



Margaret Garner Draft

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MARGARET GARNER
An Opera in Three Acts

Music by Richard Danielpour

Libretto by Toni Morrison

(as of 3/15/02)

MARGARET GARNER

Cast of Characters

Principal Roles

MARGARET GARNER* , an African-American slave in her mid-20s, Robert's wife	Mezzo-Soprano
ROBERT GARNER* , an African-American slave in his early 30s, Margaret's husband	Lyric Baritone
CILLA* , an African-American slave about 50 years old, Robert's mother	High Mezzo-Soprano or Dramatic Soprano
EDWARD GAINES , the handsome and charismatic Master of Maplewood Plantation, in his late 30s or early 40s	Lyric Baritone

Secondary Roles

CASEY , the Foreman of Maplewood Plantation	Dramatic Tenor
CAROLINE GAINES , the daughter of Edward Gaines, engaged to George Hancock	Light Lyric Soprano
GEORGE HANCOCK , engaged to Caroline Gaines	Tenor
AUCTIONEER , a Professional Salesman (<i>doubles the role of MAYOR</i>)	Lyric or Character Tenor
4 SLAVE CATCHERS	2 Tenors, 2 Baritones
SIMON** , the Ship's Waiter, a Freedman	Baritone
2 FERRY MEN **	Baritones
OVERSEER** , responsible for the slaves on the steamship	Tenor
MAYOR (<i>doubles the role of AUCTIONEER</i>)	Lyric or Character Tenor
MARGARET'S TWO CHILDREN light-skinned, about 4 years old	non-singing roles

Chorus of White Townspeople***

SATB: 40 voices (min. 32)

Chorus of African-American Slaves *

SATB: 32 voices (min. 20)

* Although much latitude is possible in casting, **Margaret Garner** does require that these roles be sung by African-American performers.

** These roles can be sung by members of the White Chorus.

*** It is essential that the White Choristers outnumber the African-American Choristers.

MARGARET GARNER

Act I, scene i

The opera begins in darkness [or possibly in dim light, with an array of tall, thin, and wavy shadows hovering like Giacometti figures on a backdrop of dramatic color]. Gradually, a number of slaves (twenty or more) become visible; they are shackled or locked in cages (abstract, not representational) on a large trading block.

SLAVES

NO! NO MORE!
NO! NOT MORE!
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE!
NOT IN OUR LIFETIME!

MARGARET

...BODIES CIRCLED WITH A CHAIN...

Ankles

SLAVES

NO! NO MORE!
NO! NOT MORE!

MARGARET

...SKIN BROKEN BY A CANE...

SLAVES

NO! NO MORE!

MARGARET

...BLOODY PILLOWS UNDER MY HEAD...

SLAVES

OH NO! NO MORE!
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE!

MARGARET

...WISHING, PRAYING I WAS DEAD...

SLAVES

NO. NO. NO MORE!
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE!

MARGARET

BLOODY PILLOWS UNDER MY HEAD
WISHING, PRAYING I WAS DEAD.

SLAVES

PLEASE GOD, NO MORE!

MARGARET

MASTER'S BRAND IS FOLLOWING ME
ON MY BACK THE MARK OF THE TREE

SLAVES

PLEASE GOD, NO MORE!
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE!

A change in lighting transforms the scene into one depicting a bustling townsquare, with a church visible in the distance. A group of TOWNSPEOPLE is gathering for a slave auction. They display a small-town mentality: familiar with everyone else's daily life and business, they love to gossip and at times are judgmental of others.

AUCTIONEER

BY THE POWERS INVESTED
AND BY CUSTOM INGESTED
I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW
THE SALE OF ALL GOODS
AND CATTLE AND WOODLAND
SLAVES AND PLANTING FIELDS
DARK WITH LOAM.

Hand is threatening me

I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW
AN OLD ESTATE RICH IN HISTORY
IS NOW ON THE MARKET
FOR A GENTLEMAN'S POCKET.
A PRIZE IN THE WHOLE COUNTY ...

[N.B. The VENDORS have been eliminated.]

YOUR SHREWD EYES WILL LIGHT UP
YOUR BIDS ARE INVITED
DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR
POUND FOR POUND
THE BESTEST VALUE FOR MILES AROUND.

