past. For him, no dialogue between a German and Jew is possible in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

The Jewish expatriates who have been blacklisted and exiled by McCarthyism for their liberal ideals of freedom and equality use the same corrupt methods with regard to Norman. They elicit false evidence about Norman's being an informer, they
withdraw Norman's source of income and finally ostracize him. In a grotesque reversal of the traditional roles of submissive Jews and domineering Gentiles, the Jewish group of expatriates emerges as a microcosm of a totalitarian regime. They persecute Norman in the way the American government persecuted them.

The Incomparable Atuk explores another perspective of subversion. Atuk, the protagonist in The Incomparable Atuk is an Eskimo poet who has been discovered in the Tundra and brought to Toronto by Rory Peel, Buck Twentyman's adman. First Buck Twentyman, the Canadian tycoon uses Atuk to disprove accusations of his exploitation of the Eskimo community. Then Twentyman decides to use Atuk to discredit Canadian interests in Canada and thus gain undisputed control over the Canadian economy. Atuk proves to be a murderous manipulator worthy of the model set by Twentyman. He senses correctly that the cannibalism he practised in the distant wilderness of the tundra can be applied with minor variations to the reality of civilized Toronto.

When the novel opens, Atuk is living in the Canadian Arctic, where he is discovered by Rory Peel, an advertising executive, who sees in Atuk's poetry possibilities for one of his clients, Twentyman Fur Company. Peel makes Atuk his protégé, gets his poetry published in a number of advertisements and later in a book
and eventually brings the now celebrated poet to Toronto where he becomes the major attraction at literary parties, coffee houses and television shows. In many of these situations, Atuk functions initially as an artless figure whose primitive innocence serves to undercut the pretensions of civilized society. Eventually he is shown to be no better than those around him. His artlessness is a mask cunningly cultivated to improve his social and financial status. He deliberately creates simplistic verses and rubs noses instead of shaking hands because this is what his admirers expect of him. Within a few months of his arrival in Toronto, his materialistic and exploitative nature surfaces when he imprisons his trusting relatives in a Toronto basement to mass produce pieces of Eskimo sculpture. The profit from the sales he keeps to himself.

In the tundra, Atuk had committed the cannibalistic murder of an American officer. This foreshadows his painless assimilation into the jungle like style of life in the big metropolis. The Eskimo defies the tradition of the noble savage exposed to the temptations of the modern world. Later on in Toronto, obsessed with ambition to make a fortune, Atuk does not hesitate to send his brother to his death by misdirecting him through traffic lights. Atuk's unscrupulous drive to gain power over society and to become a
tycoon himself coincides with Twentyman’s wish to gain economic power over Canada.

Rory Peel, the adman sees the tycoon as the representative of the White Protestant affluent society, the ultimate stage of social and financial success. Rory dreams of total assimilation into the Canadian non-Jewish society. In order to gain acceptance into the Gentile world, Rory disowns his Jewish roots by changing his name and dissociates himself from the immigrant past of his ancestors and establishes himself as a rich businessman, working for Buck Twentyman. He attempts to create the image of a liberal tolerant citizen of the world by hiring non-Jewish help. “Rory had hired Brunhilde and engaged only non-Jewish girls at the office in order to demonstrate that he was utterly free of prejudice. . . . it is true he paid (Brunhilde) lavishly and didn’t object when her boyfriends went into his liquor, but this was only because he wanted her to learn how liberal some Jews could be” (29).

Rory’s so-called liberation is only skin deep. When Atuk decides to convert to Judaism and marry Rory’s sister Goldie, he objects strongly and displays racial bias and discrimination openly. Rory argues that Atuk, the Eskimo is not fit to marry into a Jewish family. He agrees to the marriage only when he guesses Twentyman’s lethal plan to sacrifice Atuk in order to consolidate his
financial empire. Ironically, Rory does not fail to perceive the advantages of entering into a business partnership with the “dumb” Eskimo. The directorship of the fraudulent Esky Enterprises—cheap mass production of Eskimo art presented to the Canadian consumer—offers Rory considerable financial gains. Rory uses his business association with Atuk to promote the image of a successful top executive.

Rory and Atuk are experts in manipulating the liberal ideology to achieve their own ends. They realize that liberalism is a necessary disguise in the world in which the ambition for materialistic success and control over others has become the all important goal. Once the masks of fake liberalism are removed, a forbidding image of violence, exploitation and corruption are revealed. The revelation of Atuk’s and Rory’s misconduct towards their own families exposes not only their own inhumanity, but also releases the dments of aggression and cruelty in the family itself. In spite of their plausibility, Atuk’s Eskimo art factory and Rory’s war shelter are in reality slave camps where brutal exploitation and violence are practiced. The particular nature of interpersonal relationships that the characters maintain with their relatives is defined by Leslie Fielder as “emulation of the oppressor” (297). According to her, the oppressor projects upon his victims “his
hidden and most shameful desires and proclivities. The oppressed minorities deal with psychological impact of the projection in ways such as name-changing, intermarriage and emulation of the oppressor in the privacy of their own world” (296).

