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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **0475/21**

Paper 2 Drama **May/June 2024**

1 hour 30 minutes

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

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INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **two** questions.
- Your answers must be on **two** different set texts.
- You must answer **one** (a) passage-based question and **one** (b) essay question.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

This document has **12** pages.

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LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 1(a)

Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

Ernestine [*Reading*]: Blessed. Peace Angel, you are one of the blessed. Your positive visu ... visu ... visual-i-zation has materialized into a response to your letter. Your honesty touched me. STRENGTH! You speak of being a poor man, being a colored man, being a man without prospects.

[*Godfrey nods emphatically*.]

You speak of Jim Crow. COURAGE!

Godfrey: COURAGE!

Ernestine [*Reading*]: We know that there are no differences between the races in this Kingdom, and that segregation is the creation of the ignorant to punish those who are in touch with God –

Godfrey: What's that?

[ERMINA *rips open her letter*.]

Ernestine [*Reading*]: ... segregation is the creation of the ignorant to punish those who are in touch with God. That God who is a living vital force moving through you.

Godfrey: Oh yes. Go on. Go on.

Ernestine [*Reading*]: ATONE! You, who have escaped the hold of passion and other temptations that corrupt the purity of the spirit. Remember celibacy, peace and Godliness are all that I ask of you! ABSTAIN! [*A moment*] ALERT! I have considered your request and decided to bestow upon one of my devoted disciples beautiful names for your family. Names that God will immediately recognize and open up to a direct line of communication. All that said and done, I give you the names Godfrey Goodness –

Godfrey [*Tries it on*]: Godfrey Goodness!

Ernestine [*Reading*]: For your eldest, Darling Angel. And your baby, Devout Mary.

[GODFREY *smiles at* ERMINA; *horrified, she mouths the name*.]

JOIN US AT THE HOLY COMMUNION BANQUET! The Kingdom awaits you. REMEMBER! HEED! VIRTUE! Life is a feast, but unfortunately, food still costs money and I know you won't let us starve. Peace and Blessings, Father Divine, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America.

Godfrey: Ain't that beautiful? THERE! He speaks the truth! From God's mouth to our ears.

Ermina: Not me, Miss Devout Mary. [*Sucks her teeth*] What's wrong with Ermina Crump? No way I's gonna be called Miss Devout Mary. What kinda first name is Devout? What sorta boy is gonna wanna ask out a gal named Devout Mary?

Godfrey: Well, you know where Father stands on that.

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Ernestine [*To audience*]: Is he speaking for himself or Father Divine? Ain't always clear. I like being a Crump, was just getting used to being a Crump.

Godfrey [*Flabbergasted*]: We're now part of his flock, we're capable of entering the Kingdom. [*In a heavenly daze, he reaches into his wallet and counts out his money*.] This is just about the best news I've heard. [*A moment. In a broad, theatrical gesture*] My Angels, this calls for a celebration. What are you waiting for, go on and get dressed up, we're going out ... to the movies!

Ernestine [*To audience*]: At least I wish he had said that, but he sat and counted his money until it was time to go to work.

[*from* Act 1, Scene 1]

In what ways does Nottage make this moment in the play both entertaining and serious?

Or 1(b)

How does Nottage's portrayal of Ermina contribute to the dramatic impact of the play?

Do **not** use the passage printed in **Question 1(a)** in answering this question.

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WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 2(a)

Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

Elesin: There was fear in the forest too.

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Shall I yield them cause to foul the rafters?

[*from* Scene 1]

How does Soyinka memorably portray Elesin at this moment in the play?

Or 2(b)

To what extent does Soyinka make you dislike the British characters in the play?

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 3(a)

Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

Blanche: Stella, oh, Stella, Stella!

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Blanche: I was so exhausted by all I'd been through my – nerves broke.

[*from* Scene 1]

How does Williams make this early moment in the play so revealing?

Or 3(b)

Blanche calls Stanley 'an animal'.

To what extent does Williams persuade you to agree?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 4(a)

Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

Quince: Answer, as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bottom: Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quince: You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bottom: What is Pyramus? A lover, or a tyrant?

Quince: A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

Bottom: That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest – yet my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

'The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far,
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.'

This was lofty. Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein: a lover is more condoling.

Quince: Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flute: Here, Peter Quince.

Quince: Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

Flute: What is Thisby? A wand'ring knight?

