



Margaret Garner Act I Synopses

No Known Copyright

Princeton University Library reasonably believes that the Item is not restricted by copyright or related rights, but a conclusive determination could not be made.

You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use.

Princeton University Library Disclaimer

Princeton University Library claims no copyright governing this digital resource. It is provided for free, on a non-commercial, open-access basis, for fair-use academic and research purposes only. Anyone who claims copyright over any part of these resources and feels that they should not be presented in this manner is invited to contact Princeton University Library, who will in turn consider such concerns and make every effort to respond appropriately. We request that users reproducing this resource cite it according the guidelines described at <http://rbcs.princeton.edu/policies/forms-citation>.

Citation Information

Morrison, Toni. 1931-

Margaret Garner Act I Synopses

1 folder

Contact Information

Download Information

Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 01:28:36 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/765375944>

MARGARET GARNER

Opera in Two Acts

Music by
Richard Danielpour

Libretto by
Toni Morrison

Act I Synopsis

CAST

(In order of appearance)

Congressman John Gaines (Bass Baritone)

Auctioneer, Caucasian male (Character Tenor)

SATB Caucasian Chorus (not less than 30)

Margaret Garner, a female Afro-American slave (Mezzo Soprano)

Robert Garner, Margaret's husband (Lyric Baritone)

Young Thomas Garner, Margaret & Robert's son at age five

Cilla, Margaret's Mother (High Mezzo Soprano or Dramatic Soprano)

SATB Afro-American Chorus (not less than 18)

Colonel Archibald Gaines, younger brother of John Gaines (Lyric Baritone)

Mr. Casey, the Foreman of Maplewood Plantation (Dramatic Tenor)

Members of Pro Slavery Band, brass quintet and two percussion players

Elizabeth Gaines, the daughter of Colonel Gaines (Light Lyric Soprano)

Major William Hancock, Elizabeth's Fiancé and eventually her Husband (Tenor)

Two Onstage Instrumental Performers, violinist and pianist

The Twins, Margaret's Mulatto children – male and female at age four

Older Thomas Garner, Margaret's son at age nine (Boy Alto)

Elijah Kite, a free Afro-American from Cincinnati with the Underground RR (Bass Baritone)

Emily Kite, Elijah Kite's wife (Lyric Soprano)

Six Militiamen from Caucasian Chorus (3 Tenor and 3 Baritone)

Act I Scene 1 (Prologue)

(Setting: Boone County Kentucky, Richwood Station Town Square, Late morning.)

[Congressman John Gaines, Colonel Archibald Gaines, Margaret Garner, Robert Garner, Cilla, Chorus of 18-20 Afro-American slaves (plus a few children), Auctioneer, Mr. Casey and Chorus of at least 30 Caucasian Towns People]

In the center of a busy town square ~~where the business of the day ensues~~, Congressman John Gaines, who has recently been appointed Governor of the Oregon Territory has put up his slaves and plantation for auction. Before the auction, the auctioneer publicly reads a list of punishments in the Town Square. As the auction unfolds and reaches a fevered pitch, Gaines' younger brother Colonel Archibald Gaines arrives to out-bid all others and wins claim to his brother's slaves and plantation. It is obvious from their interaction that the older Gaines is a kinder and gentler man than his brother. Archibald, recently a widower, seems harder, more impatient and slightly envious of his older brother's success.

Just then, a small band preaching secession and upholding the recently passed fugitive slave act makes its appearance with an almost evangelical fervor. The slaves at this moment, roughly 18 to 20 in number, begin to sing a spiritual - quietly at first and gradually crescendos until they drown out the band and its leader. As the slaves in their defiance establish their presence, Colonel Gaines suddenly silences them and orders them to comport themselves as they now belong to him.

As he surveys his property, he notices Margaret, a young woman of 25 and her husband Robert and their son Thomas. He refers to her as an attractive piece of "property" and to everyone's astonishment she replies to her new master that in the Eyes of the God they both worship, she is not property at all, but a woman. Surprised and offended by Margaret's and the other slaves' defiance he threatens to put them all "in his pocket" (a popular phrase of that time meaning to sell them off and pocket the money). He then orders all the slaves immediately taken back to the plantation at Maplewood.

(End of Scene)

Orchestral Interlude I

Act I Scene 2 (Setting: Maplewood Plantation slaves quarters several weeks later)

[Cilla, Margaret, Robert, Thomas, Mr. Casey and the Chorus of Afro-American slaves]

As the sun is setting, the slave women are preparing dinner for the men who are returning home after a long day working on the plantation. As the men enter, they are singing a spiritual about "crossing over Jordan into Canaan land." The women join in as the men clean up and prepare for dinner.

Cilla, Margaret's mother, then calls everyone to the table. Cilla performs an invocation and prayer of thanks over the meal and proceeds to invite any individual to offer a prayer of thanks. After two or three participants, Robert and finally Margaret offer their supplications. Margaret makes known her hope of freedom and safety for her family. She is approached by her mother who reminds her that her nobility and freedom come from within. (Cilla's Aria)

Suddenly the Foreman, Mr. Casey, enters and informs Robert Garner that he is to be "leased out" in the morning to a neighboring plantation. Mr. Casey then turns to Margaret and orders her to pack Robert's things and "while you're at it, get yourself ready, 'cause you're going to the 'big house' to serve the master." After Mr. Casey leaves, Margaret and Robert sing a love duet.

(End of Scene)

Orchestral Interlude II

Act I Scene 3 (Setting: Maplewood Plantation Gaines' Residence, months later, after dinner)

[Colonel Gaines, Elizabeth Gaines, Major Hancock, Two on-stage Performers (violinist & pianist), Margaret and Chorus of 15 Guests (Caucasian only)]

Gaines
~~Colonel Gaines is giving his daughter, Elizabeth, an engagement celebration. As the curtain rises, the guests are assembled in the Parlor listening to a performance of violin and piano music. The arrangement is Steven Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home."~~
At the end of the performance, following the applause, Gaines announces Elizabeth's engagement to Major William Hancock, an officer from a well-to-do family in Ohio and offers a toast to the engaged couple. Everyone raises his or her glasses and drinks. In turn, the young Major proposes a toast to the continued welfare and prosperity of the Gaines' Household. Gaines, in jest, condescendingly reminds the Major that the welfare and prosperity of his family is dependant upon an ideology that the Major opposes - the owning of slaves. The Major finally proposes a toast to Gaines's health.

Elizabeth offers to sing
To dispel the tension between the two men, a guest suggests that Elizabeth sing. *one Hancock guesses here* Obliging, she slips her arm inside her fiancé's *is hard to believe - the slaves I would not be without* ushering him away from her father (the opposite side of the room). As she sings a love song about the joining of hearts that unite to build a home, Gaines and the Major each in aside continue to slander the other and their ideologies. When Elizabeth finishes her song, there are pleas from the crowd for another. At this point Elizabeth suggests that Margaret, who has been serving the guests at the party, join her in singing a spiritual that Margaret has taught her. (It is evident that the two women have developed a close personal bond in the short time Margaret has been at Maplewood.) In protest, Gaines immediately forbids the possibility of such a performance, insisting that he wants nothing to do with such music in his home. *more to opposite side of room*

Embarrassed and upset by this display of her father's, Elizabeth leaves the room with her fiancé attentively trailing behind her. Gaines then hastily bids his guests a goodnight, leaving the room to see out the last guest. This leaves Margaret alone in the room to clean up after the party. As she is doing this she quietly begins to sing to herself the song, she was moments ago forbidden to intone. Gaines, demanding that she drop what she is doing to attend to him in his bedroom chamber rudely interrupts her. Ignoring Gaines' demand, she continues to pick-up glasses. Gaines angrily charges her and grabs her by the wrist, dragging her to his bedroom chamber.

(End of Scene)

Orchestral Interlude III

* Commands everyone's attention to the engagement of his daughter

Amid murmurs of delight the Col. offers a toast to the Couple; the guests join in

and are followed by

Sneers "We don't want to 'overwork' our help, do we?"

M. drops a glass
his foot follows

Act I Scene 4 (Setting: Margaret's Cabin, almost 5 years later - February 27 1861. Late evening.)