Atuk exploits his family members by keeping them in isolation from the rest of the world. They are treated like indentured labourers who provide him with enough Eskimo art to make him rich. He manipulates their obedience by making them addicts of television programmes, threatening them with the dangers of the unknown world and providing them with prostitutes. These slave-like relatives are ignorant of the fact that they are cunningly manipulated by Atuk who hypocritically presents himself before them as their protector and benefactor. Atuk does not have second thoughts when it comes to the elimination of his brother who was about to damage his prospects in the “white” world. Thus Atuk, who has been cruelly exploited by the Whiteman, enslaves his own people.

A similar distortion of family life is also conspicuous in Rory’s treatment of his family and his staff. Rory’s father Panofsky mocks and criticizes Rory’s seemingly “liberal” decision to hire the German maid Brunhilde. The presence of the German who may have been a Nazi, in a Jewish home is unacceptable to Rory’s
father. The underground shelter disguised as a swimming pool at the bottom of the garden ostensibly provides Rory with a sense of protection and security in the post-Holocaust world whose hostility he fears. In reality, however the shelter is not intended as a refuge in the case of another Holocaust. It has become a place where the secret fantasy for Rory's ambition for power and potency is momentarily performed in an act of aggression and violence. The war game compensates for Rory's frustrations and insecurity as a Jew in a Gentile World.

Rory constantly summons his family to the shelter as part of their military training. The family has been conditioned to respond without fail to the sound of his buzzer. In the shelter Rory commands total control and undisputed authority. Brunhilde is given the part of the guard who locks and unlocks the latch. When everybody is gathered in the shelter, Brunhilde is identified as Mrs. Springhorn, the next door neighbour who is considered to be the enemy and orders his children to attack her. Brunhilde, the German is treated by the Jewish family as an inferior human being. But in her role as Mrs. Springhorn, the invader, Brunhilde also embodies Canadian society. Incredibly, Rory, the avowed liberal, is shown to be instilling in his children the sense of aggressive superiority over the Gentile world.
Roy’s father is a racist whose hatred for the Whites is not limited to oral insults and mental intimidation. His racist thesis on the White inferiority is presented in his conversation with Derm Gabbard, a Protestant Canadian—“But of course you’re a Protestant, I could tell at once. You have the typical no face. . . A gay, Gabbard is for running elevators or carrying a rifle. . . the most boring, mediocre man in the world is the White Protestant gay, northern species, and in Canada he has found his true habitat” (94-5). Having completed the theoretical part of his presentation, Panofsky physically attacks Gabbard. In a parody of the anti-Semitic accusations of the Jews for having killed Jesus, Panofsky twists Derm’s arms, kicks him in the ribs, accusing the Gentile world for destroying the temple and plundering Jerusalem.

Though Atuk’s and Rory’s history, background and religions differ, they are united in their struggle for power. To achieve power, they identify with their oppressor and use tyranny and manipulation to subordinate their victims. Atuk achieves material success by keeping his brothers, sisters and other relatives in isolation, squalor and ignorance. The inhuman treatment that he accords to his family is in fact a re-enactment of the cultural and financial deprivation that Buck Twentyman has been subjecting the Eskimos to in the tundra for years. In a cruel twist of fate, the
exploitation of the minority group is continued and maintained by members of the oppressed group itself.

Even the young children of Rory are trained to be totally subservient to mindless violence. The children zealously identify with their roles as tormentors and expand the scope of their violence. At a certain point Rory’s son suggests to his mother, “let’s play if Daddy’s radioactive and I have to shoot him” (118). This incident reveals that the youngster has no compunction about including his own father among the victims of his violent activities.

The vicious cycle of brutal exploitation, physical and moral abuse ends in the violent deaths of both Atuk and Rory. The death in both cases takes the form of an execution. Rory and his family end up getting asphyxiated when Brunhilde finally takes her revenge. Rory’s underground shelter is eventually turned into a gas chamber reminiscent of the Nazi days when Brunhilde doesn’t unlock the door to the shelter. Atuk, on the other hand is publicly guillotined by the manoeuvering of his mentor Buck Twentyman. To promote both his recently acquired television station and a new line of frozen foods, Esky-Foods, Twentyman comes up with a promising format for a quiz show and arranges for Atuk to be the first contestant. This show, “Stick Out Your Neck,” epitomizes the avarice and stupidity that motivate most of the characters in the
novel. *The Incomparable Atuk* begins with Twentyman importing a guillotine into Canada. It ends with Atuk in the guillotine, and Twentyman’s hypocritical funeral oration.

Both means of execution—the gas chamber and the guillotine—convey the terror of mindless inhuman oppression of brutal forces which eliminate the innocent victim as well as the man of ideals. The gas chamber evokes the spectre of the Holocaust, the systematic destruction of the Jewish people. The guillotine, initially used by Robespierre against those who opposed his dictatorship, evokes the perversion of the ideals of freedom, equality and brotherhood propagated by the French Revolution. Both the gas chamber and the guillotine are inhuman means of destruction of human life. Their victims are traditionally considered to be innocent and idealists. Millions of innocent people were gassed in concentration camps for being born a Jew; thousands of idealistic defenders of the newly born French Republic were decapitated for their liberal convictions. Historically, the gas chamber and the guillotine have become symbolic monuments which commemorate the innocent victim and condemn the merciless murder.