Quince: It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flute: Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming.

Quince: That's all one; you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bottom: An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice: 'Thisne, Thisne!' [*Then speaking small*] 'Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! Thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

Quince: No, no, you must play Pyramus; and, Flute, you Thisby.

Bottom: Well; proceed.

Quince: Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Star: Here, Peter Quince.

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Quince: Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout; the tinker.

Snout: Here, Peter Quince.

Quince: You, Pyramus' father; myself, Thisby's father; Snug, the joiner, you, the lion's part. And I hope here is a play fitted.

Snug: Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it to me, for I am slow of study.

Quince: You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bottom: Let me play the lion too. I will roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar that I will make the Duke say 'Let him roar again, let him roar again'.

Quince: An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the Duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

All: That would hang us, every mother's son.

Bottom: I grant you, friends, if you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us; but I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

Quince: You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-fac'd man; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man; therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

[*from* Act 1, Scene 2]

How does Shakespeare make this such an entertaining introduction to Bottom?

Or 4(b)

In what ways does Shakespeare's portrayal of Puck contribute to the dramatic impact of the play?

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 5(a)

Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

Iago: But I pray, sir,
Are you fast married? For be assur'd of this,
That the magnifico is much beloved,
And hath in his effect a voice potential
As double as the Duke's. He will divorce you,
Or put upon you what restraint and grievance
That law, with all his might to enforce it on,
Will give him cable.

Othello: Let him do his spite.
My services which I have done the signiory
Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know –
Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
I shall promulgate – I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege; and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd. For know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the seas' worth.

[*Enter* CASSIO *and* Officers *with torches*.]

But look what lights come yonder.

Iago: Those are the raised father and his friends.
You were best go in.

Othello: Not I; I must be found.
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?

Iago: By Janus, I think no.

Othello: The servants of the Duke and my lieutenant –
The goodness of the night upon you, friends!
What is the news?

Cassio: The Duke does greet you, General;
And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance
Even on the instant.

Othello: What is the matter, think you?

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Cassio: Something from Cyprus, as I may divine.
It is a business of some heat: the galleys
Have sent a dozen sequent messengers
This very night at one another's heels;
And many of the consuls, rais'd and met,
Are at the Duke's already. You have been hotly call'd for;
When, being not at your lodging to be found,
The Senate hath sent about three several quests
To search you out.

Othello: 'Tis well I am found by you.
I will but spend a word here in the house,
And go with you. [*Exit*.]

Cassio: Ancient, what makes he here?

Iago: Faith, he to-night hath boarded a land carrack.
If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever.

Cassio: I do not understand.

Iago: He's married

Cassio: To who?

Re-enter OTHELLO.

Iago: Marry, to – Come, Captain, will you go?

Othello: Have with you.

[*Enter* BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, *and Officers with torches and weapons*.]

Cassio: Here comes another troop to seek for you.

Iago: It is Brabantio. General, be advis'd;
He comes to bad intent.

Othello: Holla! stand there.

Roderigo: Signior, it is the Moor.

Brabantio: Down with him, thief.

[*They draw on both sides*.]

Iago: You, Roderigo; come, sir, I am for you.

Othello: Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.
Good signior, you shall more command with years
Than with your weapons.

[*from* Act 1, Scene 2]

What striking first impressions of Othello does Shakespeare create for you at this moment in the play?

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Or 5(b)

What does Shakespeare's portrayal of Iago make you feel about him?

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Surname	StemUp Model Solution
Answer booklet	Write the question number in the left-hand margin at the start of each answer.

Question number

1a

Nottage builds this moment around a single letter, and its comedy and its seriousness grow from the same source: the gap between what Father Divine's words promise and what the Crump family actually needs. We laugh at the bombast of the letter and at the girls' reactions to their new names, yet beneath the laughter lies a grieving, struggling father who has placed all his hope in a distant stranger, and a family whose identity is being rewritten without its consent.

Much of the entertainment comes from the letter itself. Ernestine, reading aloud, stumbles over "visu ... visu ... visual-i-zation", and the broken word makes the language of the Peace Mission sound grand but slightly absurd, as though it is too inflated even to pronounce. The sudden capitalised commands, "STRENGTH!", "COURAGE!", "ATONE!", "ABSTAIN!", interrupt the sentences like slogans shouted from a pulpit, and on stage the effect is almost comic in its rhythm. Yet the content is serious. The letter names the real conditions of Godfrey's life, "a poor man, being a colored man, being a man without prospects", and speaks of "Jim Crow". The claim that "segregation is the creation of the ignorant" offers a dignity that the outside world denies him, so we understand why Godfrey nods so "emphatically". Nottage lets us smile at the style while respecting the hunger it feeds.