[Margaret, Cilla, Thomas, The Twins, Gaines, Elizabeth, Major Hancock, Robert and 2-3 Afro-American slaves]

Margaret is coming home from a ^{different} long day, looking forward to seeing Robert, who has been secretly visiting her on Sunday evenings. Inside, Cilla, along with Thomas and the Twins - who are around four years of age and light-skinned (one boy and one girl), are packing. The interior is modestly furnished - a bed, a wood-burning stove and perhaps a small wooden table with a chair. Margaret enters and looks upon the action with bewilderment. She asks Cilla what is going on. Cilla explains that while Margaret was away, ^{her husband} they had received a message that Robert (her husband) is coming this evening to fetch Margaret and the children to take them across the Ohio River to Cincinnati. Margaret is excited and fearful of this news. Cilla takes Thomas to pack his things. Margaret then notices that the Twins are exhausted and decides to put them down to sleep before Robert comes. She takes each of them by the hand to the bed and they kneel in front of the bed to say a prayer. The children bow their heads and whisper their prayers while Margaret sings a version of "Our Father" with her head raised upward. As the children climb into bed, she asks them if they would like to hear a song as they fall to sleep. They eagerly nod in approval and she sings to them a strophic lullaby. She begins the song by humming the tune and ends it in the same way. While she sings to them, she is contemplating the journey that they will be taking this evening. The lullaby segues into a slightly faster, up-tempo development of the tune. We then hear a voice off-stage calling "Margaret" in a floating eerie way.

Recognizing Voice

Realizing it is Gaines, she wakes the children and sends them to Cilla's Cabin. ^{she} He hears Gaines calling again, but this time it is "Margaret Ann" (the name of Gaines' deceased wife). He sounds inebriated; and when he finally enters with a stagger, he is carrying an almost empty whiskey bottle. His clothes are crumpled and his pants are dirty at the knees. As he speaks sweetly to Margaret, it is evident that he is in a drunken delirium and thinks that Margaret is his deceased wife. He asks her why she has been away so long. Margaret is terrified and does not dare to speak. Gaines continues by recounting his wife's fatal accident - her fall down a flight of stairs; after an argument they were having. He insists that he did not push her down, but that she fell from the threshold of the stairway while trying to free herself from his grasp. As he reaches for Margaret, she can no longer hold back her words. She sings emphatically, "I am not your wife, I am not your dog or your whore, I am MARGARET GARNER!" This breaks Gaines out of his drunken delirium, and smashing the whiskey bottle against the floor he angrily denounces and insults her for speaking to her Master in such a way. He then proceeds to throw her on the bed, insisting that, "he will teach her a lesson and who is Master here." She screams "Oh my God, not now, not again!" He removes his jacket, vest, and begins to undo his belt as he holds her down with his legs on the bed.

^{What have you done?} She screams again and this time Elizabeth and Major Hancock, now her husband, suddenly enter having heard the screams from afar while walking in the nearby garden. They are horrified by what they see. Cilla and some of the other slaves enter from the opposite side. The other slaves look on from outside while Cilla proceeds to enter the Cabin. Cilla says to Gaines "Leave my child alone. What harm has she done to you?" Gaines slaps Cilla on the face, saying, "Margaret doesn't belong to you now - she is my property!" Elizabeth and the Major escort Gaines out, each on either side of him. (At this point, a light snow begins to fall outside) After they leave, Cilla with some of the other slaves now present implores Margaret to take her family and leave this place. Cilla confirms that Robert will be coming in a coach for them just before midnight. Cilla now sings a version of the lullaby to Margaret, only with different words, encouraging her to find her freedom.

It is apparent now as Robert arrives that Cilla has decided to stay behind. Robert and Margaret bid a tearful farewell to Cilla and their friends. Cilla ushers the children to the couple. The clock in the distance strikes twelve.

^{Some}
(End of Scene)

Orchestral Interlude IV

* Note earlier in text or delete
** Sympathetic
*** Trio

Same music / different lyrics

Why is Gaines at M's cabin?

Wouldn't he call for her?

Why, if thinking of wife,
would he grab M.?

Think M. should over wary
very cautious a cloth to wipe
? Sympathy if successful
for a minute. - till he grabs
her. (No rape her) She fights
him off

Act I Scene 5 (Setting: A Large furnished Cabin (stage right) on the outskirts of Cincinnati after the escape - March 31, 1861. It is dusk and as the scene progresses it becomes night and there is a full moon.)

[Elijah Kite, Emily Kite, Robert, Margaret, Thomas, The Twins, Gaines, Mr. Casey and 6 Caucasian Militia Men]

Cleaning

The Garners have taken refuge with the Kite family, who has been assisting run-away slaves as part of the Underground Railroad. Elijah Kite and his wife, Emily, have brought provisions for the Garners and are preparing supper for them. Robert is checking the pistol he took from Maplewood, before the escape, Margaret is bundled in a quilt and sitting near a fire on an old rocker. Waking up from a nap, she observes Elijah, an older well-educated Afro-American man whose father bought his own freedom, teaching Thomas to read. They are using a section of an important speech by newly elected Abraham Lincoln - "A House Divided Cannot Stand." There is a discussion between Robert and Elijah about the South leaving the Union - South Carolina had just seceded from the Union weeks earlier. Emily gets involved with the discussion by asking her husband what kind of man does he think the new President is. Kite responds that, although he is on their side, he fears a great conflict coming between the States. The thought of war unsettles Margaret; she tells Robert to mind the children and walks out where it is cold and clear. As she leaves, we begin to hear an introduction to "I am not Prey." She walks out the door into the light of the full moon (towards stage left), down the steps and follows a crescent-shaped path from the front of the cabin to the rear of the stage. As she walks, she passes a leaf-less tree with a stone bench beneath it. When she turns around to return, she finally stops to sit under the tree and begins to sing about feeling safer outside in this new territory than in her former habitat.

Robert turns the care of the twins to Emily Kite and comes out to find Margaret. He is afraid that she will be seen - she tells him to relax and enjoy the night sky and lightly scolds him for not watching out for the children. He tells her that he is always watching out for her and they sing a duet. ("You Can Count On Me") As they walk back into the cabin, the Kites offer Robert & Margaret a glass of "punch" and they toast to their friends' newfound freedom. As they start to sit at the table for supper, the sound of heavy footsteps is heard in the distance. The couples become concerned. Elijah tells Robert to close the curtains as he blows out the candles. (The fireplace still lights the cabin from within.) The sound of the men draws nearer, there is finally a knock on the door - more like the pounding of a fist. The light outside, being provided by the full moon, is shadowy, but we can make out the shapes of six men. Three of them are singing in unison rhythm demanding that the door be opened. Robert, eyes on the door, tells Margaret and the Kites not to worry as he pulls out Gaines' revolver. The knocking comes again and the men outside threaten this time to break the door down. Margaret is in the corner holding her three children close as the men begin to break down the door. (The sound of heavy percussion the pit aids the sound of two axes hitting the door.)

When it is broken down, we see Colonel Gaines, Mr. Casey and 6 militiamen hired to retrieve the runaways.) Robert immediately fires the revolver twice at Mr. Casey, hitting in the hand and shoulder. Gaines wrestles the revolver from Robert, who puts up a tremendous fight. Two of the men take hold of Robert. Gaines then orders them to take him outside to the tree, pointing his finger toward the same leafless tree that Margaret and Robert were standing under moments earlier. Margaret and the Kites helplessly watch as Robert is lynched from the tree. Knowing this act to be illegal in Cincinnati, Gaines provides the Coup de Gras by shooting Robert in the chest to make it look like self defense. He then returns to the cabin to find Margaret holding a knife at the throat of one of the twins. She threatens Gaines, telling him not to touch her. The Kites, who have been watching this in fear and disbelief slowly encourage Margaret to let go of the knife. As she reluctantly does so, Gaines orders her bound in chains with her hands behind her back. The sound of the heavy percussion that evoked the knocking down of the door earlier is heard again and as the men exit the cabin with Margaret and her children, the curtain slowly descends.

(End of Scene)

(End of Act)

INTERMISSION

* Boy & Man voices singing a line from Lincoln's speech.

** "Lay it down" [Sword and shield]

Previn?
~~Time~~
~~See~~

if he is as anti slavery
as he appears - he
has ~~a~~ powerful
enemies

Act I

90 minutes

Act II

60 minutes

On the boat

" Didn't my hard, delious
Daniel? Didn't he?
Didn't he?"