*Cocksure* is the story of a Gentile who finds himself to be “the Jew” in an alien ghetto. One could even argue that *Cocksure*
is Richler's most thorough treatment of the concept of Jew and it is such a persuasive treatment precisely because Mortimer Griffin, the protagonist, is not technically a Jew. The setting of *Cocksure* is London in the sixties. Mortimer Griffin, the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant protagonist of the novel is a high ranking editor of Oriole Press, a British publishing firm that is taken over by an aging, undying movie mogul who suddenly, seemingly inexplicably moves across the ocean to be closer to his British operations. Like most of Richler's protagonists, Mortimer believes "in the possibilities within each of us for goodness" (221) and is genuinely disgusted with the depraved behaviour around him. Yet, he often resents himself for what he stands for: "the virtues of which I was raised to believe in have become pernicious. Contemporary writing, he thought, is... making me repayment to myself. An eyesore" (102). He belittles himself for being hardworking, honest and liberal and appears to earn admission to the society he condemns, but is foiled by his moral upbringing.

The producer, Star Maker, turns out to be a grotesque emblem of fraudulent Hollywood as well as the flimsy swinging London. The epitome of self-concern, Star Maker aims first at self perpetrations, and then self reproduction. When in the first episode of the novel, the sycophantic Dino Tomasso, who has
been designated as Star Maker's heir, finds that he is being demoted to oversee the London operation, in a first and final burst of fury shouts at Star Maker to reproduce himself. This, Star Maker decides to do. After a certain amount of surgical juggling, Star Maker succeeds in consummating his relationship with himself, which has obvious symbolic overtones for a society, which is increasingly both narcissistic and hypersexual.

Mortimer comes into contact with Star Maker's enterprises after he is chosen to be the new head of Oriole Publishing. He is chosen, incidentally, because of his marvellous lymphatic system. For those who work for Star Maker, good health is definitely unhealthy. Tomasso, for example, who has already contributed to Star Maker's well being is soon called upon to give more. First one eye and then the other are lost before this subordinate realizes how truly blind he has always been. Like Star Maker's other greedy lackeys, he has been willing to sacrifice personal pleasures, moral principles and body parts—all for the prospect of ultimately inheriting a piece of Star Maker's kingdom. But, as Star Maker becomes pregnant, Tomasso's hopes are dashed. He knows too much about the business. He must be replaced and eliminated. Mortimer also fares no better. He shares the same fate of Tomasso. Mortimer, however, will be eliminated because of
his refusal to abandon traditional values and his unwillingness to be a part of the murderous Star Maker industries.

Though Mortimer Griffin, a World War II veteran, engages in a moral struggle with Star Maker, the tycoon who threatens to control the world, the ideals which guided Mortimer in his war against the Nazis have lost their effectiveness in the reality of the post-war era. The hypocrisy and corruption which govern the new reality render Mortimer’s idealism useless and meaningless. The lack of resistance to the tycoon reveals that the liberalism that withstood the Holocaust is no longer a force with the capacity to rescue freedom. Mortimer’s situation is pathetic because he is supported by neither the Christian world nor the Jewish. His seemingly spiritual parents and Ms. Ryerson and Lord Woodcock, ostensibly epitomize the conservative social order based on the virtues of brotherly love, religious faith, patriotism and honour. The ineffectuality of their ideals and the full extent of their hypocrisy are revealed in their cynical interaction with the world. What undoubtedly motivates Ms. Ryerson and Lord Woodcock is the dominant wish to regain power, influence and recognition. Like the blacklisted intellectuals in A Choice of Enemies who resort to Mc Carthyite methods to assert themselves, neither Ms. Ryerson nor
Lord Woodcock would discriminate between moral and immoral means in their pursuit of power.

Lord Woodcock assumes the role of the prophet of peace, spreading the word of Christian love and forgiveness between German and Jews. His excessive liberalism leads him to such grotesquely ridiculous acts as planting, together with his “Jewish brother,” trees and gardens on German soil soaked with Jewish blood “to demonstrate how love and only love, could conquer hatred” (33). His ridiculous demonstrations of humane impartiality includes a book about “all the charitable little acts done by German to Jews during the Nazi era” (30) and an annual collection of funds for the wives and children of concentration camp guards. Once his ambition for social recognition has been fulfilled, all Woodcock cares about is to satisfy a new tyrant. Thus he welcomes the Nazi, Herr Dr. Manheim, and his Frankfurt efficiency team at Oriole Press. He rebukes Ms. Fishman for her outburst against Fraulein Ringler, who was obviously involved in Ms. Fishman’s mother’s murder. Finally, in a ceremony of ultimate sanctification of Nazism, “the saintly Woodcock . . . had won another medal, the Grand Cross of the German Order of Merit which had been presented to him on the playing fields of Dachau” (149).
The Jews in *Cocksure* exploit Mortimer by manipulating his crisis of conscience in relation to victims. In Richler’s world, where the individual is motivated mainly by his egoistic need for power—the Jews as well as the Gentiles use each other to gain power and control. In this reality, the Jews brutally mistreat the Gentiles in order to assert themselves in the Gentile society. In fact, the Jew quite consciously contributes to the growing maladjustment of the expatriate Canadian war veteran with his adoptive environment in order to expand their own spheres of influence. Through skillful manipulation of their ethnic grievances, the three Jewish characters—Ziggy Spicehandler, Hy Rosen and Jacob Shalinsky—gradually divest Mortimer of his identity as a male White Protestant. The three use the argument of the long standing inferiority of the Jew in order to gain social recognition. Most of them reveal love or emotional attachment to their Jewish heritage; in fact their ruthless treatment of the Gentile exhibits the narcissistic exploitation of their Jewish lineage as merely political tools.