The humour sharpens when the letter turns to money. After all the spiritual uplift, the line "Life is a feast, but unfortunately, food still costs money and I know you won't let us starve" lands with wonderful bathos. The audience sees, as Godfrey does not, that the blessing comes with a bill. This is deeply ironic, because a

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"feast" is exactly what this family lacks: the play's title suggests they live on crumbs from a table of joy, not the banquet itself. The seriousness lies in Godfrey's response: "In a heavenly daze, he reaches into his wallet and counts out his money." The stage direction is quietly painful, since a poor man is giving away what little he has to the very voice that has just reminded him of his poverty.

The renaming is the comic heart of the scene. Godfrey "Tries it on", "Godfrey Goodness!", with childlike pleasure, while Ermina, "horrified", silently mouths "Devout Mary". Her outburst is very funny: "What sorta boy is gonna wanna ask out a gal named Devout Mary?" Her colloquial, practical voice cuts straight through the solemnity, and her concern with boys is exactly what the letter's demand for "celibacy" forbids. However, her question "What's wrong with Ermina Crump?" is also serious. A name carries family, memory and the girls' dead mother, so to replace it is to erase something. Ernestine's quieter confession to the audience, "I like being a Crump, was just getting used to being a Crump", is touching because it suggests a family still trying to settle into a new life in a new city, now asked to change again.

Nottage's use of Ernestine as narrator adds both comedy and sadness. Her aside "Is he speaking for himself or Father Divine? Ain't always clear" is wry, but it also exposes how completely Godfrey has handed his authority to someone else. The ending is the most striking moment. Godfrey seems to burst into joy, "My Angels, this calls for a celebration", and promises a trip "to the movies!" The dramatic pause and the "broad, theatrical gesture" make us expect release. Then Ernestine undercuts it: "At least I wish he had said that, but he sat and counted his money until it was time to go to work." The abrupt shift from fantasy to reality is comic in its timing, but it leaves a lonely image of a father counting coins and daughters longing for a little pleasure.

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Overall, Nottage makes this moment entertaining through exaggerated language, bathos, Ermina's sharp tongue and Ernestine's ironic narration, but every laugh is tied to something serious: poverty, racial injustice, grief and a fragile sense of who the Crumps are. The audience is invited to laugh with the girls while feeling a real sympathy for the man counting his money.

2b

Soyinka certainly makes me dislike the British characters, but not in a simple way. He does not present Simon and Jane Pilkings as monsters: they are lively, often funny, sometimes well meaning. What makes them unattractive is their casual blindness, their assumption that what they do not understand cannot matter. My dislike therefore grows less from any single act of cruelty than from a steady accumulation of arrogance, which Soyinka exposes through comedy, irony and the contrasting dignity of the Yoruba characters, until it becomes tragic.

The first sight of the Pilkingses is deliberately jarring. After the poetry, music and ceremony of the market scene, we find them tangoing in egungun costumes, the sacred clothing of the ancestors, which they plan to wear to a fancy dress ball. Soyinka's structure makes the contrast brutal: what Elesin's world treats as a link with the dead, the British treat as a party outfit. Amusa's horrified refusal to speak to Pilkings while he is wearing the costume shows how offensive this is, yet Pilkings simply mocks him. Here I dislike Pilkings because he takes pleasure in ridiculing someone else's belief, and because he seems to think his authority gives him the right to.

His treatment of Joseph deepens this impression. When Pilkings questions his servant about the drumming, he teases him about his Christianity and his

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knowledge of local customs in a way that is both amused and contemptuous. The dramatic irony is sharp: Pilkings wants information from the people he despises, but cannot listen to it properly. Jane is more careful and occasionally rebukes her husband for his language, which makes her seem kinder. Yet she too is wearing the costume, and her curiosity has a tourist's quality, as if Yoruba culture were an interesting puzzle rather than a living faith.