(In preparation for their sale at auction, members of slave families are separated from one another. They are divided by gender and age, into groups of men, boys, women, and young girls.)

TOWNSPEOPLE

HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?
FOR PICKNIES AND MAMMIES AND BREEDERS AND BUCKS?
HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?
HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?

O WHAT A PROBLEM TO DECIDE
O WHAT A BURDEN ON OUR SHOULDERS.
FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOTHING,
ARE NOTHING, DO NOTHING, KNOW NOTHING
EXCEPT FOR WE WHO CLOTHE THEM AND FEED THEM
LET THEM SLEEP WHEN THEY ARE ILL
WE TEACH ALL THEY WILL EVER KNOW
OF GOD AND WORK AND HOME.

AUCTIONEER

BY THE POWERS INVESTED
AND BY CUSTOM INGESTED
I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW
THIS SALE TO BE NOW OPEN!

TOWNSPEOPLE

WHAT SAY? WHAT SAY?
FOR MILKING AND PLOWING
AND SPINNING AND CANNING AND SUCH.

HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?
FOR PICKNIES AND MAMMIES AND BREEDERS AND BUCKS?
WHO KNOW NOTHING OF GOD AND HOME!

AUCTIONEER

(bringing forth the first slave for sale)

NOW **THIS HERE** IS CILLA.
ABOUT FIFTY, SHE THINKS.
A COOK, CHILD NURSE, LAUNDRY AND SEAMSTRESS.

THIS BID BEGINS AT TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS.
DO I HEAR TWO FORTY, TWO FORTY, TWO FORTY?
I NEED TWO FORTY.

TOWNSPEOPLE *(emphatically)*

TWO FORTY!

AUCTIONEER

TWO HUNDRED FORTY.
DO I HEAR THREE HUNDRED, THREE HUNDRED, THREE HUNDRED?
I NEED THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS.

TOWNSPEOPLE *(enthusiastically)*

THREE HUNDRED!

AUCTIONEER

THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS.
I NEED FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED,
FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS...

TOWNSPEOPLE

...FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS!

EDWARD

(impatient, forcefully)

HOLD ON! HOLD ON!
I'M TELLING YOU TO HOLD ON!

TOWNSPEOPLE

(startled, a little nervous)

WHO IS IT? WHAT IS IT?
WHO IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

AUCTIONEER

(polite, but annoyed)

EXCUSE ME, SIR.
LEGAL BUSINESS IS IN PROGRESS HERE.
BY THE POWERS INVESTED,
BY THE CUSTOM INGESTED...

EDWARD

(courteously interrupting the auctioneer)

...I BEG YOUR PARDON!

THIS FARM BELONGED TO MY BROTHER.
IT CAN'T BE SOLD TO ANOTHER.

AUCTIONEER

IT IS TRUE.

IF A FAMILY MEMBER CALLS THE CLAIM
NO SALE CAN TAKE PLACE HERE OR NOW.

EDWARD

I AM GAINES. EDWARD GAINES. BROTHER OF THE DECEASED.

(incredulously, almost pleading)
DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?

TOWNSPEOPLE

(somewhat agitated, their curiosity aroused)

EDWARD GAINES? WHO IS HE?
DID OLD GAINES HAVE A BROTHER?
EDWARD GAINES? WHO IS HE?

EDWARD

I WAS BORN AMONG YOU.
AND NOW I'VE RETURNED.
DOESN'T **ANYONE** REMEMBER ME?

TOWNSPEOPLE

NO. NO. **NO. NO.**
WAS IT A LONG TIME AGO?

EDWARD

YOU THOUGHT I WAS LOST, DIDN'T YOU?
IN A ROUGH LIFE OF THE GAME?
YOU WERE WRONG.
WELL NO, YOU WEREN'T (*sotto voce*)
WELL YES, YOU WERE!

I WAS JUST A BOY
WHEN ANY OF YOU LAST SAW ME.
BUT I'VE BEEN HAPPILY MARRIED
WITH A DAUGHTER WE BOTH ADORED.
NOW I'M A WIDOWER, A MAN WITH MEANS,
A FATHER WITH A CHILD TO RAISE.
WHAT MY BROTHER OWNED
I HAVE RIGHT OF FIRST OFFER TO BUY.
WHICH I DO NOW, FRIENDS.
WHICH I DO NOW.

