The dutchman play by amiri baraka pdf full book

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0 Rubric Title You've already rated students with this rubric. Any major changes could affect their assessment results. Dutchman is a one-act play. Nearly all of the conflict and interactions in the play happen between the two main characters, Lula, a white woman, and Clay, a black man. The scene opens up with the pair in a New York subway. The audience finds Clay, sitting alone reading a magazine, seemingly oblivious to the presence of the woman sitting down the seat next to him eating an apple. Lula accuses Clay of ogling her, an act he vehemently denies. She then proceeds to accuse him of a couple of racial stereotypes, managing in the process to correctly deduce where Clay lives and where he's heading. Mysteriously, she even seems to know about Warren—Clay's friend—giving him details like his appearance and manner of speaking; her nearly supernatural comprehension of his past and intimate details of his life shock Clay. Lula continues to seduce Clay, provoking him sexually. She teasingly places her hand on his leg and suggestively slices her apple, feeding him the portions. Having correctly guessed his destination, she compels Clay to take her along, suggesting that she'd be willing to sleep with him afterward if she were invited. Her constant baiting gets his notice. Although he is receptive to Lula's provocations, he does not initiate any direct propositioning for sex. Lula, however, wants Clay to be even more aggressive; seeing that he doesn't seem to be taking the bait, she grows angry. Her mood and approach shift drastically from seduction to abuse. Lula insults Clay's responses to Lula change drastically as well, becoming apologetic and defensive where they were previously self-assured and masculine. She continues to berate him, criticizing him for being black and unresponsive, and then she starts to dance alluringly and toss her possessions into the aisle of the car. Other riders begin to populate the car where once it was empty. Lula invites Clay to dance with her, teasing him, challenging him to "do the nasty" with her. Clay opposes her provocations, but eventually, he is fed up. He grabs her and throws her to the floor, slapping her twice while maligning her background and life of ease. He then orders her to leave him be. Clay now begins a soliloquy, telling the audience of the challenges that a black person must go through. He rants, asserting that white people still maintain distinctions of culture, happily allowing black artists to perform "black dances" and produce "black music" but not the other way around. He also alleges that these so-called "artistic pursuits" are exploitative at their core, keeping blacks preoccupied enough so they remain disinterested with trying to break into the "white world." Clay continues his passionate tirade. All the while, Lula listens, seemingly uninterested with trying to break into the "white world." Clay continues his passionate tirade. All the while, Lula listens, seemingly uninterested. After his monologue, Clay readies himself to leave, but Lula suddenly stands up and dispassionately stands him in the heart twice. She then commands the other passengers to throw his corpse out at the next stop. Towards the end of the play, Lula makes eye contact with yet another young black man who has just entered the subway car. A black train conductor passes through, respectfully tipping his hat to Lula. The Slave Grace and Easley, a white couple, come home one night. They are frustrated that their city is convulsed by riots carried out by the black liberation movement, is in their living room holding a gun. Frightened and annoyed, the couple tries to figure out what Walker is doing there. Walker provokes Easley in particular, and he accuses Grace of leaving him all alone. She defends herself, saying that she had to leave since he was crazy and spoke of killing white people. Walker for being a bad poet and intellectual, and Walker admits he is torn between Western culture and the realities of being black in America. He hates Easley, mocks his faux-liberalism, and suggests he is gay, but he also says he would rather debate Easley on politics or poetry than converse with his own officers sometimes. As Walker grows drunker, he becomes more morose. Easley thinks it is the right time to try to tackle Walker. When he does, Walker bests him, pulls out his gun, and shoots him dead. Easley's last words are "ritual drama," which is his way of explaining Walker's feeble attempts to make meaning for himself. Grace is distraught and begs Walker to leave. She also begs him not to take the girls. A massive explosion rocks the house and Grace is badly hurt. She asks Walker how their children are and Walker tells her matter-of-factly that they are dead. Grace dies. Walker leaves the house amid the explosions. A child's voice is heard yelling upstairs. Jennifer Mudge and Dulé Hill as Baraka's controversial strangers on a train. Photograph by Steve Pyke.In 1963, LeRoi Jones, a twenty-eight-year-old poet from Newark, New Jersey, sat down and wrote a play. Titled "Dutchman," Jones's one-act work was more or less finished twenty-four hours after its inception. In his 1984 autobiography, the author (who, in 1967, prompted by Malcolm X's assassination two years earlier, abandoned his "slave name" to become