Soyinka's most powerful method is to place the British beside Olunde. In the conversation at the Residency, Jane assumes that the son, educated as a doctor in England, must share her horror at his father's death. Olunde's calm dismantles her. His remark that he discovered "you have no respect for what you do not understand" is the clearest judgement on the British in the play, and it is persuasive because it comes from someone who has lived among them. His story of a ship's captain who sacrificed himself to protect others, an act the British admire, exposes a double standard: sacrifice is noble when it is theirs and barbaric when it is Yoruba. This is the point at which my dislike becomes most intense, because their contempt is shown to be hypocritical, not merely ignorant.

The ball scene adds satire. The Resident is more concerned with avoiding embarrassment during the Prince's visit than with any person's life, and Soyinka presents colonial power as fussy, self-important and slightly ridiculous. The market women's earlier mimicry of British manners in front of Amusa reinforces this, turning colonial authority into a performance the audience can laugh at.

The tragedy, however, is where Pilkings's actions matter most. By arresting Elesin and holding him in a cellar once used for slaves, he believes he is saving a life. Instead, as Elesin tells him, "You did not save my life, District Officer. You destroyed it." His interference leads directly to Olunde taking his father's place and

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to Elesin's own death in chains. Pilkings's bewilderment at the end is almost pitiable, and this complicates my response: he is not evil so much as hopelessly limited.

Yet Soyinka warns in his Author's Note that the colonial factor is "a catalytic incident merely", and that the central conflict lies within Elesin himself, who hesitated on the brink because of his own love of life. This qualifies my dislike of the British. They are irritating, arrogant and damaging, but they are not the real heart of the play. So I dislike them a great deal, especially Pilkings, but I recognise that Soyinka uses them chiefly to set off a deeper metaphysical tragedy, and to show, through their failure to understand, how much richer the world they dismiss really is.

3a This early moment is revealing because almost everything Blanche says to Stella means more than she intends. Williams lets us watch her performing a version of herself, gracious, refined and in control, while her nerves, her drinking and her evasions keep breaking through. The reunion between the sisters therefore works as a kind of quiet exposure: we learn about Blanche less from what she tells us than from how she tells it.

The greeting itself is theatrical. Blanche's cry of "Stella, oh, Stella, Stella!" and her playful "Stella for Star!" are warm and affectionate, but their repetition and exclamation feel heightened, as though she is playing a scene of joyful reunion rather than simply living it. The pet name also reveals how Blanche sees the world: in romantic, poetic terms, where her sister is a star rather than a woman living in a cramped flat in a poor district of New Orleans. Her language belongs to the old world of Belle Reve, and it immediately sounds out of place in Elysian

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Fields.

Her horror at her surroundings is equally revealing. She calls on Edgar Allan Poe as the only writer who could do the place justice, and imagines outside the "ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir". The literary allusion is funny, because Stella deflates it with a practical explanation, but it also shows that Blanche filters reality through literature and fantasy. When she exclaims that "never, never, never in my worst dreams" could she have pictured her sister living like this, the triple repetition reveals snobbery, but also genuine shock and fear. Williams is already establishing the conflict between her illusions and the hard, physical world of Stanley.

The most striking detail is her terror of light. Blanche asks Stella not to look at her until she has bathed and rested, and begs for the light to be turned off, protesting that she will not be looked at in "this merciless glare". The adjective "merciless" is extreme for a light bulb and reveals how deeply she fears exposure. This is one of the play's central symbols, and an audience may sense even here that it is not only her age she wishes to hide. Later, when she covers the bulb with a paper lantern and when Mitch finally drags her into the light, this early moment gains a painful significance.

Her drinking is revealed through uneasy stage business. The audience has already watched her secretly gulp whisky before Stella arrives, so when she asks after liquor and talks of her nerves in front of her sister, we share a joke at her expense. Yet the dramatic irony is troubling: her nerves need constant soothing, and she is already hiding things from the one person she depends on.

The ending of the passage is the most revealing of all. When Stella asks how she

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could leave her teaching post during the term, Blanche explains that the superintendent suggested a leave of absence, and that she "was so exhausted by all I'd been through my" before the line trails off and resumes with "nerves broke". The hesitation and fractured syntax suggest that she is improvising, searching for an acceptable story. An audience may not yet know that she has really been dismissed, as Stanley reveals much later, but Williams plants enough doubt for us to suspect a hidden truth. The phrase "nerves broke" also has a literal truth: Blanche is fragile, and the breakdown it hints at will be completed by the end of the play.