AUCTIONEER

IT IS TRUE.
IT IS THE LAW.

TOWNSPEOPLE

(*echoing the AUCTIONEER*)

IT IS TRUE. IT IS TRUE.
IT IS TRUE. IT IS TRUE.

AUCTIONEER

WE MUST ENTERTAIN HIS RIGHT UNDER THE LAW.

(*to EDWARD*)

WHAT IS YOUR PLEASURE, MR. GAINES, SIR?
WHAT PARTS INTEREST YOU?

EDWARD

I WANT IT ALL.
I'LL HAVE IT ALL.
EVERY STICK EVERY BARREL
EVERY BOX OF CHINA TEA BELONGS TO ME.
EVERY BODY EVERY BROOM
EVERY MULE EVERY LOOM.

KEEP ALL THE SLAVE FAMILIES TOGETHER.
I'LL BUY IT ALL.

(GAINES negotiates his contract with the AUCTIONEER [Stage Left]. Although the TOWNSPEOPLE begin to disperse, several prominent businessmen remain to witness the legal transaction.)

(The slave families, allowed to stay together thanks to GAINES's generosity, celebrate in dance and song. However, their movements suggest, abstractly, bars of detention.)

CHORUS

BLACK CHORUS

A LITTLE MORE TIME
A LITTLE MORE TIME
MORE TIME WITH THE CHILDREN WE LOVE...

(tenor soloist)
...TIME WITH OUR BROTHERS...

(all)
...WE FEEL THE MERCY OF OUR LORD GOD
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.

CILLA and MARGARET

ANOTHER SEASON OF FRIENDSHIP
TELLING STORIES, SHARING SECRETS BY THE FIRE.

CHORUS

WE FEEL THE MERCY OF OUR LORD GOD
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.

MARGARET

MORE NIGHTS TO CURL LIKE A VINE
IN OUR HUSBANDS' ARMS

ROBERT

MORE DAYS TO BASK IN THE LIGHT
OF OUR DARLINGS' EYES ...

CILLA and MARGARET

OUR FATHERS' GRAVES WE CAN STILL ATTEND

ALL

WITH SWEET WILLIAM AND COLUMBINE

CHORUS

A LITTLE MORE TIME
A LITTLE MORE TIME
MORE TIME WITH THE CHILDREN WE LOVE...

(mezzo soloist)
...TIME WITH OUR MOTHERS...

(all)

WE FEEL THE MERCY OF OUR LORD GOD
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.

MARGARET

I MADE A LITTLE PLAY DOLL FOR MY BABY
WITH BUTTON EYES AND HAIR OF YARN;
THE LIPS ARE MADE OF ROSE-COLORED THREAD.

(Distracted, GAINES turns around and notices MARGARET. He is intrigued, and grateful for the good fortune to have just purchased her.)

ONE DAY SHE WILL LOVE IT
I AM WAITING FOR HER TO LOVE IT

(GAINES resumes his negotiations.)

WHEN SHE IS OLD ENOUGH TO HOLD IT
I'M WAITING FOR THIS MYSTERY CALLED CHILD.

ALL

A LITTLE MORE TIME
A LITTLE MORE TIME
MORE TIME WITH THE CHILDREN WE LOVE...

(tenor soloist)
...TIME WITH OUR BROTHERS...

(all)

...WE FEEL THE BREATH OF OUR LORD GOD
WITH THE GIFT OF A LITTLE MORE TIME

(softer)

WE FEEL THE BREATH OF OUR LORD GOD
WITH THE GIFT OF A LITTLE MORE TIME...

(ending quietly)

(To the accompaniment of soft instrumental music, the SLAVES slowly exit Stage Right.)

(After completing his transaction with GAINES, the AUCTIONEER departs Stage Left with the prominent businessmen.)

(Upon finishing her song, MARGARET unties her neck *scarf* and wraps it around a pole. She then exits Stage Right, the last of the SLAVES to leave.)

EDWARD

(watching the last of the townspeople leave)

LOOK AT THEM.
THEY WERE MY NEIGHBORS ONCE.
THEY LIE.
THEY PRETEND THEY DON'T REMEMBER ME.