Ziggy Spicehandler is a lone, ruthless and nihilistic individual. His philosophy of life is that God is dead and, therefore, the criteria of justice and social order have ceased to exist. Everything is permitted and nothing makes sense anymore. Ziggy
teaches Mortimer that “things just happen. . . life is meaningless. Totally absurd. . . In the long run, we’ll all be dead, you know” (150). However, Ziggy’s behaviour towards Mortimer contradicts his hipster philosophy. Once Ziggy has finished the presentation of his nihilistic view of life, he takes care of his self-interest by talking Digby Jones into having Mortimer’s heroic military part discredited on his television programme “Insult”. In an extraordinary feat of sophistication, which exposes a total loss of moral discernment, Digby Jones compares the courageous, selfless act of the Canadian soldier to the inhuman crime of a Nazi murder of Jews:

‘Tell me, Griffin, during the war did you kill any Germans?

Yes.

And how do you feel about that. . . now?

Well that was the war. We were at war then.

Quite. And you were only obeying orders?

Yes. . .

Like Adolph Eichmann?

Hold on there!

Just another little cog in the wheel, weren’t you?’ (189)

Digby Jones refuses to distinguish the Allies’ war against Hitler’s Germany and the Nazi concentration camps. In his
interview, Digby actually presents the idea that Germans were victimized by the Allies to the same extent as the Jews were victimized by the Germans. This turn of the tables against Mortimer is significant for Ziggy. There is logic in his scheme: having seduced Mortimer's wife and moved into the comfort of the Griffin home, Ziggy wishes to remove any chance of Mortimer's return.

Ziggy's ruthless behaviour of his friend is indicative of his personal history characterised by selfish exploitation and manipulation of others. Ziggy would do anything to attain the status of the super hipster, the man who disclaims social mores. Prompted by his uninhibited ambition to orchestrate the vogue of nihilistic demoralization, Ziggy uses his Jewish roots as a trump card. Ziggy has a mixed parentage. Having been born as Gerald Spencer to a Jewish father and a Gentile mother, Ziggy was raised and educated as a Protestant. It is only when he "discovered that his Anglicized name, his expensive middle-class education, his knowledge of classics, Latin and Greek, his unexcelled elocution, had all contrived to make him regularly ill-equipped for life in modern England," (120) that Ziggy reverts to his Jewish name.

For Ziggy, his Jewish heritage is a commodity to be exploited. Trying to establish his reputation as rebellious and
unpredictable, he publishes a pornographic novel about his Jewish family where “the teachers and harlots... the perverts... went by the names of his mother, his aunts and uncles, his ‘baba’, his ‘zeyda’ and Jewish community leaders in Leeds” (120). On the other hand, in his attempt to become a powerful and outrageous social critic of the white Protestant middle class establishment, Ziggy produces a movie called Different. It projects as much hatred towards the Protestant world as his novel did towards his Jewish heritage. His absurd, indiscriminating identification with those who are different—Jews, lesbians, homosexuals, transvestites, Negroes—disclose Ziggy’s overwhelming sense of deprivation. His irrational condemnation of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant as oppressor of those who do not conform reveals Ziggy’s rage directed at the Protestant world which has never accepted him because of his Jewish background.

The last scene in the film presents Ziggy’s terrifying fantasy of the totally destructive revenge he would wish to inflict upon those who have rejected him:

Next the camera zoomed in... and zoomed out again on the well-adjusted man peeling a banana. That well-adjusted man, the villain, was Mortimer. Finally, Mortimer was held in a frozen frame, winking, licking
an ice cream. This frame was superimposed over an H-bomb explosion, and scrawled in blood over Mortimer's face was one word: WASP. (55)

Mortimer, who has treated Ziggy as his brother, is branded in the film as the WASP, its villain and self-contented conformist. Mortimer is portrayed as the source of indifference which perpetuates intolerance towards those who are different, namely the members of society who are not WASPs. The representation of the WASP as a totally despicable immoral and inhumane creature concludes with a powerful suggestion of the complete annihilation of the white Protestant middle-class. The terrifying irrational message of the movie, confirmed by the enthusiastic response of the public is in fact, an imitation of the German anti-Semitic propaganda which spelt out the death sentence for European Jewry. Ziggy's manipulation of Mortimer's weakened ego inculcates the desired reaction of self-hatred and alienation on the part of the victim. In the world of self-righteous minorities, Mortimer sees himself as "an intruder, a Gentile peeper. . . an eye sore" (84). His sense of unworthiness ends up in self-abuse: "Protestant," he said aloud. "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant filth, that's what you are" (84).
The other Jewish characters in the novel are Hy Rosen and Shalinsky who requires the presence of the Gentile so that they may establish themselves socially as powerful Jews. Hy’s great chance to materialize his fantasy as a powerful Jew emerges when Mortimer becomes his only rival for the position of editor-in-chief at Oriole House. Mortimer is also Hy’s old friend, but Hy does not seem to consider their friendship an obstacle to fulfilling his ambitious goal. On the slightest pretext, using his Jewish sensitivity as a tactical weapon, Hy breaks off the friendship with Mortimer and accuses him of being anti-Semitic. He does not stop at mere accusations and his long lasting range proves to be extremely detrimental to Mortimer.