4/14/1860

Tom Hemson
Levise James

Act II Scene 1 (Setting: The Henry Louis, a steamboat bound for Northern Kentucky, early April 1861, going into evening.)
 [Mr. Casey, Margaret, Thomas, the Twins, Simon, Steamboat passengers and crew (full white chorus) and slaves (full black chorus)]

The scene opens with a view of only the upper tier of the boat. The passengers are eating, drinking and gambling. Mr. Casey is seated at the center of the card table, bandaged from the shooting, and drinking heavily with a "bar girl" standing next to him. As the honky-tonk piano at the rear of the boat's "parlor" continues playing the passengers, "bar girls" and proprietors ~~begin~~ to sing about the pleasures of the flesh. There is a general air of rowdiness and debauchery. Eventually, Mr. Casey wins the hand of poker with a deadman's hand (four aces and a king). To lighten the others unease (and his own) about the superstition he changes the subject by offering each player at the table a bottle of fine Kentucky Bourbon. He dispatches Simon, the Afro-American who has been serving them, to go below and fetch the bottles out of the cargo. The singing continues as Simon steps out onto the deck and proceeds down the stairs to the cargo portion of the boat.

As he reaches the bottom of the stairs the lights fade out upstairs and slowly come up downstairs. The party noise from above ~~is~~ ^{is} no longer heard. As the lights rise in the cargo hull, we hear the sound of the Afro-American slaves singing about* (Margaret is silent.) The slaves are seated on planked benches and chained to the hull of the boat. Simon proceeds through the double row seating to the front of the hull. There he rummages through a crate for the bottles of bourbon as the slaves continue to sing. On his way back through, Simon notices Margaret and her children. He stops to ask her if he can be of any assistance. She replies that only God can help them now. Shrugging this answer off, Simon continues to the upper level of the boat.

As he reaches the top of the stairs, the music and lights resume in same fashion as when he had left. (The lights remain on in the cargo level.) When he returns to the card table, Mr. Casey is now more intoxicated, and is angry that Simon has taken far too long to retrieve the bottles. Mr. Casey also notices that Simon is a bottle short and accuses him of stealing the fourth. Mr. Casey's accusations begin to spread through the rest of the partygoers who begin to sing in support of the supposed thievery. As the music on both tiers rises to a feverish level, one of the boat's crew rushes in announcing that the boat has hit a "snag" - a slang word for a clump of trees or roots entangled and embedded in the river bottom.

In the above deck the passengers begin to gather their belongings and winnings; while below, in the cargo hull ^{Crewman} ~~an overseer~~ unchains the slaves. The slaves are shuffled upstairs to unload because the cargo below prevents access to the railing of the deck. Margaret sees this as an opportunity for freedom and grabs her children to flee. As she reaches the upper deck, her back to the railing, she sees Mr. Casey, who has just made his way out of the parlor. Mr. Casey even in his drunken state can see Margaret's intent ~~and tries to talk her out of her crazy notion~~. As he moves forward, she ~~grabs the Twins and jumps over the ship's railing~~. Mr. Casey and Simon ~~jump overboard in hopes of saving Margaret and the children~~. The slaves and white chorus gather on the rail to watch the action below. Margaret, helped by Simon, is pulled up and onto the boat. As Simon is pulled aboard, he is asked about the fate of the children and Mr. Casey. Simon replies that they are gone, lost under the boat's current. Margaret looks lost and defeated as the stage fades into darkness.

(End of Scene)

Orchestral Interlude V

* { Steal Away

* { or Ironic men - women then all together refrain
 = fugue (dialect)

climbs further
 pauses
 stares and
 then almost
 casually turns
 and holding
 the twins tightly

Alarm Sound

Book to Richard Danielson

Act II Scene 2 (Setting: A "flat" ferry on the Ohio River a few weeks later. It is around four a.m. April 14, 1861. A very dense fog hovers on the surface of the river.)

[Margaret, 2 Ferry men (from the chorus), and an Overseer (from the chorus)]

Margaret is huddled in a blanket and chained to the ^a center post ^{midships} of the ferry. The two Ferryman are ^{in the bow} at each corner in the front of the boat manning the oars, while the Overseer seated on a barrel with a rifle ^{on his lap} nestled between his legs and resting on his shoulder watches Margaret from the rear. The Overseer is playing the harmonica — a rendition of "Amazing Grace." One Ferryman, a Northerner, ^{with} begins in a curious way to ask the other Ferryman, a Kentuckian, whether the Negro is really a human being. ^{with a Southern accent} In good humor, they argue the issue back and forth, and are finally interrupted by the Overseer, who ^{gruffly} insists they stop their bickering and enjoy the performance. The Ferryman look at one another, shrug their shoulders and join in with the Overseer's playing by singing midway through one of the verses. Eventually the Overseer puts his harmonica down and joins in singing with the Ferryman in three-part harmony.

Margaret begins to sing in another key as the men hum the last verse of "Amazing Grace." She says that she can hear her husband and her children calling to her — she is relieved that they are now free and that nothing can harm them where they are. She then hears the voice of her mother (Cilla is heard singing off stage.) ^{Calming} Nearly ^{describes his prisoner as a} delicious, Margaret tells her mother that the children are free now and that she will soon be joining them herself. The strains of "Amazing Grace," heard in the background, eventually give way to Margaret's final aria. The instrumental coda of the song accompanies the coming of dawn's gradual light and the arrival of a new morning. Throughout the scene, the ferry has been moving slowly and steadily from one side of the stage to the other. By the end of the scene, the ferry reaches the landing not far from Richwood Station. ^{case or point}

(End of Scene)

Orchestral Interlude VI

a kind of
"Your arms too short to
box w/ God."

what she (Margaret)
is singing under
the lyrics of "Amazing Grace"
Margaret sings
that she

was

having "sealed
the mountains"

Act II Scene 2 (Setting: A "flat" ferry on the Ohio River a few weeks later. It is around four a.m. April 14, 1861. A very dense fog hovers on the surface of the river.)
[Margaret, 2 Ferry men (from the chorus), and an Overseer (from the chorus)]

Margaret is huddled in a blanket and chained to the center post of the ferry. The two Ferryman are at each corner in the front of the boat manning the oars, while the Overseer seated on a barrel with a rifle nestled between his legs and resting on his shoulder watches Margaret from the rear. The Overseer is playing the harmonica – a rendition of "Amazing Grace." One Ferryman, a Northerner, begins in a curious way to ask the other Ferryman, a Kentuckian, whether the Negro is really a human being. In good humor, they argue the issue back and forth, and are finally interrupted by the Overseer, who gruffly insists they stop their bickering and enjoy the performance. The Ferryman look at one another, shrug their shoulders and join in with the Overseer's playing by singing midway through one of the verses. Eventually the Overseer puts his harmonica down and joins in singing with the Ferryman in three-part harmony.

Margaret begins to sing in another key as the men hum the last verse of "Amazing Grace." She says that she can hear her husband and her children calling to her – she is relieved that they are now free and that nothing can harm them where they are. She then hears the voice of her mother (Cilla is heard singing off stage.) Nearly delirious, Margaret tells her mother that the children are free now and that she will soon be joining them herself. The strains of "Amazing Grace," heard in the background, eventually give way to Margaret's final aria. ("There Are No New Songs") The instrumental coda of the song accompanies the coming of dawn's gradual light and the arrival of a new morning. Throughout the scene, the ferry has been moving slowly and steadily from one side of the stage to the other. By the end of the scene, the ferry reaches the landing not far from Richwood Station.

(End of Scene)

Short Orchestral Interlude

Act II Scene 3 (Setting: Richwood Station, Northern Kentucky, April 14, 1861, about 9:00 a.m.)

[Margaret, Gaines, Cilla, Thomas, Auctioneer, Elizabeth Gaines Hancock, Major Hancock, Messenger, Towns' people (white chorus) and Maplewood plantation slaves (black chorus)]

We are back to the opening setting, only now the town is slowly coming to life and there is an unhitched paddy wagon sitting in the square with two men standing guard. (Margaret is inside, but we cannot see her.) The Maplewood plantation slaves are standing on the auction block with Cilla and Thomas in the center of the group. Cilla opens the scene by singing "I Asked Jesus If It Would Be Alright If I Changed My Name" ^{along with} to the other slaves, ^{voice above the others} as they are all ~~about~~ to be sold to another plantation. As the song progresses, the towns' people slowly arrive and engage in their business of the day. At the end of the song, we hear Margaret telling her mother not to worry. Cilla hears her daughter, and as she starts to look ~~about~~ ^{for her} is diverted by the arrival of Colonel Gaines. He tells the ~~slaves~~ ^{Auctioneer and} that they are being separated and sold down river to plantations in New Orleans and Georgia. ^{He would be the group who answer his call & response}

~~Gaines~~ ^{he} then orders the two guards to open the wagon. Margaret, chained, slowly steps out of the wagon. She is approached by Gaines, who begins ^{be making} interrogating her about the death of her children. She answers him by telling them that they were also his children, and the brother and sister of Elizabeth Gaines, his daughter. Enraged, Gaines cannot bear to hear any more. ~~Gaines~~ turns to the Auctioneer and asks him what is the punishment for a runaway slave. The Auctioneer answers him with "12 lashes." Gaines announces that being the owner of this property, he will administer the punishment and asks for the bullwhip and orders that Margaret be chained to the whipping post. At this point, Elizabeth and Major Hancock arrive with the intent of stopping Gaines. Elizabeth pleads with her father not to go through with this embarrassing scene.

