

II M.A. ENGLISH

SUB CODE: 18PEL9NEW LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

THE APPRENTICESHIP OF DUDDY KRAVITZ -- MORDECAI RICHLER

Mordecai Richler was a Jewish-Canadian writer. He has written novels, short stories, children's books, journalistic pieces and screen plays. He is a humourist and satirist. *Son of a Smaller Hero*, *St. Urbain's Horseman* and *Solomon Gursky* are his major works. His novel, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* brought him both popularity and critical acclaim.

The work is a 'coming of age novel.' It deals with Duddy Kravitz who relentlessly pursues his materialistic dreams. Duddy Kravitz is a youth growing up in Montreal, Quebec, and is a member of the Jewish religion. His grandfather told Duddy that land was important, and "a man without land is nobody". Therefore, Duddy grows up respecting this belief, and makes it his primary goal in life to acquire land and money, despite the negative consequences that this may have on his relationship with his family.

Duddy's Uncle Benjy never really cared for Duddy, and preferred his brother because he wanted to become a doctor. Because Duddy is so greedy when it comes to money, he fires Duddy from a job at his clothing factory.

While out on a date with a girlfriend named Yvette, Duddy discovers a beautiful pond that he thinks would make a great resort place for tourists. Yvette thinks that this behavior is rather rude, as she prefers the land stay as it is.

Meanwhile, Duddy starts a film company to further his entrepreneurial ambitions. He meets a blacklisted man (who happens to be a communist), and hires him on the spot. He wants to produce a film about Jerry Dingleman (“the boy wonder”) who had a miraculous childhood, but fails to capture Jerry's attention.

By buying up land in urban areas, Duddy starts to become richer, but at the expense of his emotional health. Now, most of what he is spending is from loans from the bank or friends, and he has no money in hand. Duddy buys the lake that he once wanted, and moves into his now-deceased uncle's mansion.

Pressing everyone he knows for money, Duddy loses Yvette as a friend. Despite this, Duddy still thinks he is "manly" because of all of the things he owns.

Some points :

Duddy Kravitz : Duddy reaches out his family members in their hour of need ; he reconciles his aunt Ida with his ailing uncle Benjy ; he saves the medical studies of his brother Lennie. He is ready to allot a piece of land for his grandfather's use. On the other hand, he never hesitates to exploit anyone outside his family to realize his materialistic dreams. He exploits his loyal girl friend—Yvette and Virgil—his friend. On the positive side, Duddy bubbles with energy ; on the other side, he is a ruthless exploiter and manipulator.

Yvette : a French-Canadian girl and the loyal girl-friend of Duddy . It is she who helps Duddy in buying the land of his dreams, from different owners. But

Duddy is never loyal to her ; he has no plans to marry her. At the end of the novel, Yvette along with Virgil (whose money was swindled by Duddy) stand estranged from Duddy.

Jerry Dingleman : He is a mysterious Jewish tycoon of Duddy's locality. He is regarded as "the boy wonder." He started his career as a salesman of second-hand cars. His is a story of rags to riches. Max—Duddy's father idolizes him and motivates Duddy to emulate Jerry. Later, Duddy finds that Jerry is actually a drug peddler and breaks the myth surrounding Jerry.

PATRICK WHITE : VOSS

Patrick White is an Australian Nobel Laureate. Happy Valley, The Tree of Man, Riders in the Chariot and The Vivisector are some of his famous works. Voss is a memorable novel of White which deals with Voss-the protagonist's quest to explore Australia. The novel is noted for its symbolism and narrative technique.

Though based on actual events, *Voss* is by no means a conventional historical novel. The exploration is as much of the psychological and spiritual nature of the characters as it is of the actual terrain, though Patrick White renders the latter most vividly in his concentrated and poetic style. As the novel opens, Johann Ulrich Voss, a German immigrant, calls on Edmund Bonner, the major financial backer of the expedition, and meets Bonner's niece Laura Trevelyan. The development of their ensuing relationship parallels the fate of the expedition.