Amiri Baraka, or Blessed Prince) wrote, "I can see now that the dramatic form began to interest me because I wanted to go 'beyond' poetry. I wanted some kind of action literature." The "action literature" that he created would likely have made the great Thespis yelp. In "Dutchman," he not only picked up some of the themes that Strindberg had explored in "Miss Julie," his hallucinatory 1888 examination of class and gender, but added that other great taboo: race. Reading Baraka's script today is like watching an expert butcher at his bloody chopping block. One hears a terrible kind of music as the playwright slices through his characters' flesh, bones, and cartilage. Lula and Clay, the white woman and the black man who are the play's protagonists, screech and wail at each other in ghastly speeches, which recall the bruising hooks and repetitions that Baraka's contemporary Ornette Coleman laid down on his 1961 disk, "Free Jazz." Take, for instance, Lula's characterization of Clay, shortly after they meet: You look like you been trying to grow a beard. That's exactly what you look like. You look like you live in New Jersey with your parents and are trying to grow a beard. That's what. You look like death eating a soda cracker. Her analysis of Clay's pretensions is actually solicited by Clay: halfjokingly, he asks her to describe him as she sees him. (We are also meant to understand that Baraka was indicting his own bohemianism here.) Clay is complicit in his sparring partner's disgust. Would she express her contempt so gleefully if it weren't obvious to her—she is an animal who can instantly sniff out fear—that her whiteness and femininity matter more to Clay than his own "lukewarm" manhood? These are some of the thoughts that cross one's mind at the beginning of Bill Duke's thrilling revival of the show, at the Cherry Lane, where it first opened on March 24, 1964, and created a sensation. The play is still a sensation. Upon entering the small theatre, the audience immediately feels as if it were in a "No Exit" situation. Projected across two panels blocking the stage are images from the New York subway system. The houselights flash and then darken like the lights of a subway car. A tall elderly black conductor (Paul Benjamin) enters the theatre and walks down the aisle with a Bojangles-like strut and shuffle. Pushing the two panels aside and disappearing from view, he leaves us in a subway car with Clay (Dulé Hill), a handsome black man in a dark suit who sits reading a book. (The appropriately skeletal and realistic set is by Troy Hourie. Drew Levy and Tony Smolenski's sound design—we hear trains screeching and steel wheels rumbling in tunnels throughout the play contributes to the eerie atmosphere.) Clay's train pulls into a station. On the platform just outside, a thirtyish white woman (the phenomenal Jennifer Mudge) walks by, spies Clay, and smiles knowingly. She enters the car slowly, casually, her hips and breasts moving to and fro in her light summer dress. Her long gold-streaked brown hair is a tangle of Medusa curls. Clay pretends not to notice Lula as she bends over, rummages through her satchel, and pulls out an apple. But pretty soon there is no way for him to avoid looking at this urban Eve. Nor can Lula resist the desire that she assumes she inspires. Sitting a little too close to Clay, she exchanges a few pleasantries before the dance of death begins.LULA: Weren't you staring at me through the window? CLAY (wheeling around and very much stiffened): What? LULA: Weren't you staring at me through the window? At the last stop? CLAY: I saw you through the window . . . if that's what it means. I don't know if I was staring. Seems to me you were staring through that window down in the vicinity of my ass and legs. Clay's stiffening in response to Lula's accusations indicates the level of fear that this country's historically murderous response to miscegenation can provoke in a black man. (Eldridge Cleaver described the soul-lacerating effects of that history four years later, in his memoir, "Soul on Ice": "The white women, who are the symbol of freedom. . . . Until the day I can have a white woman in my bed . . . I will still be a slave.") Lula can claim her desire, but Clay cannot acknowledge his. Lula has whiteness—which is to get by. Still, Hill overplays Clay's "niceness," which does the role a disservice—or, more precisely, undermines what it could be. He shrinks too far into Clay's recessive nature, so that when, near the end of the show, he finally explodes at Lula ("I'll rip your lousy breasts off!") it feels more like an apoplectic coda—the ramblings of an impotent poseur—than what Baraka intended: the outpouring of a soul filled with a rage that is too great to express or expel. Hill gives Mudge less than she needs to play against, but that's all right: she owns Lula. Her performance is so profound an evocation of worldly disgust that one feels as if Hill were there merely to feed her the lines. Whether she's eating an apple or taunting Clay or mocking his aspirations with bile and knowing ("You're an escaped nigger. . . . You crawled through the wire and made tracks to my side"), Mudge tears into Baraka's blight, into the poetry he finds in the nightmare of being. She embodies his ideas so utterly that one begins to think of "Dutchman" as a monologue.

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