When Hy, in his provoking brutal way implies that Mortimer is sexually impotent, he intuitively takes advantage of Mortimer’s doubts about his sexual prowess and thus contributes to Mortimer’s ensuing impotence. When Hy accuses Montimer of being a Nazi, he manipulates the liberal Gentile’s sense of guilt about being a racist. Hy stabs the deepest wound when he denies Mortimer support in the crucial moment of danger when Mortimer is about to be murdered by the efficiency team of the Star Maker. In a tragically ironical twist of events, the Jew who lives in constant
suspicion and fear of anti-Semitism remains completely oblivious of the authentic Nazis who are about to kill his Gentile friend.

Shalinsky the other Jewish character in *Cocksure* is fanatical in his conviction of Jewish superiority. Shalinsky chooses to prove this theory of Jewish supremacy through statistical data. Since Shalinsky considers himself a champion of Jewish cultural and social heritage, any outstanding personality in the areas of literature, art, politics or science must in his view, be Jewish, or at least, be related to Judaism. In other words, once a person becomes a celebrity, Shalinsky counts him as a Jew. Thus in an absurdly funny and revealing conversation with Mortimer, Shalinsky mentions not only Freud, Marx and Trotsky, but also hints at the alleged Jewish connections of Stalin and Tolstoy. The rest of Gentiles are not even worth mentioning because they are, according to Shalinsky, “Mediocrites, the lot” (158). He does not hide his intentions when he tells Mortimer, who vehemently opposes Shalinsky’s insistence on redefining him as a Jew: “But Griffin, Griffin don’t you see? A Jew is an idea. *Today* you’re my idea of a Jew” (211). The whimsical arbitrariness indicated by “today” and the authoritarian sense of self-importance revealed in “my” denote, once again, a reversal from the symbolic significance of the victim attributed to the Jews by Western liberal thinkers.
The misuse of scientific methodology to justify social prejudice also leads to abuse and persecution of the Gentile. When Mortimer refuses to join the ranks of Jewish celebrities in Shalinsky’s system, the Jew retaliates by endless pestering and public accusations of Mortimer being a Jewish anti-Semitic. In terms of racial persecution, Shalinsky’s ruthless mistreatment of Mortimer which affects his professional and personal life turns the Gentile into the stereotyped victim of the Jew. The portrait of Mortimer being murdered by the Nazi completes the process of reversal whereby the Gentile is eliminated as if he were a Jew. Shalinsky’s tyrannical, brutal imposition of his will on others represents another version of Star Maker. Whereas Star Maker uses the physical parts of his victim’s bodies to keep alive and to reproduce himself, Shalinsky, in order to survive and expand, needs human talents, creativity and thinking. Like the Star Maker, he must mould and create people in his own image to be able to feed his narcissistic needs. Thus, when Star Maker boasts of having created movie stars, Shalinsky, in the same vein, points out that all great movie stars are Jewish.

Unembarrassed hatred of Nazi criminals and the imperative of vengeance are among the central themes of St. Urbain’s Horseman. In the novel’s opening scene, Jake Hersh awakens
from a dream in which Josef Mengele is tortured in the way that he and his Nazi compatriots tortured their victims in Auschwitz. Mengele’s “gold fillings” are extracted “from the triangular cleft between his upper front teeth with pliers” (2). And in a long list of life-long fantasies yet to be accomplished, Jake affirms his longing for revenge: “I will be buried without ever having directed Olivier. . . seen Jerusalem. . . fought for a cause. . . killed a Nazi” (49).

It might be said that Jake Hersh whom we first meet in the midst of a serious personal, but comically rendered crisis is in need of a counterweight to his deeply held, but unresolved fascination with the Holocaust. Charged with the rape of a young au pair, his family and his reputation in danger, he repeatedly flees from these problems by losing himself in his obsession with the Nazi’s crimes and his frustration of being unable to avenge them. He is an inveterate newspaper clipper and the walls of his “attic-study” are “plastered with photographs of wartime Nazi leaders and their survivors” (6). He fashions his “acre” as a place where he can focus his energy and his anger—on the escaped war criminal Josef Mengele. The wall-clock is adjusted to “show the time in Paraguay—the Doktor’s time” (2-3); it is to his acre that Jake goes when he is awakened by his dreams of the Doktor.
In a neurotically comic, but not entirely unserious way, the Holocaust seems to be “fully present” for Jake in his recurrent fantasies of the disasters that modern life might visit upon his family:

... in Jake’s Jewish nightmare, they come into his house. The extermination officers seeking out the Jew. Ben is seized by the legs like a chicken and heaved out of the window, his brains spilling on the terrace. Molly whose experience has led her to believe all adults gentle, is raised in the air not to be tossed and tickled, but to be flung against the brick fireplace. Sammy is dispatched with a pistol. (67)