CASEY

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, SIR.
YOU'VE BEEN AWAY FOR TWENTY YEARS...

EDWARD

(turning back around)

...TWENTY YEARS. (as an aside)

THEY PRETEND. THEY LIE.
THEY SAY THEY DON'T REMEMBER ME.

(MARGARET's *scarf*, tied to a pole, catches GAINES's attention; he starts walking toward it.)

CASEY

SOMETHING IN THE PAST, SIR?
SOMETHING BEST FORGOTTEN?

EDWARD

(taking MARGARET's scarf from the pole)

I WAS JUST A BOY.
THE TROUBLE I CAUSED WAS INESCAPABLE.
FOR A BOY ...
A BOY WITH AN APPETITE.

CASEY

BUT EVERY BOY HAS AN APPETITE, SIR.

EDWARD

I LEFT UNDER A CLOUD OF SUSPICION.
IT WAS NOTHING, NOTHING TO RAISE EYEBROWS.
SO NOW THEY PRETEND
NEITHER I NOR IT EVER HAPPENED.
WHAT A SHAME ...
I REMEMBER!
I REMEMBER EVERYTHING.

ARIA

EDWARD *(wistfully)*

I REMEMBER THE CURVE OF EVERY HILL
THE SWANS IN THE POND
I REMEMBER IT STILL.

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE
MAPLE, BIRCH, WILLOWS AND PINE

I CAN SEE THEM NOW
SHADING THE DRIVE
SHELTERING ME FROM THE HEAT.
MAPLE, BIRCH AND THE ODOR OF PINE

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE
BUT NONE OF THEM REMEMBERS ME.

THE WELL, THE CREEK
FISHING WITH A STRING.
BERRIES IN MY POCKET
~~HAY RIDES AFTER LONG AFTERNOONS IN THE SUN~~
EVENINGS OF LAUGHTER
WITH GIRLS WHO WANTED TO SING. [PLAY]

by the bay [by a lake]

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE
BUT NONE OF THEM REMEMBERS ME.

THEY WON'T FORGET ME AGAIN!

(EDWARD and CASEY leave.)

End of Scene One

[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE I]

Orchestral Interlude I is pure rhythm: intensely energetic, almost hard-edged staccato figures played by the orchestra's percussionists. These rhythmic motives lead organically into the opera's second scene, during which we see the slaves making music upon their own plantation work implements and domestic goods, as well as singing animated work songs when coming home from a day's labor in the distant fields.

During the opera's Orchestral Interludes, atmospheric period photos of Southern plantations or historical sites (pre-Civil War, c. 1850) will be projected onto scrim(s) to enhance the sense of "time once removed." If any people are seen in these photos, their facial features must not be distinguishable; they are to be considered "props," not individuals or characters.

Act I: scene ii

Twilight, about six months later. The slaves -- some of whom are children, barely 10 or 12 years old -- head back to their quarters after a day working in the fields.

CHORUS

ROBERT

TURN MY FACE TO THE DYING SUN

ALL

CAN'T STRAIGHTEN MY BACK
TIL THE WORK IS DONE

ROBERT

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

ALL

GOING TO DANCE
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY

OH MOTHER, OH FATHER
DON'T ABANDON ME
WHILE MY SWEAT STILL SWEETS THE [rich-brown] DIRT
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.

WOMEN

(soloist) BOSS IS HAPPY AT HIS PLATE
(chorus) LONG AS HE GETS HIS FOWL
(soloist) IF I STAND AT HIS COOKING STOVE
(chorus) HIS SUPPER WILL BE FOUL.

(chorus) BELIEVE IT! (*shouted as in gospel music*)

ALL

OH MOTHER, OH FATHER
DON'T ABANDON ME
WHILE MY BLOOD FLOODS THE [rich-brown] DIRT
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.

...CRACK...

...UH! BACK...

...CUT...

...UH! CANE...

...PULL...

...UH! MULE...

...CHOP...

...UH! COTTON...

...SPLIT...

...UH! WOOD...

...CRACK! CUT!
PULL! CHOP! SPLIT!...

...CRACK! CUT!
PULL! CHOP! SPLIT!...