In Sydney, Voss recruits four members of the expedition, one of whom, the boy Harry Robarts, attaches himself to Voss, making himself useful and idolizing Voss as benefactor and hero. Palfreyman is a rather sickly young man, an ornithologist commissioned by a titled Englishman to make a collection of flora and fauna. For Frank Le Mesurier who has held a number of jobs but none for very long, the expedition may provide fulfillment and self-knowledge, though he is prophetically uneasy about the undertaking. Turner, a drunkard, forces himself upon Voss, assuring him that he will do his part.

Meanwhile, Edmund Bonner and his wife are preoccupied with their own affairs, to which Voss and the expedition are peripheral. Their daughter Belle is a beautiful but rather empty-headed young woman; her cousin Laura is the quiet, bookish one. The Bonners' secure, middle-class household is disrupted by the discovery that Rose Portion, their servant, who was transported for the manslaughter of one illegitimate child, is now pregnant again. Rose, an awkward, ungainly young woman with a harelip, thought that she had done what was best for the child. Like Harry Robarts, she is somewhat simple.

Although they have spoken only a few times, at the farewell dinner the Bonners give for the expedition Voss talks for some time with Laura in the garden and requests permission to write to her. Laura agrees. The expedition sails the next day for Newcastle, where they will pick up supplies and the other members of the expedition, staying with the Bonners' friends the Sandersons. Voss is uneasy about including the former convict Judd but realizes that he has to accept him after Judd cares for Palfreyman, who falls ill at the

Sandersons' house. The Sandersons' neighbor, Ralph Angus—wealthy, arrogant, and handsome—also joins them. At that time, Voss writes to Bonner and also to Laura, asking her permission to write her uncle requesting her hand in marriage.

From Newcastle, they set out overland. The last stop is Jildra, where Voss receives letters, including one from Laura, who accepts his proposal on condition that they “pray together for salvation.” Voss writes her for the last time from this final outpost of civilization, a scruffy outback town where their last host is Brendan Boyle, his home a filthy shack. In Jildra, Voss takes on the final members of the party, the aborigines Dugald and Jackie. At first, the journey is relatively uncomplicated, but as they penetrate further and further into the interior, the weather, the terrain, and increasingly hostile aborigines menace the expedition. Dugald finally begs to return, and Voss entrusts to him his final letters. Dugald encounters a tribe of his people and destroys the letters.

Laura, in the meantime, composes a number of letters to Voss, whom she begins to think of as her husband, and she becomes greatly attached to and concerned for Rose Portion. Identifying with Rose, she stays up with her during the birth of the child, Mercy, caring for her and adopting her when Rose dies. The child becomes a symbol of her spiritual union with Voss. As the expedition becomes imperiled, Laura becomes withdrawn and ill, almost dying of a fever but recovering at the moment of Voss's death. Voss, meanwhile, composes letters.

The travelling party splits in two and nearly all members eventually perish. The story ends some twenty years later at a garden party hosted by Laura's cousin Belle Radclyffe (née Bonner) on the day of the unveiling of a statue of Voss. The party is also

attended by Laura Trevelyan and the one remaining member of Voss's expeditionary party, Mr Judd.

The strength of the novel comes not from the physical description of the events in the story but from the explorers' passion, insight and doom. The novel draws heavily on the complex character of Voss.

Thanks to its metaphysical nature, the novel is noted for its symbolism. The novel uses extensive religious symbolism. Voss is compared repeatedly to God, Christ and the Devil. Like Christ he goes into the desert, he is a leader of men and he tends to the sick. Voss and Laura have a meeting in a garden prior to his departure that could be compared to the Garden of Eden.

A metaphysical thread unites the novel. Voss and Laura are permitted to communicate through visions. White presents the desert as akin to the mind of man, a blank landscape in which pretensions to godliness are brought asunder. In Sydney, Laura's adoption of the orphaned child, Mercy, represents godliness through a pure form of sacrifice.

There is a continual reference to duality in the travelling party, with a group led by Voss and a group led by Judd eventually dividing after the death of the unifying agent, Mr Palfreyman. The intellect and pretensions to godliness of Mr. Voss are compared unfavourably with the simplicity and earthliness of the pardoned convict Judd. Mr Judd, it is implied, has accepted the blankness of the desert of the mind, and in doing so, become more 'godlike'. The spirituality of Australia's indigenous people also infuses the sections of the book set in the desert.