Jake, the protagonist of *St. Urbain’s Horseman* is born into one of the poorer branches of a successful Jewish family (but one still restricted to St. Urbain Street of Montreal ghetto), yearns for a larger, freer life. Canada is, for him and in Auden’s words *tieftse provinz*, “the remotest hinterland”. The source of the label suggests Jake’s aspirations. He wants, as a socially engaged artist, to make his mark in the larger world. The field for that endeavour will be, he first imagines, New York city. But at the border, he is confused with his cousin Joey Hersh, whom Jake already very much admires. Jake’s evaluation of Joey is not shared by the American

*St. Urbain's Horseman* is sprinkled with references to Mengele, Auschwitz, Dachau and anti-Semitism, yet this thematic material is treated on an emotional and personal level—often with more than a touch of black comedy—rather than from a philosophical or theological perspective. The hero in Jake's fantasies of revenge is his elusive cousin Joey, whom he remembers as a tough and glamorous figure from his boyhood days on St. Urbain Street in Montreal. To relieve his feelings of guilt for having settled for success as a film director in London, Jake worships the memory of Joey as an avenging "Horseman" who is relentless in his pursuit of Nazis such as Mengele. His cousin is his moral editor, his "conscience, his mentor" (433), who gives vicarious expression to his rebelliousness and dreams of unconventional, uncompromised individualism.

Jake remembers Joey as a fighter with style, working out in his makeshift gym while glamorous women looked on. St. Urbain Street legend has it that Joey played semi-professional baseball
and piloted a plane. He was supposedly sighted in action in Spain in 1938 and in Israel a decade later, and now Jake imagines them in Paraguay hunting down Josef Mengele. Joey is a convenient figure on whom Jake can project his “causes,” especially his desire for action which has been frustrated by his comfortable life as a “husband, father, house owner, investor, sybarite and film fantasy spinner” (289).

Jake’s awareness of how remote his own experience in the war years was from that of the Jews of Europe, contributes to his sense of inadequacy and self-loathing. He worries that he has come to resemble the hard-working, prudent Jews of Montreal that he detested as a youth. As Franco strutted into Madrid, a conqueror, Jake and his friends sat on St. Urbain street shops . . . and mourned the benching of Lou Gehrig, their first hint of mortality . . . . The Holocaust was when their parents prospered on the black market and they first learned the pleasure of masturbation. As secure and snotty ten year olds, they mocked those cousins and uncles who were too prudent to enlist, then it was an apprenticeship appropriate to encroaching middle age, when they were to exhort younger men to burn their draft cards . . . . Too young to have marched into
gunfire in Europe, they were also too old and embarrassed, too fat, to wear the flag as underwear.

(80-1)

Through Joey, Jake identifies with the activists of history, the men who battled against evil. Joey's rumoured presence in the Spanish civil war, in the Israeli War of Independence and now in Jake's fantasies in Paraguay give Jake a sense of being engaged himself.

The basis for his fantasies about Joey lies in his own experience with anti-Semitism when he was a boy in wartime Montreal. He recalls the altercations between Quebecois and Jews as scenes of instruction, as primal battles that become integral to the way in which he views his place in the world. He remembers the bullying of the Jews by Quebecois nationalists and bigots and his Uncle Abe's astonishment at seeing "A Bar Ler Juïts" painted along the highway. In town, the windows in Jewish shops were being broken and swastika painted on the pavement outside the street on Fairmount street. In the novel, Richler does not resort to the stereotype of the Nazi victims going quietly as sheep to the slaughter, but the valorization of action and resistance over compromise and passivity comes close to invoking this simplistic interpretation of the Holocaust. The inability of Jews to
defend themselves against Nazi violence, alongside the political unwillingness of the Jews of Montreal to meet violence with violence kindles Jake's impassioned interest in Joey, Mengele and St. Urbain Street. It is to challenge and repudiate the role of the Jew as victim that Jake creates the image of Joey as an avenging Horseman, whose quest is to find Mengele, the face of death of Auschwitz, to whom he would mete out just retribution.

Jake's obsessions, continuing anger and anxiety are intensified by the reports that he reads of the Frankfurt trial of Auschwitz guards. Beginning in December 1963 and continuing into 1965, it was the longest jury trial in German legal history. Its aim was to bring to justice representatives of low and middle ranking Nazis who beat, tortured and murdered prisoners of their own initiative. Verbatim testimony from this trial haunts Jake as he searches for Joey, whom he believes might be in Germany to watch the proceedings. Richler includes from this testimony a well known and horrifyingly matter-of-fact description of the dead after a gas chamber is opened:

The bodies are not lying scattered here and there throughout the room, but piled in a mass to the ceiling. This is explained by the fact that the gas first inundates the lower layers of air and rises but slowly
to the ceiling. That forces them to trample and clamber over one another. At the bottom of the pile are babies, children, women and aged, at the top, the strongest. Their bodies which bear numerous scratches occasioned by the struggle which set them against one another, are often intertwined. The noses and mouths are bleeding, the faces bloated and blue.