Overall, the moment is revealing because Williams uses Blanche's heightened language, her fear of light, her secret drinking and her faltering explanations to show a woman living on illusion and on the edge of collapse. We laugh at her affectations, but we also sense, very early, that her performance is a defence against a past she cannot bear to have exposed.

3b

Williams goes a long way towards persuading me that Blanche is right, because so much of the language and staging surrounding Stanley is physical, instinctive and violent. Yet I am not fully persuaded, because the word "animal" makes Stanley sound less conscious than he really is. What is most disturbing about him is not that he acts without thought, but that he is calculating, territorial and cruel by choice, which in some ways makes him worse than an animal.

From his first entrance Williams encourages the comparison. Stanley arrives carrying a package of meat, which he hurls at Stella with the single word "Meat!", and her laughing catch suggests a sexual playfulness between them. The opening stage directions describe the "animal joy" implicit in his movements and present

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him as the "gaudy seed-bearer", a bird displaying itself, sizing women up "at a glance". Before he has spoken much, Williams has defined him by appetite and instinct.

The poker night in Scene Three intensifies this. The stage is filled with raw colour and the men are described in primary terms, and Stanley's drunken rage, hurling the radio from the window and striking his wife, is shocking in its sudden violence. Afterwards he stands in the street bellowing "Stella!" until she comes down, and the two "come together with low, animal moans". Williams's stage directions here almost endorse Blanche's view: Stanley's need, like his anger, seems pre-verbal, a cry rather than an argument.

Blanche's speech in Scene Four makes the case explicitly. She tells Stella that Stanley "acts like an animal, has an animal's habits", and imagines him as something "sub-human", one of the apes left behind while civilisation moved on. She begs her sister, "Don't hang back with the brutes!" The speech is persuasive in its energy, and the audience has just seen evidence for it. However, Williams then reveals that Stanley has overheard every word, and his grin at Blanche over Stella's shoulder as she embraces him is chilling precisely because it is knowing. From this point he is not a creature reacting to instinct, but an opponent planning revenge.

This is why I resist the label. Stanley's destruction of Blanche is methodical. He investigates her past in Laurel, gathering the facts about the hotel and her dismissal from school, and in Scene Seven he relishes reporting them while Blanche sings in the bath. He tells Mitch, ending Blanche's hope of marriage, and presents her with a bus ticket back to Laurel as a birthday present, a cruel joke that requires thought and timing. In Scene Eight, when Stella calls him a pig, he smashes the dishes and proclaims that every man is a king and that he is the

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king in this house. The violence is real, but it is a deliberate assertion of power, the language of ownership rather than of instinct.

The rape in Scene Ten is the climax of this. Stanley's line "We've had this date with each other from the beginning!" shows he has been thinking of this moment, perhaps for the whole play. Williams surrounds it with a jungle-like soundscape and inhuman voices, as if to suggest the animal, but the words themselves reveal intention. An animal may be dangerous, but it is not cruel in this sense; Stanley chooses to destroy Blanche.

Williams also gives Stanley qualities that complicate the label in the other direction. He is loyal to his friends, genuinely loves Stella, and has a point when he resents Blanche's snobbery: when he is called a "Polack", he insists that he is American, and we feel his pride. At the end he comforts Stella tenderly as she weeps, though his hand moving into her blouse reminds us that desire remains his language.

So Williams persuades me that Stanley is brutal, physical and dangerous, and his staging deliberately invites Blanche's description. Yet he also shows that Stanley is shrewd and purposeful. The more accurate judgement may be that Blanche's word is too kind: an animal cannot be blamed, whereas Stanley knows exactly what he is doing.

4a

Shakespeare introduces Bottom as a man whose enthusiasm is far larger than his talent or his self-awareness, and the entertainment of the scene comes from watching that enthusiasm overflow. He wants every part, misuses grand words with total confidence, and is gently managed by Quince, so that by the end of the

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passage the audience already loves him for the very vanity that makes him ridiculous.

From his first line Bottom takes charge of a meeting that is not his to run. Quince is the director, yet Bottom answers the roll call with "Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed", a brisk command that sounds like a nobleman instructing a servant. His question "A lover, or a tyrant?" shows he thinks of acting in terms of stock roles, and when told he is to play a lover who "kills himself most gallant for love", he immediately imagines his own triumph: "let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms." The hyperbole is comic because the audience knows these are amateur workmen, yet Bottom pictures a weeping crowd overwhelmed by his genius.