He states that he will not be made a fool of and proceed to administer the punishment to Margaret. (Each lash resonates with a sharp chord from the orchestra.) Major Hancock cannot take any more of it and by the eleventh lash grabs Gaines' hand, stopping him. As Elizabeth pleads again for her father to stop, Major Hancock is ordering the Auctioneer/Sheriff to unchain Margaret from the post. ^{left} Gaines argues, "No, I have one more coming to me," and turns. By this time, Margaret has seen the knife attached to the ^{right} side of one of the guards who is untying her. After she is unchained, she breaks free from the grasp of the guards, ^{shoot} grabs the knife and runs into Gaines as he steps into her. Gaines grabs Margaret and slowly ^{sinks} sinks to the ground. The guards ~~seize~~ Margaret ^{and} Elizabeth runs to the side of her dying father. Major Hancock is stand ^{over} over the scene in disbelief.

Just now a messenger arrives and approaches Major Hancock. After speaking with the Major, the messenger announces to everyone that fort Sumpter has been taken and that President Lincoln has ordered the dispatch of 50,000 troops. War is declared. Major Hancock realizing what has happened, orders a stretcher for Gaines and Margaret taken away. The black chorus sings that this is only the beginning – as the town bells toll. The curtain descends.

(End of Scene)

Finis

final statement

*interchange
dialogue*

Act I Scene I (Prologue)

In the center of a busy town square in Boone County, Kentucky, preparations are being made for an auction of a plantation including its home furnishings, its equipment, its stock and its twenty or so slaves. The seller, Congressman John Gaines, accepts congratulations from interested buyers on his recent appointment to Governor of Oregon Territory and compliments on the quality and profitability of his plantation.. In the middle of these self-congratulatory remarks, the auctioneer opens the proceedings by reading the List of Punishments. The auction begins and, to the obvious surprise of Colonel John Gaines, his younger brother, Colonel Archibald Gaines, arrives clearly intent on participating in the auction. It is obvious in the brothers' manner and the nature of their exchange, that John is a calmer even gentler man than Archibald, and that the younger man is envious of his brother's successes. The auction reaches fever pitch then subsides when Archibald out-bids all others and takes legal possession of his brother's property.

Just as Gaines begins signing papers, a small band of evangelical/secessionist whites enters with banners and shouts calling for the separation of states and praising the new fugitive slave act as a first step. Their song along with the accompanying band is loudly triumphant for a while as the just auctioned slaves begin quietly to sing "Before I'll be a slave; I'll be buried in my grave." The folk song grows louder {with drums to make the point] and overcomes the band. At that moment Archibald asserts himself as the new owner silencing the slaves and permitting the secessionist band to capture the moment.

(End of Scene)

[The end of this scene, as on original, is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons: Archibald Gaines would not behave this way in front of other white slave-owners of that class. His sexual hints would isolate him and be entertaining only in a saloon, or private drinking party . Also the

threat to sell the slaves is not really a threat since they are already being re-sold. Obviously there should be some activity in which Margaret is introduced and is noticed as being defiant. But as conceived now she is stupid, reckless. I can't think of a different kind of encounter however, so I wonder if the scene can't end with the exit of the band as above and, perhaps, Margaret taking the lead in the defiantly sung slaves' song. And it is her aggressive, bold-eyed singing that prompts Archibald Gaines to silence the whole group.]

Act I Scene 2

[This scene is seriously problematic for me. First it is highly unhistorical with the assumption that the men worked and the women prepared the food. In fact children, men and women all worked the fields. Only the infants and the very old would have been there to start a meal. Second it seems a-historical with the "banquet" meal taking place as though it is routine after work.. On the contrary, each family would seek the privacy of their house or cabin for the evening meal. Group eating is useful for the staging, I suppose, but it has such a bad connotation for me I offer another view to consider. The families go into separate houses and we concentrate on one such family: the Garners'. Another thing: the "pathetic" crossing over into Jordan is inappropriate here; and serves to deprive the slave population of wit or even understanding. I recommend another kind of song and that all opportunities to re-enforce the cliché' slave be ignored.]

The sun is setting casting a radiant glow on the men and women and teenagers returning from the fields. As they enter they are singing a wry and cynical song about their work and the bosses who require it. It is one of dozens of such songs in the lore which are both angry and cheering. And makes for some high-spiritedness while the laborers wash up, say good bye to one another and disappear into their cabins.

Cilla, Margaret's mother, stands at her door and calls to her family. They, Robert Garner and Margaret Garner greet Cilla and their son Thomas and settle at table. Cilla says grace and the husband and wife follow suit. Robert's blessing is traditional; but Margaret's is unorthodox—not

so much thanking God for the food as implying that it is their due. Cilla chastises her suggesting she is doing harm to her son by giving him outrageous ideas. Robert defends Margaret and says he hopes his son does have outrageous ideas—otherwise known as ambition. Margaret re-iterates her hopes to get out of that place, to raise her family properly. Cilla sings to them about the source of nobility and freedom being within. Margaret answers with an elaboration of her vision, the ferocity and imagistic description of which infects them all.

Just as the notes and mood of this dream of a free life sweeps them all and lifts their eyes, the tableau is interrupted by Casey, the foreman. He informs Robert that he is to be leased out the next day and may be away for several weeks. About to leave Casey turns and, as though an afterthought, tells Margaret there is no field work for her tomorrow. She is assigned to the “big house.” Why? Because Colonel Gaines wants her there. The message is loaded and unmistakable.

At Casey’s exit, Robert and Margaret exchange glances and sing a love duet.

(End of Scene)

Act I Scene 3

As the curtain rises fifteen guests, served by Margaret Garner, are assembled in Archibald Gaines’ parlor listening to a violin and piano arrangement of Steven Foster’s “My Old Kentucky Home.” Following the applause at the close of the performance, Gaines commands everyone’s attention to announce his daughter Elizabeth’s engagement to Major William Hancock. Amid murmurs of surprise and delight Gaines offers a toast to the couple. The guests join in. In turn the Major thanks his future father-in-law, and mentioning that being from Ohio he has discovered much to admire about Kentucky and more he is eager to learn, he toasts the continued welfare and good fortune of Maplewood. All drink, after which Gaines, half in jest but clearly condescending, reminds the major that neither luck nor good fortune created Maplewood

Instead it was hard work that did it. Hancock answers saying "I stand corrected. It was rude to exclude the hard work of the slaves in his toast." Gaines roars, "Slaves?" (He obviously meant his own hard work.)

To defer the rising hostility between the two men, Elizabeth offers to sing. She slips one arm through her fiancée's; the other through her father's arm. As she sings a song about the joining of hearts to build a home, Gaines and the Major moved to opposite sides of the room. Each intervening is Elizabeth's song to make asides slandering the other's point of view. At the end of her song, amid pleas for more, Elizabeth catches sight of Margaret replenishing and tidying up, and agrees to an encore with Margaret singing along a spiritual Margaret taught her. Elizabeth, defying her father and siding with her fiancé' with this gesture, has intensified the hostility she had been trying to erase. When Elizabeth and Margaret prepare to sing, Gaines sneers and asks whether it is a good idea to "overwork" Margaret this way.

Embarrassed, Elizabeth exits with the Major throwing the guests into awkward consternation. Gaines tries to soothe them and bid them good night at the same time. While he exits with his guests, Margaret finishing the clearing away, hums to song she and Elizabeth were about to sing. Gaines re-enters demanding that she abandon the cleaning up and accompany her to his room. She ignores him and continues her work. Gaines sweeps the glasses from the tray or table and yanks her along to his bed room.