(245)

Richler also quotes from the testimony given by an Auschwitz survivor, Arie Fuks, of Mengele’s activities: “Where there also other methods of killing children?” “... I saw them take a child from its mother, carry it over to Crematory IV, which had two big pits, and throw the child into the seething human fat. ...” (245). Richler does not contextualize or philosophize about the Frankfurt trial or the issues that it raises, and his protagonist shows no interest in such rumination. For Jake, the crimes described at the Frankfurt trial remain an engaging enigma, a source of anger and disgust rather than a starting point for philosophy.

Jake’s respect for the Horseman is motivated by his own feelings of irrelevancy in the face of the Nazi’s crimes. International with his obsessive fear of violent death and his uneasiness about his affluent and happy life is a deeply felt and
complicated compulsion to do something about Holocaust. But apart from his interest of the Frankfurt trial, the Holocaust is never anything other than a phantasm haunting his daily life. Clinging to the memory of a youthful Joey standing up to anti-Semitic harassment, Jake creates a counter phantasm, a hero who abhorred passivity and exhorted his elders "mocking them, asking them what they intended to do about such insults" (125).

Joey's militancy becomes a touchstone for Jake and his cousin's words returns at the novel's conclusion. Though Joey is reported dead "in an air crash between the Mato Grosso and the Brazilian Highlands, not far from the Panama River" (433), Jake hears his voice demanding, "What are you going to do about it?" (433). Jake's response to this query is to cross out the notation that he has made in the Horseman's journal regarding his death, "July 20, 1967 in an aircrash," in favour of the note "presumed dead" (433, 436). Ironically, rather than take on his cousins' supposed heroic wanderings himself, Jake extends his faith in the Horseman, continuing to fantasize that his hero is unkillable, a kind of avenging angel.

Through most of the novel, Jake's pained fascination with the Holocaust provides him with no creative suggestion of how to live in post-war culture, he seems unable to enter into any dialogue
with the part that will generate viable institutions of both discourse and social life that effectively racist the recurrence of any thing comparable to the Nazi regime. He is stricken by fear, self-doubt and a feeling of incompatibility with a world that he holds in contempt, and he can see no alternative to the culture in which he lives and which he sees as complicit as well as corrupted.

In the novel's climactic scene when Jake undergoes a transformation on learning about Joey's death, Richler intimates that he has managed to overcome his feelings of loss and his unworked relationship with history's trauma. Jake weeps at the end of *St. Urbain’s Horseman*, but not so much for Joey and the Holocaust's victims as for all the unfinished business in his own life, the compromises, disappointments and betrayals that he has never come to terms with:

He wept... the tears he couldn't wax out of himself at his father's graveside or summon up for Mr. Justice Beal's verdict on Harry or his mother's departure, flowed freely now. Torn from his soul, the tears welled in his throat and ran down his checks. He whimpered, he moaned. He sank, trembling to the sofa. He wept for his father... rotting in an oversize pinewood casket. He wept for his mother, who deserved a more
loving son. He wept for Harry, fulminating in his cell and assuredly planning vengeance. (464)

_St. Urbain's Horseman_ is a trial haunted book. Jake hovers about the site of the Frankfurt trial of Auschwitz guards hoping to contact the Horseman. Jake himself is subject to his own trial, both in a court of law and before his family and friends. Jake undergoes a transformation in the aftermath of his own trial, as it along with the news of the Horseman's death, triggers a renewed investigation of his own experience of loss. This sense of loss is not tied to his fantasies of Joey's heroism, nor is it informed by the compulsive fear that has led him to draw comparison between himself and the victims of Holocaust. Jake's problems are many and Holocaust is only one of them.

By calling on all the lessons of history, Richler encourages us to look long and hard at ourselves as interdependent beings. He does not accept the idea that history is merely a series of inversions, with victim and victor possessing a common consciousness. The undeniable fact of the Holocaust, along with the lesser facts of human misery Jake reads about in the newspapers is largely responsible for Jake's feeling of being engulfed and overwhelmed. Jake's fantasies are a desperate
response to his awareness of the facts of contemporary life. As Zavarzadeh reminds us:

In innovations in narrative, as in the arts in general, is not merely the result of the writer's private decision or simply the outcome of purely aesthetic processes; rather, it is largely a function of the pressures created by the new configurations of forces in reality. (SUH 4)

In Richler's fiction, a Jewish protagonist is the representative product of the history man has made, rather than the symbolic embodiment of human nature which is alienated from history. Jewishness is no metaphor for the human condition in the novels of Richler, although it does contribute to the state of mind of his characters to the extent that any individual is affected by his cultural and historical milieu. Richler's history is also determinedly Jewish. Even when Joshua is studying something unrelated to the Jews—his book on Spain, for example—he finds there is no escaping the Jewish reality:

How can a Jew go to Spain and play Hemingway when the Spaniards tortured the Jews in the twelfth century? He cannot. Mackenzie cannot be considered a harmless old fool, because he was a man who wielded genuine power and affected actual political
events, and from his position of power he stated the 'the world will come to see a great man, a mystic in Hitler. He will rank some day with Joan of Arc among the deliverers of his people and if he is only careful may yet be the deliverer of Europe. (JTN 162)