His speech then swerves away from the part he has been given. Admitting "my chief humour is for a tyrant", he launches into a sample of "Ercles", his version of Hercules, and the bouncing rhymes of "The raging rocks / And shivering shocks" are deliberately terrible. The short lines, heavy alliteration and jingling rhyme parody the bombastic style of old-fashioned tragedy, and the mangled "Phibbus' car" for Phoebus's chariot shows his learning is borrowed and half understood. Shakespeare makes Bottom's self-satisfied verdict, "This was lofty", all the funnier because nobody else is given time to judge it. The phrase "a part to tear a cat in, to make all split" is wonderfully vivid too, suggesting that for Bottom acting means noise and violence rather than subtlety.

The structure of the scene turns his greed for roles into a running joke. When Flute protests that he cannot play a woman because "I have a beard coming", Bottom seizes his chance: "let me play Thisby too." He demonstrates "in a monstrous little voice", and "monstrous" is a comic contradiction, since a voice

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cannot be both huge and small. The stage direction "speaking small" gives the actor a chance for broad physical comedy as he lurches from Pyramus to Thisbe. Then, when Snug admits he is "slow of study", Bottom asks to play the lion as well, promising to roar so well that the Duke will cry "Let him roar again". The pattern of interruption builds comic rhythm: each new part Quince assigns becomes another part Bottom wants.

Shakespeare also uses the lion episode to reveal Bottom's mix of vanity and anxiety. When the others fear that frightening the ladies would "hang us, every mother's son", Bottom instantly adjusts, promising to "aggravate" his voice and roar "as gently as any sucking dove". "Aggravate" is a malapropism for moderate, and the paradox of a gentle roar, likened to a dove and a "nightingale", is absurd. Yet it is also endearing, because it shows he wants to please everyone at once.

Finally, Quince's handling of Bottom is a joke in itself. Rather than argue, he flatters him: Pyramus is "a sweet-fac'd man", "a most lovely gentleman-like man; therefore you must needs play Pyramus." The piled-up compliments, and the false logic of "therefore", show Quince knows exactly how to manage his star. The audience enjoys being in on the trick that Bottom misses.

This introduction is entertaining, then, because Shakespeare makes Bottom both absurd and lovable: boastful, confused with language and comically greedy, but also generous in energy and eager to delight. It also prepares us for the later scenes, since a man this confident of his own charm is perfectly placed to be given an ass's head and adored by the Fairy Queen without ever seeming surprised.

4b

Puck is the engine of the play's comedy. Shakespeare makes him the agent who

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turns Oberon's plans into chaos, the observer who laughs at human folly, and finally the voice who steps out of the fiction to speak to us directly. His mischief drives the plot, but his detached, playful view of love also shapes the way the audience feels about everything it sees, so that potential tragedy becomes delight.

Shakespeare establishes Puck's character before he does anything important. When the Fairy in Act Two Scene One identifies him as "that shrewd and knavish sprite / Call'd Robin Goodfellow", Puck cheerfully confirms it: "I am that merry wanderer of the night." He boasts of tricks such as misleading travellers and tipping drink over an old woman, and his delight in these petty pranks tells us he is mischievous rather than malicious. This matters dramatically, because the audience is prepared to trust that whatever chaos he creates will be comic rather than cruel.

His speed and energy make him a thrilling presence on stage. Sent for the love-in-idleness flower, he promises "I'll put a girdle round about the earth / In forty minutes." The boast creates a sense of supernatural power and pace, and it contrasts sharply with the slow, heavy confusion of the mortals lost in the wood. Puck moves at the speed of the play's imagination.

His great contribution to the plot is his error. Oberon tells him to anoint the eyes of a man in Athenian clothes, and Puck, finding Lysander asleep near Hermia, assumes he has found the right man. The mistake reverses the lovers' positions: both young men suddenly pursue Helena, who had been scorned, and Hermia is abandoned. Puck's defence, "Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook", is charming, but Oberon suspects his "knaveries" may be wilful, and Puck's own admission that the things which please him best are those that "befall prepost'rously" suggests he is not entirely sorry. This ambiguity is part of his dramatic appeal: we cannot be

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sure whether the chaos is accident or design, and the uncertainty makes him exciting.