(End of Scene)

Act I Scene 4

Margaret is coming home from a difficult day, but it is Saturday and she is looking forward to seeing Robert who has been able to visit her secretly on Sundays. Inside the house, Cilla, along with Thomas, now eight years old, and a pair of twins, a boy and a girl, are sorting a few clothes. Bewildered Margaret asks what is going on. Cilla in low whispers, explains that a message from

Robert has been received. That he has made arrangements to escape across the Ohio River to Cincinnati. The news frightens Margaret and excites her. Cilla takes Thomas into another room to finish the packing while Margaret puts the twins to sleep. She takes each of them by the hand to the bed and they kneel to say their prayers. The children bow their heads as murmur lines from their prayers while Margaret sings and echoes fragments and phrases from their prayers. They children climb into bed and as she arranges the quilt, they ask her for a song to put them to sleep. She sings to them a strophic lullaby. She begins the song by humming the tune and ends it in the same way. While she sings to them, she is contemplating the journey that they will be taking. The lullaby segues into a slightly faster, up tempo development of the tune. At its end we hear an eerie floating voice calling "Margaret."

[The balance of this scene presents a narrative problem. Why does Gaines go to Margaret's cabin? If he wanted her he would call for her to come to him. Why, if in a drunken nostalgic mood for his wife does this make him think of Margaret? The name similarity is not enough, or ought not be: both too simple and incredible. I would rather see the scene played with Margaret, after listening to Gaines' drunken story of his wife's death and his obvious guilt and sorrow, offering him a measure of compassion—a very cautious quite wary gesture of sympathy for example, a cloth to wipe his face, a drink. And the gesture is successful for a while, until he is overcome and grabs her. There should be no rape her [too much] but Margaret does fight him and curse him.]

Cilla, Elizabeth and the major enter, all horrified by the struggle they witness. Cilla reaches for Gaines' pulling him, hitting him shouting "What have you done?" Elizabeth, appalled by her father's behavior, is frozen; her husband leaps into action and helps remove Gaines from the room. All should be singing some version of "What have you done?" Including Gaines ["What have I done?"] A light snow begins to fall. When the whites have left, Cilla confirms Robert's return with a coach at midnight. Cilla sings a version of the lullaby, same music different lyrics, encouraging, urging her daughter to leave and blessing the family on the journey.

Robert arrives. They gather, say goodbye and exit. A clock strikes twelve.

[End of Scene]

Act I Scene 5

The Garners have taken refuge with the Kites, Elijah and Emily, a family working the Underground Railroad assisting run-away slaves. Emily is preparing supper; Robert is cleaning a pistol; Margaret, wrapped in a quilt, naps before the fireplace. Elijah, an older and obviously well-educated African-American, is teaching Thomas to read. The man's voice and the boy's voice sing from the "text" they are using—a speech from the newly elected President titled A House Divided Cannot Stand.

Robert and Elijah discuss the news of South Carolina's secession—whether it will encourage other states to leave the Union. Emily asks her husband what kind of man he thinks the new president is. He answers that if Lincoln is an anti-slavery as they say he is, then he will have powerful enemies and a hard time trying to rule. Margaret, refusing to let talk of politics get her down, asks Robert to look in on the twins while she steps outside into the cold clear night. As she leaves we hear the introduction to "I Am Not Prey." She moves into the light of the full moon (stage left), down the steps and on following a crescent-shaped path from the cabin door to the rear of the stage. As she walks she passes a stone bench beneath a leafless tree. She circles the path, returns to sit on the bench and sing her feelings of incredible delicious safety.

Robert joins Margaret, telling her it's too soon to be careless: Gaines' or slave catchers will certainly be looking for them; better to stay inside. She teases him, encouraging him to relax and enjoy the outrageous moonlight, to live a little, dance a little. He is seduced and they sing and dance a cheerful, amorous song. As they finish, laughing and excited by the danger they have defied, the Kites stand in the door offering cups of hot punch and an invitation to supper. Just as they all settle at the table, the sound of hooves, then foot steps draws close. Elijah signals Robert

to close the curtains; he blows out the candles; but the light from the fireplace throws their shadows. The footsteps draw near and stop; there is pounding at the door. The silhouettes of six men are clear in the moonlight. Three men are singing in unison demands that the door be open. Robert picks up his pistol. Emily hides the children in another room. Elijah motions Robert behind the door as he prepares to deny the presence of any run aways in his house. Margaret joins Emily and the children, while threats to break down the door soar throughout the scene, quickly followed by the sound of axes on wood. (The sound of heavy percussion in the pit aids the axe crushing sounds on the door).

The door collapses to reveal Gaines, Casey and six militiamen hired to capture the run aways. Before Elijah can begin his speech of alarm, Gaines shouts for his “niggers”, or makes some remark that is so insulting Robert dashes from his hiding place and fires his pistol, hitting Casey in the hand and shoulder. A tremendous struggle follows; Robert is disarmed; Elijah thrown to the floor. Margaret runs into the room screaming. Gaines, upon seeing her, turns and orders Robert taken outside, pointing to the tree where she and Robert danced only a little while earlier. The sound of the children throwing up; Emily moaning, Elijah pleading, Margaret shouting, Robert shouting his love for them—crescendos and then disappears when Robert is hanged from the leafless tree. In the hush Gaines fires a bullet into Robert’s heart. Margaret rushes into the house where Gaines finds her with a knife at her own throat. The Kites enter and beg her to put the knife down, singing a version of the spiritual, “Lay it down, lay it down, sword and shield. I aint gonna study war no more.” Reluctantly Margaret obeys them and lets the knife be taken from her hands. Gaines orders her bound, her hands tied behind her back. The percussion sounds and Margaret and her children are led away. The curtain descends slowly.

(End of Scene)

(End of Act)

Intermission

Act II scene I

The scene opens with a view limited to the upper level of a steamboat. The passengers are eating, drinking and gambling. Casey, bandaged but not disabled from the shooting, is seated as the center of the card table, fiddling with a deck of cards and joking with a "bar girl" next to him. As the honky tonk piano at the rear of the boat's parlor continues playing, passengers, "bar girls" and proprietors sing a bawdy song accompanied by gestures of debauchery. Casey wins a hand of poker with a "dead man's hand" (four aces and a king.) To lighten the mood that this superstition throws over the party, Casey changes the subject by treating each player to a bottle of bourbon. He dispatches Simon, a black servant, below for the whiskey. The singing resumes and continues as Simon steps onto the deck and proceeds down the stairs to the cargo level of the boat.

As Simon approaches the bottom of the stairs, the lights and noise above fade; the light comes up in the cargo level. The slaves in the cargo singing, thought they are seated on planks and chained to bolts in the hull. Margaret and her children are among them. She is not singing. Simon proceeds through the two rows of chained slaves to the storeroom and rummages there for the bottles of bourbon. On his way back through, Simon notices Margaret and her children—she seems to be smiling. He asks her is she all right; is there anything he can do for her. She smiles up at him saying Everything is already taken care of. Simon departs, puzzled, for the stairs. As he climbs them, the music and lights pick up while the lights remain on at cargo level. Delivering the bottles to Casey, Simon is accused of stealing a fourth bottle, since he has brought only three (one for each player excluding Casey). The others join in in teasing, pushing, insulting Simon for being stupid, a thief, etc. They sing a "coon" song as they have their sport with him. The music builds at both levels—the "coon" song and the spiritual vying for supremacy—when suddenly the ship shudders and a crewman shouts that they have hit a snag in the river and are shipping water.

White passengers begin to collect their belongings and winnings on the first level while below in the cargo crewmen unchain the slaves, filing them above deck. Margaret, taking advantage of

the disorder, runs with her children toward the railing. As she reaches the upper deck, her back to the railing she sees Casey who has just made it out of the parlor. Casey moves toward the railing to stop her. As he moves closer, she climbs further, holding the twins to her chest with one arm, and pulling herself forward with the other. Suddenly she pauses, stares then almost casually steps over the ships' railing. Casey and Simon both leap in the water to save them. Slaves and whites gather at the railing aghast at the action in the water below—singing each portion of the events as they occur. Eventually Margaret and Simon emerge and climb into the steamship. The voices of blacks and whites comment in song on the death by drowning of Casey and the children.

[What has happened to Thomas, the older boy?]