WOMEN

(soloist) BOSS IS HAPPY IN HIS BED
(chorus) LONG AS HIS PILLOW'S DOWNEY
(soloist) IF I STOOD NEAR HIS SLEEPY HEAD
(chorus) HIS FACE WOULD BE AS FLUFFY.

(chorus) TELL IT! (*shouted as in gospel music*)

ROBERT

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

MEN

GOING TO DANCE
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK ONE DAY.

ALL

OH MOTHER, OH FATHER
DON'T ABANDON ME
WHILE MY TEARS MUDDY THE [rich-brown] SOIL
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.

...CRACK...

...UH! BACK...

...CUT...

...UH! CANE...

...PULL...

...UH! MULE...

...CHOP...

...UH! COTTON...

...SPLIT...

...UH! WOOD...

...CRACK! CUT!
PULL! CHOP! SPLIT!...

...CRACK! CUT!
PULL! CHOP! SPLIT!...

(The dinner bell sounds, and the workers wash up for supper. CILLA is standing in the doorway of MARGARET and ROBERT's cabin.)

CILLA

YOU LEFT THE LIGHT BEHIND YOU.
DID YOU HAVE A WORRISOME DAY?

ROBERT

EVERY NEW DAY IS LIKE YESTERDAY.
WORK THE CROPS,
FORGET ABOUT PAY.
END EACH DAY
LIKE THE ONE BEFORE.
DON'T LEAVE THE FIELD
TIL THE LIGHT'S TOO POOR.

CILLA

THIS GAINES IS NOT LIKE THAT LAST ONE.
A MEAN STREAK RIDES HIS BROW.
THE OTHER ONE HAD A HEART SOMETIMES.
AT LEAST IT SEEMED SO TO ME.

MARGARET

NO SUCH THING AS A BOSS'S HEART.
HE CAN'T AFFORD THE SPACE.

ROBERT

IF HE COULD HARVEST CORN
IN HIS CHEST
HE WOULD LEASE OUT
HIS OWN HEART'S PLACE.

CILLA

EASE YOURSELVES.
EASE YOURSELVES.
THE TABLE IS LAID.
THE SUPPER IS PLAIN BUT WARM.
I'VE GOT MILK AND STRAWBERRIES TOO.

(They all sit down to eat.)

"PRAYER"

CILLA

DEAR LORD IN HEAVEN.
MAKE US GRATEFUL FOR OUR FOOD.
KEEP US WELL AND IN YOUR SIGHT.

ALL

AMEN.

ROBERT

YOU ARE A HUNDRED POUND BLESSING, MAMA.

MARGARET

HOW IS MY BABY?
NOT CRYING FOR ME?
NOT MISSING ME?

CILLA

SLEEPING, MARGARET. SLEEPING.
NOT A FROWN ON HER SUGAR BUTTER FACE.

ROBERT (*laughing*)

YOU EVER SEE A MOTHER LIKE THAT?
THE CHILD SUPPOSED TO NEED THE MOTHER.
NOW HERE THE MOTHER NEEDS THE CHILD MORE.

MARGARET

I NEED TO SMELL HER BREATH...

CILLA

...THE BABY NEEDS HER REST...

MARGARET

...I NEED TO SEE HER EYES, HER SMILE.

CILLA (*emphatically*)

IT'S DANGEROUS, DAUGHTER,
TO LOVE TOO MUCH.
THE LORD GIVETH
AND THE LORD TAKETH AWAY.
COME TO YOUR SUPPER BEFORE YOU WAKE HER.

MARGARET

SHE IS MY SUPPER,
THE FOOD OF MY HEART.

ROBERT

AND WHAT AM I?
THE LEAVINGS?

MARGARET *(laughing)*

OH NO.
YOU ARE THE PULSE.
WITHOUT YOU I HAVE NO HEART.

ROBERT

AND WITHOUT YOU I HAVE NO PULSE TO GIVE.

(They embrace.)

CILLA

ENOUGH SAID.
GO GET YOUR HEART
BEFORE YOU BREAK MINE.

(As CILLA and ROBERT eat dinner, MARGARET sits at the table and tenderly sings to her baby.)