Puck is also the play's most important commentator. Watching the lovers quarrel, he exclaims, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" This line shapes our response to the whole middle of the play. The lovers' passion feels intensely serious to them, as Hermia's fury and Helena's misery show, but Puck invites the audience to look down on it from a fairy's height and laugh. Love, through his eyes, is irrational and changeable, and the juice on the eyelids becomes a comic symbol of how arbitrary attraction can be.

His transformation of Bottom provides the play's most famous image. Puck reports with glee that he fixed an "ass's nole" on Bottom's head and that "My mistress with a monster is in love." His relish in the joke is infectious, and the meeting of the Fairy Queen and the weaver brings together the play's different worlds in a single absurd and memorable stage picture.

Yet Shakespeare also uses Puck to restore order. In the final stages of the confusion he leads Lysander and Demetrius apart, imitating their voices until they sleep, and applies the antidote so that "Jack shall have Jill; / Nought shall go ill." The bouncing rhyme and nursery-rhyme names reassure us that comedy will triumph and the couples will be properly paired.

Most strikingly, Puck has the last word. Alone on stage after the court has gone to bed, he speaks the epilogue: "If we shadows have offended, / Think but this, and all is mended, / That you have but slumber'd here / While these visions did appear." Here "shadows" means both fairies and actors, and Puck blurs the boundary between the play and the audience, suggesting the whole performance

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may have been a dream. His request, "Give me your hands, if we be friends", turns applause into a gesture of reconciliation.

Puck's dramatic impact is therefore enormous. He creates the chaos, comments on it, resolves it and finally frames the whole play as a dream. Through him Shakespeare keeps the play light, mischievous and magical, and reminds us that we, too, have been charmed by a trick.

Sa

The most striking thing about Othello here is his composure. After a first scene in which we have only heard him described, crudely and in his absence, by Iago and Roderigo, Shakespeare at last shows us the man himself, and he is calm, dignified, confident in his worth and in his love. Every attempt in this passage to unsettle him, first Iago's warning, then the arrival of armed men, fails, and that steadiness is what makes the first impression so powerful.

The passage opens with Iago testing him. Iago warns that Brabantio is "much beloved", with a "voice potential / As double as the Duke's", and could "divorce" him or impose "restraint and grievance". The anxious, piled-up clauses are designed to provoke fear. Othello's reply, "Let him do his spite", is short and unhurried, and the contrast in length is itself revealing: Iago fusses while Othello dismisses. He trusts that "My services which I have done the signiory / Shall out-tongue his complaints." The verb "out-tongue" is striking, as though his deeds will literally speak louder than Brabantio's words, which suggests a soldier who values action over rhetoric.

His sense of his own worth emerges next. He reveals that he comes from "men of royal siege", yet adds that he will only "promulgate" this when boasting becomes

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"an honour". This is a subtle touch: Othello is proud of his royal lineage but too dignified to parade it, a quiet rebuke to Iago, whose whole method depends on talk. The image that his "demerits", here meaning merits, may speak "unbonneted" suggests a man who need not take his hat off to anyone, an equal to the Venetian aristocracy he has married into.

The most moving lines concern Desdemona. Othello declares that "But that I love the gentle Desdemona", he would not give up his "unhoused free condition" for "the seas' worth". The adjective "gentle" is tender, and the soldier's image of an unhoused, free life shows what love has cost him: he has willingly accepted "circumscription and confine" for her sake. The vast hyperbole of "the seas' worth" makes the love sound boundless and sincere, quite unlike the bestial images Iago used in the opening scene. An audience may also feel a shiver of foreboding, since we already know Iago intends to destroy exactly what Othello treasures most.

When lights approach, Shakespeare stages a second test. Iago urges him to "go in" and hide, but Othello refuses: "Not I; I must be found." The monosyllables are firm, and the following line, "My parts, my title, and my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly", shows a man with nothing to conceal. The phrase "perfect soul" is perhaps a hint of pride, even of a dangerous innocence, as he trusts that the truth about him will be obvious to everyone. The irony is sharpened by Iago swearing "By Janus", the two-faced god, a reminder that Othello is standing beside a man who wears two faces.