(End of Scene)

Act II Scene 2

Margaret is huddled in a blanket and chained to a post midships a ferry. Two ferrymen are in the bow manning the poles, while an Overseer, seated astern on a barrel with a rifle on his lap, watches Margaret. The Overseer is playing on his harmonica a rendition of "Amazing Grace". One oarsman with a northern accent asks the other who has a southern accent, whether he believes that Negroes are fully human. They argue the points until they are interrupted by the Overseer who describes his prisoner as a case in point. The oarsmen nod, shrug and join the harmonica singing midway through one of the verses. Eventually the Overseer joins in and they sing a three-part harmony of the hymn. As the men hum the last verses of "Amazing Grace" Margaret begins to sing in another key. Under their lyrics of "Amazing Grace," Margaret is singing another song—a lovely melody with words describing the voices of her children calling to her; she talks to them; and to Robert. Their "conversation" is about how happy she is that they

are all free. Then she hears the voice of her mother Cilla, and we hear Cilla's voice too, offstage, warning Margaret: "Your arms too short to box with God" kind of warning. Margaret's dream song including the voices we hear of the dead children and husband swells above the "Amazing Grace" and we listen to Margaret's triumphant aria.

The instrumental coda of the song accompanies the coming of dawn's gradual light and the arrival of morning. Throughout the scene, the ferry has been moving slowly from one side of the stage to the other. At the close of the scene, the ferry has reached the landing not far from Richmond Station. Margaret's voice of irrational happiness curls over the scene.

(End of Scene)

Act II Scene 3

The scene is the same as the opening setting, only now the town is slowly coming to life and there is an unhitched paddy wagon sitting in the square with two men standing guard. (Margaret in inside the wagon, but we do not see her.) Maplewood slaves are standing on the auction block with Cilla and young Thomas among them. Cilla initiates the action by singing "I Asked Jesus if it Would Be All Right if I Changed My Name". The other slaves answer her in "call and response" ritual mode. As the song progresses, the townspeople arrive and engage in business of their own. At the end of the song, we hear Margaret's voice above the others, telling her mother not to worry about her name. Cilla, hearing her daughter's voice, tries to move about searching for her. She is diverted by the arrival of Colonel Gaines, who instructs the auctioneer and the would be purchasers, that he wants the slaves sold individually, no family groups, and that they are none to be sold locally but rather for New Orleans or Georgia.

Gaines orders the men guarding the wagon to open it. Margaret, chained and beatific, steps down from the wagon. When she approached by Gaines, her expression changes. He berates her

for the death of her children. During his speech, Margaret seems to chill. Then she begins to berate him for the death of his children the twins, and for the death of his daughter's niece and nephew; these same twins.

Enraged, Gaines calls to the auctioneer to read the punishment for run-aways. The answer is twelve lashes. Gaines orders the whip; has Margaret fastened to the post and proceeds with the lashes. In between lashes—each one of which elicits a sharp chord from the orchestra—several things occur: Elizabeth and the Major arrive; they enter into a dialogue with Colonel Gaines, the pleas for mercy, maturity, restraint etc. the couple sing are countered with Gaines' insistence upon retribution, law and order etc. At the eleventh lash, the Major gives up the debate and reaches for Gaines hand holding the whip. He then orders the guardsmen to unchain Margaret. Gaines shouts that the punishment is incomplete. He has one more lash due him The guards are interrupted in their task of untying Margaret and turn to fend off Gaines. As they turn to deal with Gaines insistent anger, Margaret seizes a knife from the waist of one of the guards. Running, breaking free she steps into Gaines and sinks her knife into him. Gaines grabs her around the neck and shoulders as he falters. She in turn is held by the knife that holds Gaines up. A guard shoots Margaret in the back. The two dying antagonists, wrapped together in blood, sink to the ground. Amid the tableau of horror and disbelief, a messenger arrives and speaks to Major Hancock. The Major turns and speaks to the crowd: Fort Sumpter has been taken. The President has ordered fifty thousand troops. As he glances at the entangled bodies lying before him, now being lifted onto stretchers, he says War. Elizabeth says the war can't last; it will be over soon. The Major says, no, this is a war that can't be won and can't be lost. It will go on for ever. The bodies on the stretchers are aloft. The slaves, comforting Cilla and Thomas, sing a song of the future redemption.

(End of Scene)

Finis

Act I Scene I (Prologue)

In the center of a busy town square in Boone County, Kentucky, preparations are being made for an auction of a plantation including its home furnishings, its equipment, its stock and its twenty or so slaves. The seller, Congressman John Gaines, accepts congratulations from interested buyers on his recent appointment to Governor of Oregon Territory and compliments on the quality and profitability of his plantation.. In the middle of these self-congratulatory remarks, the auctioneer opens the proceedings by reading the List of Punishments. The auction begins and, to the obvious surprise of Colonel John Gaines, his younger brother, Colonel Archibald Gaines, arrives clearly intent on participating in the auction. It is obvious in the brothers' manner and the nature of their exchange, that John is a calmer even gentler man than Archibald, and that the younger man is envious of his brother's successes. The auction reaches fever pitch then subsides when Archibald out-bids all others and takes legal possession of his brother's property.

Just as Gaines begins signing papers, a small band of evangelical/secessionist whites enters with banners and shouts calling for the separation of-states and praising the new fugitive slave act as a first step. Their song along with the accompanying band is loudly triumphant for a while as the just auctioned slaves begin quietly to sing "Before I'll be a slave; I'll be buried in my grave." The folk song grows louder {with drums to make the point} and overcomes the band. At that moment Archibald asserts himself as the new owner silencing the slaves and permitting the secessionist band to capture the moment.

(End of Scene)

[The end of this scene, as on original, is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons: Archibald Gaines would not behave this way in front of other white slave-owners of that class. His sexual hints would isolate him and be entertaining only in a saloon, or private drinking party. Also the

*Gaines notices Mergent at guests to his brother's club he
the elder Gaines responds -*

threat to sell the slaves is not really a threat since they are already being re-sold. Obviously there should be some activity in which Margaret is introduced and is noticed as being defiant. But as conceived now she is stupid, reckless. I can't think of a different kind of encounter however, so I wonder if the scene can't end with the exit of the band as above and, perhaps, Margaret taking the lead in the defiantly sung slaves' song. And it is her aggressive, bold-eyed singing that prompts Archibald Gaines to silence the whole group.] *wonder then taking*

Act I Scene 2

[This scene is seriously problematic for me. First it is highly unhistorical with the assumption that the men worked and the women prepared the food. In fact children, men and women all worked the fields. Only the infants and the very old would have been there to start a meal. Second it seems a-historical with the "banquet" meal taking place as though it is routine after work.. On the contrary, each family would seek the privacy of their house or cabin for the evening meal. Group eating is useful for the staging, I suppose, but it has such a bad connotation for me I offer another view to consider. The families go into separate houses and we concentrate on one such family: the Garners'. Another thing: the "pathetic" crossing over into Jordan is inappropriate here; and serves to deprive the slave population of wit or even understanding. I recommend another kind of song and that all opportunities to re-enforce the cliché slave be ignored.]

The sun is setting casting a radiant glow on the men and women and teenagers returning from the fields. As they enter they are singing a wry and cynical song about their work and the bosses who require it. It is one of dozens of such songs in the lore which are both angry and cheering. And makes for some high-spiritedness while the laborers wash up, say good bye to one another and disappear into their cabins.

Cilla, Margaret's mother, stands at her door and calls to her family. They, Robert Garner and Margaret Garner greet Cilla and their son Thomas and settle at table. Cilla says grace and the husband and wife follow suit. Robert's blessing is traditional; but Margaret's is unorthodox—not

so much thanking God for the food as implying that it is their due. Cilla chastises her suggesting she is doing harm to her son by giving him outrageous ideas. Robert defends Margaret and says he hopes his son does have outrageous ideas—otherwise known as ambition. Margaret re-iterates her hopes to get out of that place, to raise her family properly. Cilla sings to them about the source of nobility and freedom being within. Margaret answers with an elaboration of her vision, the ferocity and imagistic description of which infects them all.

Just as the notes and mood of this dream of a free life sweeps them all and lifts their eyes, the tableau is interrupted by Casey, the foreman. He informs Robert that he is to be leased out the next day and may be away for several weeks. About to leave Casey turns and, as though an afterthought, tells Margaret there is no field work for her tomorrow. She is assigned to the "big house." Why? Because Colonel Gaines wants her there. [The message is loaded and unmistakable.]