Richler's response to Germans and to the Nazi persecution of the Jews is complex as can be seen from the discussions of the above novels viz. *The Acrobats*, *Cocksure*, *A Choice of Enemies*, *The Incomparable Atuk* and *St. Urbain's Horseman*. His writings reveal the constant tension between the acceptance of Jewish history of persecution and the rejection of the ramifications of the tradition of suffering upon the Jewish individual. The consciousness of the Holocaust, the most terrible example of Jewish victimization exacerbates the division and posits it as an unresolved identity conflict. An aspect of his work represents the notion that, to reject the particularity of Jewish suffering in the Holocaust signifies renunciation of the Jewish claim for justice. The consciousness of the Holocaust strengthens Jewish identity in the postwar world. Yet, in Richler's works, the Holocaust also represents in a most concrete way, the vulnerability of the Jew in general society. This dichotomy also reveals an ongoing exploration of the Jewish position in the Gentile world.
An examination of the voices that Richler employs reveals a certain pattern in his seemingly inconsistent ideological thinking. The angry voice of the moralist constitutes Richler’s reaction to the Jewish unwillingness to consider his social criticism of the Jewish community as constructive and valid: “My people,” Richler claims, in an article in *Maclean’s* “are still so insecure that they want their artists to serve as publicists not critics” (82). Richler’s insistence on adopting a satirical treatment of the Jewish community confirms his prerogative insistence on artistic freedom. However, the pattern of contradictory voices in Richler’s writings suggests that, on the psychological level, the role of the impartial social critic fulfills an emotional rather than artistic need on the part of the writer himself.

The seemingly blatant contradiction can be explained only in view of Richler’s inner difficulty in reconciling the attitudes of a liberal moralist with the position of a Jew burdened with anti-Semitic experience and the consciousness of the Holocaust. While the humanist promotes the ideals of forgiveness and brotherhood of men, the emotionally mutilated Jew considers himself as an avenger while the moralist sees himself as the loser’s advocate. The Jew considers himself as the loser whose suffering at the hands of the outside world must be corrected through a violent act of revenge. Thus, Richler’s writing represents the double faced
position of a Diaspora Jew in today’s world. The consistency of his position is exhibited by the ever-changing voice of the universal moralist and the Jewish avenger:

I’m most engaged, and I have been from the beginning . . . with values, and with honour. I would say I’m a moralist, really. You may not find whatever code of honour I’m groping for as a way to live, acceptable, but that’s really my obsession. (Cameron 124)

The literary mode employed in the five novels discussed in this chapter mark the progression from the vision of a harmonious world to the representation of brutal totalitarianism to the restoration of order through a justified act of revenge which can result in the renewal and rebirth of society. The comic affirmation of life and hope for the mankind in The Acrobats is followed by the ironic treatment of post-war liberal society in A Choice of Enemies. The ironic moves towards the satiric in The Incomparable Atuk and Cocksure. Frye defines the satiric mode as “militant irony . . . [which] demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque” (223). The ideological power struggle between the Jew and the Gentile is an absurd, violent and grotesque confrontation.
The fantasy of the Horseman avenging the Jewish victims of the Holocaust actually reflects the need for potency and security. The ironic mode which underlies the Golden Calf signifies that through the figure of the Horseman, Richler is showing the obstacles in the way of restoring justice and morality in a world which experienced the Holocaust. This circular pattern of Richler’s novels, ranging from hope to chaos, as represented by the Holocaust to the aspiration of a harmonious future corresponds to Jung’s concept of the mandala as building blocks of myth itself. As Jung himself has suggested, it is difficult for individuals to live forever with fragmentation and that modern art, with all its fragmentation points toward the possibility of world renewal:

The development of modern art with its seemingly nihilistic trend toward disintegration must be understood as the symptom and symbol of a mood of world destruction and world renewal that sets its mark on our age. (69)

The movement from an awareness of disintegration to a sense of renewal is, according to Eliade, the pattern of all sacred stories that he calls myths. The application of myth and legends as applied by Richler is according to Eliade a return to full, unlimited formlessness: “The turning to myth is yet another way to protest
against the world as it is today and to manifest a nostalgia for another world, downlike, fresh, untouched" (232).

The brutal injustice of terror and cruelty of Holocaust brings to the mind of the reader the Exodus of the prehistoric times and the trials and tribulations which followed. The grand design of the entire "Book of Exodus" resembles that of primitive tribal initiation rites, but on a high, ethical and symbolic plane. Before the young males in a primitive tribe can join adult society, they have to go through initiation rites which have these five elements in common: a symbolic death, a symbolic rebirth, a symbolic mutilation uniting them into a brotherhood, a new name given to each initiated member and finally revelation of the tribal laws.

The forty years of wandering in the Sinai desert by the Jews under the leadership of Moses, during which time the old generation died out and a new generation was born represents the symbolic birth and rebirth in the "initiation rite" of Exodus. All males are then circumcised. Next, the Hebrews are given a new name, the People of Israel. Finally, the new law, The Torah is revealed to them. Holocaust can be considered as an Exodus of modern times. Millions of people fled the persecution and it took years for them to overcome the mental and physical trauma. The Exodus or Diaspora took them to many lands, many civilizations. Their firm
belief that they were God’s Chosen People gave them the will to survive, the Torah nourished that will to survive, and their men of learning designed the tools for that survival—but it was the Diaspora itself that freed the Jews from time, from history, and from death as a civilization.
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