His relationship with the state is also established. When Cassio arrives, Othello greets the men with courtesy, "The goodness of the night upon you, friends!", and Cassio's account shows how indispensable he is: the Senate has sent "three several quests" to find him because of "Something from Cyprus". The dramatic effect is to

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show that Venice needs this man, which strengthens his position against Brabantio.

The climax is Othello's handling of the brawl. Brabantio enters crying "Down with him, thief", swords are drawn on both sides, and Iago theatrically challenges Roderigo. Othello defuses the moment with one elegant line: "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them." The calm, almost amused tone, and the poetic image of dew, show authority so complete that he does not need to raise his voice. He then turns to Brabantio with respect, noting that he can "more command with years / Than with your weapons", a courteous reminder of age and dignity.

Shakespeare's first impressions of Othello are therefore of a noble, eloquent and self-possessed general, deeply in love and secure in his reputation. That security is admirable, yet the trust in his own transparency, set beside Iago's double-dealing, makes the audience fear how vulnerable such a man might be.

Sb

Shakespeare's portrayal of Iago leaves me with an uncomfortable mixture of horror and reluctant fascination. He is repellent because he destroys innocent people with such cold pleasure, yet Shakespeare makes him the most magnetic voice in the play, sharing his plans with us in soliloquy so that we become, uneasily, his confidants. What disturbs me most is not simply that he is evil, but that his evil is so ordinary in its methods and so impossible, in the end, to explain.

From the very first scene, Shakespeare makes me distrust him while also being drawn into his confidence. His boast to Roderigo, "I am not what I am", is a chilling inversion of God's words "I am that I am", and it announces that Iago's whole identity is built on deception. His crude, bestial images to Brabantio, such

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as "an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe", make me recoil: he reduces love to animal coupling and uses racial insult to stir up a father's panic, revealing a mind that poisons everything it describes.

What makes me feel complicit is Shakespeare's use of soliloquy. At the end of Act I, Iago tells us bluntly, "I hate the Moor", and then offers a rumour that Othello has slept with his wife, admitting he does not know if it is true but will act "as if for surety". His motives shift and multiply, so that I sense he is hunting for reasons to justify a malice that already exists. His couplet "Hell and night / Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light" frightens me because the rhyme gives his plan a sense of finality and ritual, as though he were a devil midwifing evil into being. Yet I also cannot help admiring the speed of his improvisation, and that admiration makes me uncomfortable with myself.

His contempt for others makes him even harder to like. He makes "my fool my purse" of Roderigo, repeating "Put money in thy purse" until the phrase becomes a hypnotic chant that exposes how easily he controls weaker minds. Most cruelly, he recognises Othello's virtue, calling him "of a free and open nature", and plans to use that very openness against him. In Act 2 he goes further, vowing to "turn her virtue into pitch" and to make out of Desdemona's "own goodness" the "net / That shall enmesh them all". The image of black pitch smeared over goodness, and of a hunter's net, made me feel real anger: Iago does not merely attack the good, he turns goodness itself into a weapon.

The temptation scene in Act 3 is where I feel most horrified by his skill. Iago works through hesitation and hints, so that Othello believes he is dragging the truth from a reluctant friend. His warning, "beware, my lord, of jealousy; / It is the green-ey'd monster", is deeply ironic, since he is planting the jealousy he

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pretends to warn against. The repeated label "honest Iago" grows more painful each time I hear it, because dramatic irony makes me watch the trap close while the characters cannot. When he kneels with Othello and pledges "I am your own for ever", the language of a marriage vow becomes a grotesque parody, as if Iago has replaced Desdemona in Othello's heart.

By the final act my feelings harden into disgust. He stabs Roderigo, his own dupe, and kills his wife Emilia when she exposes him, showing that he will destroy anyone, even those closest to him, to protect himself. Yet Shakespeare denies us any satisfying explanation. When Othello asks why that "demi-devil" has ensnared him, Iago replies, "Demand me nothing. What you know, you know. / From this time forth I never will speak word." The man who has controlled everyone through language chooses silence, and I find this the most frightening moment of all: we are left with evil that cannot be understood, only witnessed.

Ultimately, Shakespeare makes me fear and loathe Iago, but also respect the terrible intelligence with which he exploits human weakness. Perhaps that is the point. By making us enjoy his wit and share his secrets, Shakespeare shows how easily anyone might be seduced by a plausible voice, making Iago a warning as well as a villain.