Cilla pleads for peace

*Casey
tosses
bright pergnoir
at her.*

At Casey's exit, Robert and Margaret exchange glances and sing a ~~love~~ duet. *during which he resists and she implores.*

(End of Scene)

Act I Scene 3

As the curtain rises fifteen guests, served by Margaret Garner, are assembled in Archibald Gaines' parlor listening to a violin and piano arrangement of Steven Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home." Following the applause at the close of the performance, Gaines commands everyone's attention to announce his daughter Elizabeth's engagement to Major William Hancock. Amid murmurs of surprise and delight Gaines offers a toast to the couple. The guests join in. In turn the Major thanks his future father-in-law, and mentioning that being from Ohio he has discovered much to admire about Kentucky and more he is eager to learn, he toasts the continued welfare and good fortune of Maplewood. All drink, after which Gaines, half in jest but clearly condescending, reminds the major that neither luck nor good fortune created Maplewood

Instead it was hard work that did it. Hancock answers saying "I stand corrected. It was rude to exclude the hard work of the slaves in his toast." Gaines roars, "Slaves?" (He obviously meant his own hard work.)

↳ make the point of owning the labor,

To defer the rising hostility between the two men, Elizabeth offers to sing. She slips one arm through her fiancée's; the other through her father's arm. As she sings a song about the joining of hearts to build a home, Gaines and the Major moved to opposite sides of the room. Each intervening is Elizabeth's song to make asides slandering the other's point of view. At the end of her song, amid pleas for more, Elizabeth catches sight of Margaret replenishing and tidying up, and agrees to an encore with Margaret singing along a spiritual Margaret taught her. Elizabeth, defying her father and siding with her fiancé' with this gesture, has intensified the hostility she had been trying to erase. When Elizabeth and Margaret prepare to sing, Gaines sneers and asks whether it is a good idea to "overwork" Margaret this way.

* before her
may be an
expression
of dual
loyalty

Embarrassed, Elizabeth exits with the Major throwing the guests into awkward consternation. Gaines tries to soothe them and bid them good night at the same time. While he exits with his guests, Margaret finishing the clearing away, hums to song she and Elizabeth were about to sing. Gaines re-enters ^{with the Negroes} demanding that she abandon the cleaning up and accompany her to his room. She ignores him and continues her work. ^{G. holds} Gaines sweeps the glasses from the tray or table and yanks her ~~along to his bed room.~~

(End of Scene)

Does make it clear that
this is not the first time
she has submitted to Gaines

Act I Scene 4

Margaret is coming home from a difficult day, but it is Saturday and she is looking forward to seeing Robert who has been able to visit her secretly on Sundays. Inside the house, Cilla, along with Thomas, now eight years old, and a pair of twins, a boy and a girl, are sorting a few clothes. Bewildered Margaret asks what is going on. Cilla in low whispers, explains that a message from

Robert has been received. That he has made arrangements to escape across the Ohio River to Cincinnati. The news frightens Margaret and excites her. Cilla takes Thomas into another room to finish the packing while Margaret puts the twins to sleep. She takes each of them by the hand to the bed and they kneel to say their prayers. The children bow their heads as murmur lines from their prayers while Margaret sings and echoes fragments and phrases from their prayers. They children climb into bed and as she arranges the quilt, they ask her for a song to put them to sleep. She sings to them a strophic lullaby. She begins the song by humming the tune and ends it in the same way. While she sings to them, she is contemplating the journey that they will be taking. The lullaby segues into a slightly faster, up tempo development of the tune. At its end we hear an eerie floating voice calling "Margaret."

[The balance of this scene presents a narrative problem. Why does Gaines go to Margaret's cabin? If he wanted her he would call for her to come to him. Why, if in a drunken nostalgic mood for his wife does this make him think of Margaret? The name similarity is not enough, or ought not be: both too simple and incredible. I would rather see the scene played with Margaret, after listening to Gaines' drunken story of his wife's death and his obvious guilt and sorrow, offering him a measure of compassion—a very cautious quite wary gesture of Sympathy for example, a cloth to wipe his face, a drink. And the gesture is successful for a while, until he is overcome and grabs her. There should be no rape here [too much] but Margaret does fight him and curse him.]

Cilla, Elizabeth and the major enter, all horrified by the struggle they witness. Cilla reaches for Gaines' pulling him, hitting him shouting "What have you done?" Elizabeth, appalled by her father's behavior, is frozen; her husband leaps into action and helps remove Gaines from the room. All should be singing some version of "What have you done?" Including Gaines ["What have I done?"] A light snow begins to fall. When the whites have left, Cilla confirms Robert's return with a coach at midnight. Cilla sings a version of the lullaby, same music different lyrics, encouraging, urging her daughter to leave and blessing the family on the journey.

* Gaines (vulnerable) goes to her cabin - stumbling - drunk, singing - ends up in M's house

Robert arrives. They gather, say goodbye and exit. A clock strikes twelve.

[End of Scene]

Act I Scene 5

The Garners have taken refuge with the Kites, Elijah and Emily, a family working the Underground Railroad assisting run-away slaves. Emily is preparing supper; Robert is cleaning a pistol; Margaret, wrapped in a quilt, naps before the fireplace. Elijah, an older and obviously well-educated African-American, is teaching Thomas to read. The man's voice and the boy's voice sing from the "text" they are using—a speech from the newly elected President titled A House Divided Cannot Stand.

Robert and Elijah discuss the news of South Carolina's secession—whether it will encourage other states to leave the Union. Emily asks her husband what kind of man he thinks the new president is. He answers that if Lincoln is an anti-slavery as they say he is, then he will have powerful enemies and a hard time trying to rule. Margaret, refusing to let talk of politics get her down, asks Robert to look in on the twins while she steps outside into the cold clear night. As she leaves we hear the introduction to "I Am Not Prey." She moves into the light of the full moon (stage left), down the steps and on following a crescent-shaped path from the cabin door to the rear of the stage. As she walks she passes a stone bench beneath a leafless tree. She circles the path, returns to sit on the bench and sing her feelings of incredible delicious safety.

Robert joins Margaret, telling her it's too soon to be careless: Gaines' or slave catchers will certainly be looking for them; better to stay inside. She teases him, encouraging him to relax and enjoy the outrageous moonlight, to live a little, dance a little. He is seduced and they sing and dance a cheerful, amorous song. As they finish, laughing and excited by the danger they have defied, the Kites stand in the door offering cups of hot punch and an invitation to supper. Just as they all settle at the table, the sound of hooves, then foot steps draws close. Elijah signals Robert

to close the curtains; he blows out the candles; but the light from the fireplace throws their shadows. The footsteps draw near and stop; there is pounding at the door. The silhouettes of six men are clear in the moonlight. Three men are singing in unison demands that the door be open. Robert picks up his pistol. Emily hides the children in another room. Elijah motions Robert behind the door as he prepares to deny the presence of any run aways in his house. Margaret joins Emily and the children, while threats to break down the door soar throughout the scene, quickly followed by the sound of axes on wood. (The sound of heavy percussion in the pit aids the axe crushing sounds on the door).

The door collapses to reveal Gaines, Casey and six militiamen hired to capture the run aways. Before Elijah can begin his speech of alarm, Gaines shouts for his "niggers", or makes some remark that is so insulting Robert dashes from his hiding place and fires his pistol, hitting Casey in the hand and shoulder. A tremendous struggle follows; Robert is disarmed; Elijah thrown to the floor. Margaret runs into the room screaming. Gaines, upon seeing her, turns and orders Robert taken outside, pointing to the tree where she and Robert danced only a little while earlier. The sound of the children throwing up; Emily moaning, Elijah pleading, Margaret shouting, Robert shouting his love for them—crescendos and then disappears when Robert is hanged from the leafless tree. In the hush Gaines fires a bullet into Robert's heart. Margaret rushes into the house where Gaines finds her with a knife at her own throat. The Kites enter and beg her to put the knife down, singing a version of the spiritual, "Lay it down, lay it down, sword and shield. I aint gonna study war no more." Reluctantly Margaret obeys them and lets the knife be taken from her hands. Gaines orders her bound, her hands tied behind her back. The percussion sounds and Margaret and her children are led away. The curtain descends slowly.

(End of Scene)

(End of Act)

Intermission

not whole
spiritual

I think
the rest
to be
absolutely
it could
he too
sleazy
at least we
could quote
the spiritual

Act II scene I

The scene opens with a view limited to the upper level of a steamboat. The passengers are eating, drinking and gambling. Casey, bandaged but not disabled from the shooting, is seated as the center of the card table, fiddling with a deck of cards and joking with a "bar girl" next to him. As the honky tonk piano at the rear of the boat's parlor continues playing, passengers, "bar girls" and proprietors sing a bawdy song accompanied by gestures of debauchery. Casey wins a hand of poker with a "dead man's hand" (four aces and a king.) To lighten the mood that this superstition throws over the party, Casey changes the subject by treating each player to a bottle of bourbon. He dispatches Simon, a black servant, below for the whiskey. The singing resumes and continues as Simon steps onto the deck and proceeds down the stairs to the cargo level of the boat.