"LULLABY"

MARGARET

BAD THINGS FAR AWAY
SAD THINGS FAR AWAY

SOFT THINGS COME AND PLAY
PRETTY THINGS HERE TO STAY

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP IN THE HAY
BABY'S GOT A DREAMING ON THE WAY

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP IN THE HAY
BABY'S GOING TO DREAM THE NIGHT AWAY

NICE BABY, SMILE AT ME
SWEET BABY, SMILE AT ME
GOOD BABY, ON MY KNEE
LOVELY BABY, GO TO SLEEP

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP IN THE HAY
BABY'S GOT A DREAMING ON THE WAY

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP IN THE HAY
BABY'S GOING TO DREAM THE NIGHT AWAY.

(CASEY *suddenly barges in.*)

CASEY

NOT TONIGHT.
NOBODY DREAMS TONIGHT.

ROBERT

WHAT? WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY?

CASEY (*snarling cynically*)

WHAT'S THAT I SAY?
WHAT'S THAT *YOU* SAY?

ROBERT

EXCUSE ME, SIR.
YES, SIR.
WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY, SIR?

CASEY

BETTER. MUCH BETTER.
WHAT I SAY IS
NO HAPPY DARKY DREAMING TONIGHT.
MR. GAINES HAS OTHER PLANS.

CILLA

WHAT PLANS, MR. CASEY?

CASEY

I'M SPEAKING TO YOUR BOY, CILLA.
NOT YOU.

CASEY

(to ROBERT)

YOU HAVE BEEN RENTED OUT, BOY.
MR. GAINES WANTS YOU ON YOUR WAY TONIGHT
SO YOU'LL BE READY FOR WORK AT SUNRISE.

ROBERT

WHERE, SIR?
WHERE IS HE SENDING ME?

CASEY

NOT YOUR BUSINESS TO KNOW.
ONLY YOUR BUSINESS TO GO.
THE WAGON IS ON THE ROAD.
HOP TO IT, BOY!

MARGARET

I'LL GET READY.
HOLD THE BABY, MAMA.

CASEY

HOLD ON, GIRL.
YOU'LL GET READY ALL RIGHT.
BUT YOU WON'T NEED THE WAGON.
MR. GAINES WANTS YOU IN THE HOUSE, HIS HOUSE.
AIN'T THAT NICE?
NO MORE FIELD WORK.
AIN'T THAT NICE?
YOU CAN PUT YOUR FEET UP
IN HIS HOUSE ALL DAY,
ALL NIGHT TOO.
AIN'T THAT NICE?

(ROBERT and MARGARET exchange troubled glances; CILLA rocks the baby. As CASEY leaves, he mockingly whistles MARGARET's "LULLABY.")

ROBERT

(turning away from MARGARET)

SKUNK! SNAKE!
SON OF A WHORE!

CILLA

SHHH. DON'T WAKE THE BABY.

ROBERT

YELLOWBELLY!
SON OF A DOG!!

MARGARET

ROBERT, COOL DOWN.
HE WILL HEAR YOU.

ROBERT

I AM A MAN!
AIN'T I? AIN'T I?
AIN'T I A MAN?

MARGARET

YES! YES!
YOU ARE TO ME.
TO US.
BUT TO THEM,
NOT YET.

ROBERT

I KNOW WHAT IS ON HIS MIND.
BASTARD! THAT BASTARD!

MARGARET

IT WON'T HAPPEN. IT WON'T!

ROBERT

HOW CAN YOU KNOW?
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE?
YOU CAN'T CONTROL A SNAKE IN HIS OWN NEST.

MARGARET

HIS DAUGHTER CAROLINE LIVES THERE TOO.
HE WILL BEHAVE.

CILLA

BELIEVE HER, SON.
DON'T WORRY.
IT CAN'T BE FOR TOO LONG.

MARGARET

WE WILL FIND A WAY.
STAY STRONG.
HE IS NOT THE MASTER OF ME.

DUET

MARGARET

HOLD ME...

ROBERT

...HOLD ON...

MARGARET

...STAY SWEET...

ROBERT

...STAY STRONG...

MARGARET

...BE MY MOONRISE...

ROBERT

...BE MY DAWN...

MARGARET and ROBERT

YOU ARE MY SHOULDER
YOU ARE MY SPINE
YOU ARE MY COURAGE
YOU ARE THE SIGN
THAT LOVE IS THE ONLY MASTER
THE HEART OBEYS
LOVE IS THE ONE MASTER
MY HEART OBEYS.