As Simon approaches the bottom of the stairs, the lights and noise above fade; the light comes up in the cargo level. The slaves in the cargo singing, thought they are seated on planks and chained to bolts in the hull. Margaret and her children are among them. She is not singing. Simon proceeds through the two rows of chained slaves to the storeroom and rummages there for the bottles of bourbon. On his way back through, Simon notices Margaret and her children—she seems to be smiling. He asks her is she all right; is there anything he can do for her. She smiles up at him saying Everything is already taken care of. Simon departs, puzzled, for the stairs. As he climbs them, the music and lights pick up while the lights remain on at cargo level. Delivering the bottles to Casey, Simon is accused of stealing a fourth bottle, since he has brought only three (one for each player excluding Casey). The others join in in teasing, pushing, insulting Simon for being stupid, a thief, etc. They sing a "coon" song as they have their sport with him. The music builds at both levels—the "coon" song and the spiritual vying for supremacy—when suddenly the ship shudders and a crewman shouts that they have hit a snag in the river and are shipping water.

White passengers begin to collect their belongings and winnings on the first level while below in the cargo crewmen unchain the slaves, filing them above deck. Margaret, taking advantage of

the disorder, runs with her children toward the railing. As she reaches the upper deck, her back to the railing she sees Casey who has just made it out of the parlor. Casey moves toward the railing to stop her. As he moves closer, she climbs further, holding the twins to her chest with one arm, and pulling herself forward with the other. Suddenly she pauses, stares then almost casually steps over the ships' railing. Casey and Simon both leap in the water to save them. Slaves and whites gather at the railing aghast at the action in the water below—singing each portion of the events as they occur. Eventually Margaret and Simon emerge and climb into the steamship. The voices of blacks and whites comment in song on the death by drowning of Casey and the children.

[What has happened to Thomas, the older boy?]

(End of Scene)

stays behind
on the plantation
with the Gilla

Act II Scene 2

Margaret is huddled in a blanket and chained to a post midships a ferry. Two ferrymen are in the bow manning the poles, while an Overseer, seated astern on a barrel with a rifle on his lap, watches Margaret. The Overseer is playing on his harmonica a rendition of "Amazing Grace". One oarsman with a northern accent asks the other who has a southern accent, whether he believes that Negroes are fully human. They argue the points until they are interrupted by the Overseer who describes his prisoner as a case in point. The oarsmen nod, shrug and join the harmonica singing midway through one of the verses. Eventually the Overseer joins in and they sing a three-part harmony of the hymn. As the men hum the last verses of "Amazing Grace" * Margaret begins to sing in another key. Under their lyrics of "Amazing Grace," Margaret is singing another song—a lovely melody with words describing the voices of her children calling to her; she talks to them; and to Robert. Their "conversation" is about how happy she is that they

* Orchestra
does as a
version
which is
distorted

are all free. [Then she hears the voice of her mother Cilla, and we hear Cilla's voice too, offstage, warning Margaret: "Your arms too short to box with God" kind of warning.] Margaret's dream song including the voices we hear of the dead [children] and husband swells above the "Amazing Grace" and we listen to Margaret's triumphant aria. 9?

The instrumental coda of the song accompanies the coming of dawn's gradual light and the arrival of morning. Throughout the scene, the ferry has been moving slowly from one side of the stage to the other. At the close of the scene, the ferry has reached the landing not far from Richmond Station. Margaret's voice of irrational happiness curls over the scene.

(End of Scene)

Act II Scene 3

The scene is the same as the opening setting, only now the town is slowly coming to life and there is an unhitched paddy wagon sitting in the square with two men standing guard. (Margaret in inside the wagon, but we do not see her.) Maplewood slaves are standing on the auction block with Cilla and young Thomas among them. Cilla initiates the action by singing "I Asked Jesus if it Would Be All Right if I Changed My Name". The other slaves answer her in "call and response" ritual mode. As the song progresses, the townspeople arrive and engage in business of their own. At the end of the song, we hear Margaret's voice above the others, telling her mother not to worry about her name. Cilla, hearing her daughter's voice, tries to move about searching for her. She is diverted by the arrival of Colonel Gaines, who instructs the auctioneer and the would be purchasers, that he wants the slaves sold individually, no family groups, and that they are none to be sold locally but rather for New Orleans or Georgia.

Gaines orders the men guarding the wagon to open it. Margaret, chained and beatific, steps down from the wagon. When she approached by Gaines, her expression changes. He berates her

for the death of her children. During his speech, Margaret seems to chill. Then she begins to berate him for the death of his children the twins, and for the death of his daughter's niece and nephew; these same twins. #

* *

Enraged, Gaines calls to the auctioneer to read the punishment for run-aways. The answer is twelve lashes. Gaines orders the whip; has Margaret fastened to the post and proceeds with the lashes. In between lashes—each one of which elicits a sharp chord from the orchestra—several things occur: * [Elizabeth and the Major arrive;] they enter into a dialogue with Colonel Gaines, the pleas for mercy, maturity, restraint etc. the couple sing are countered with Gaines' insistence upon retribution, law and order etc. At the eleventh lash, the Major gives up the debate and reaches for Gaines hand holding the whip. He then orders the guardsmen to unchain Margaret. Gaines shouts that the punishment is incomplete. He has one more lash due him. The guards are interrupted in their task of untying Margaret and turn to fend off Gaines. As they turn to deal with Gaines insistent anger, Margaret seizes a knife from the waist of one of the guards. Running, breaking free she steps into Gaines and sinks her knife into him. Gaines grabs her around the neck and shoulders as he falters. She in turn is held by the knife that holds Gaines up. A guard shoots Margaret in the back. The two dying antagonists, wrapped together in blood, sink to the ground. Amid the tableau of horror and disbelief, a messenger arrives and speaks to Major Hancock. The Major turns and speaks to the crowd: Fort Sumpter has been taken. The President has ordered fifty thousand troops. As he glances at the entangled bodies lying before him, now being lifted onto stretchers, he says War. Elizabeth says the war can't last; it will be over soon. The Major says, no, this is a war that can't be won and can't be lost. It will go on for ever. The bodies on the stretchers are aloft. The slaves, comforting Cilla and Thomas, sing a song of the future redemption.

(End of Scene)

Finis

* Are already there.

*** Gaines echoes the "punishment" in an odd deranged song. # Gaines says something that shows utter contempt for his/her children.

This lashing, of course, is Gaines' last opportunity to have contact w/ her body. his unhinged understanding of his power which has become his enslavement.

MARGARET GARNER

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aptheker, Herbert. *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, volume 1, 1661-1865*, (The Citadel Press, 1951, 1994).

Fogel, Robert William. *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989.)

Fogel, William Robert and Stanley L. Engerman. *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1974.)

Gaspar, David Barry and Darlene Clark Hine, eds. *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.)

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., General Editor. *The Pen is Ours: A Listing of Writings by and about African-American Women before 1910 With Secondary Bibliography to the Present*. (The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers, Oxford University Press, 1991).

From this collection:

Collected Black Women's Narratives, Barthelemy, Anthony G., Intro.

Plato, Ann, ed. *Essays; Including Biographies and Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose and Poetry*.

Sherman, Joan R., ed. *Collected Black Women's Poetry*, Volumes 1 & 2

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. (New York, Vintage Books, 1974.)

Jacobs, Harriet A., Edited by Jean Fagan Yellin. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written By Herself*. (Harvard University Press, 2000)

Jenkins, William Sumner. *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South*. (University of North Carolina Press, 1935, 1960.)

Johnson, Isaac. *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*. (Canton, New York: The St. Lawrence County Historical Association, 1994. Original publication: Ogdensburg, NY: Republican & Journal Co. Print, 1901.)

Mellon, James, ed. *Bullwhip Days: The Slaves Remember. An Oral History*. (New York: Avon Books, 1988.)

Sklar Kathryn Kish, *Women's Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement 1830 - 1870: A Brief History with Documents*. (Boston/ New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2000)

Smith, Llewellyn, producer. Steve Fayer, writer. *Africans in America: America's Journey Through Slavery* (video). (Boston: WGBH Educational Foundation, 1998.)

Weisenburger, Steven. *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998)