MARGARET

DON'T FORGET...

ROBERT

...I WON'T FORGET...

MARGARET

...GET READY...

ROBERT

...STAY STEADY...

MARGARET

...BE MY MOONRISE...

ROBERT

...BE MY DAWN...

MARGARET and ROBERT

YOU ARE MY SHOULDER
YOU ARE MY SPINE
YOU ARE MY COURAGE
YOU ARE THE SIGN

THAT LOVE IS THE ONLY MASTER
THE HEART OBEYS
LOVE IS THE ONE MASTER
MY HEART OBEYS.

(Evening falls.)

The set's turntable rotates to show EDWARD GAINES sitting in the library of Maplewood Plantation. Affecting the airs of an English aristocrat, he is elegantly dressed, drinks brandy from a snifter, and smokes an expensive cigar. CASEY, the plantation foreman, enters.

CASEY

YOU ASKED ME TO REPORT, MR. GAINES.

EDWARD

I DID. INDEED I DID.
ANY PROBLEMS?

CASEY

NOTHING I COULDN'T HANDLE, SIR.
A LITTLE COMMOTION AT FIRST,
BUT THEY'RE QUIET NOW.

EDWARD

QUIET?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.
THE WAGON'S GONE?

CASEY

AS PLANNED.

EDWARD

THE GIRL?

CASEY

IN THE KITCHEN, SIR.
HOLDING HER HEAD UP HIGH.

EDWARD

OH YES?

(CASEY)

SHE IS FEISTY, SIR.
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK IN HER EYES.

EDWARD

LOVELY! LOVELY!
FEISTY WITH A LOOK IN HER EYES.
WAIT A MOMENT,
THEN TELL HER I WANT HER TO COME TO ME TONIGHT.

CASEY

AT YOUR PLEASURE, SIR.

(CASEY leaves.)

ARIA

EDWARD

A LITTLE SOLACE
FOR A HARD WORKING MAN
A **RUBY RED SCARF**
SOOTHES A CALLOUSED HAND
SOME RESPITE FOR AN ACTIVE MIND
IS DUE, IS DUE.

THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS
ARE NOT MARKS OF SOIL
THEY ARE THE WISDOM OF NATURE'S DESIGN
THE NATURAL LANGUAGE OF ITS KIND
A CUE, IT'S TRUE.

[Possible extension that continues this symbolism of Leopard/Gaines's predatory nature?]

A LITTLE SOLACE
FOR A HARDWORKING MAN
A LITTLE SOLACE
FOR A HARDWORKING MAN.

(Becoming increasingly inebriated and self-satisfied, EDWARD anticipates his taking of MARGARET sexually. He draws from his pocket her red scarf, stroking it.)

End of Scene Two

[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE TWO]

Although Orchestral Interlude II is still "shortish," it is longer than the first, so as to sufficiently break the dramatic action and support the change in Gaines's character.

Act I, scene iii

In EDWARD GAINES's parlor, the following May. An engagement party is taking place to celebrate the betrothal of CAROLINE GAINES, Edward's daughter, to GEORGE HANCOCK. The guests waltz to the gentle accompaniment of a piano and violin. Although MARGARET is dressed more nicely now, in the uniform befitting a house servant, she acts in a more subjugated manner.

EDWARD
(to the GUESTS)

PLEASE. MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?

(the GUESTS gather around)

(Arioso)

EDWARD
I PROMISED CAROLINE'S MOTHER
TWO THINGS.
ONE, THAT I WOULD STAY
A WIDOWER.
TWO, THAT I WOULD SEE
TO OUR DAUGHTER'S FUTURE CARE.
CAROLINE HAS PROVEN
THE RIGHTNESS OF THOSE PROMISES.
SHE WILL INHERIT A SOUND ESTATE--
WHICH, I MIGHT ADD,
HAS GROWN FROM MODEST TO GRAND,
THANKS TO ME.
AND HER CHOICE OF HUSBAND
IS EVERYTHING
HER MOTHER WISHED FOR.
A MAN OF STATURE AND LEARNING.

CAROLINE
AND YOU, FATHER?
IS HE WHAT YOU HAVE WISHED FOR ME?

EDWARD
EXACTLY SO. PRECISELY SO.
AM I RIGHT, GEORGE?
[AM I?]

GEORGE

I AM NOT SURE
THAT I DESERVE HER,
BUT I WILL SPEND MY LIFE
TRYING TO SERVE HER
AND EARN THE DEVOTION
SHE SQUANDERS ON ME.

EDWARD

WELL PUT, SON.
CAROLINE, MY ADORABLE CAROLINE.
GIVE YOUR FATHER
A DAUGHTER'S EMBRACE.

(CAROLINE returns her father's embrace, but he clutches her too tightly.)

CAROLINE *(laughing)*

OH, FATHER. I CANNOT BREATHE.

EDWARD

FORGIVE ME.
MY ARMS ARE LIKE MY LOVE.
STRONG AND ALL EMBRACING.

CAROLINE

NEVER MIND, FATHER.
I HAVE PROSPERED
SO MUCH IN YOUR ARMS
I CAN NOW EMBRACE ANOTHER.

(turns to GEORGE)

GEORGE

THERE IS NO RIVAL HERE.
LOVE DOES NOT CONQUER OR DISPOSE.
IT DOUBLES AND TRIPLES WITH USE.

EDWARD

I AGREE.
LIKE MONEY IN THE BANK.

GEORGE

OH, NO, SIR.
LOVE IS AN OCEAN
BREAKING INTO RIVERS;
THOSE RIVERS
BREAKING INTO STREAMS.

EDWARD

WATCH OUT!
HE WILL DROWN YOU, DAUGHTER.

CAROLINE

ALL WILLINGLY ...
WILLINGLY, WILL I SWIM
IN HIS SEA OF LOVE.
AIR MEANS NOTHING TO ME
WITHOUT HIM.

EDWARD

A MINUTE AGO
YOU WERE GASPING FOR AIR.
'I CAN'T BREATHE!
I CAN'T BREATHE!'
NOW YOU TRADE IT FOR WATER.
YOUR CONFUSION DISTURBS ME, DAUGHTER.

GEORGE

SHE NEEDS BOTH, SIR.
AS ALL LIFE DOES:
AIR AND WATER.
NO RIVALRY THERE.
THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE IS ALWAYS CONFUSING.
IT CAN NEVER BE AS CLEAR
AS THE EMOTION IT TRIES TO CONVEY.
THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE ...

EDWARD

...IS AN IMPOSTER!
HIDING IN DRESSES OF VERSE...

GEORGE

...IS A MAGICIAN!
TURNING ROSES
INTO DOVES ON THE WING...

EDWARD

...IS AN INFANT'S HAND
IN A FATHER'S GLOVE...

CAROLINE

...A RAFT IN A STORMY SEA,
OFFERING RESCUE...

GEORGE

...A LIGHT HOUSE TO GUIDE US
OVER HEAVY WAVES...

EDWARD

...A THIEF RESPECTING NO HOUSEHOLD,
STEALING THE LOVED ONES AWAY...

CAROLINE

A CLIPPER SHIP
WITH ROOM AFTER ROOM AFTER ROOM
FOR DANCING!
FOR CAKES AND TEA...
AND CHAMPAGNE!

(MARGARET *enters with a tray of glasses.*)

EDWARD

WELL THAT IS OUR ANSWER, THEN.
CHAMPAGNE HEALS ALL WOUNDS
AND PUTS ARGUMENT TO BED.
CONGRATULATIONS, SON.
BLESSINGS, DAUGHTER.

(They drink as MARGARET serves the GUESTS.)

CAROLINE

MARGARET. WAIT A MOMENT.
COME TO ME.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

MARGARET

EXCUSE ME? MAM?

CAROLINE

WHAT DO YOU THINK
ABOUT LOVE?
WE WERE DISCUSSING
THE WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT.

DO THEY HELP US TO LOVE
OR HURT US BEYOND REPAIR?

EDWARD *(warning)*

CHILD! **DEAR** CHILD!

GUESTS *(alarmed)*

OH DEAR.
WE THOUGHT HE WAS QUALITY.
THIS IS A MISTAKE
QUALITY FOLK WOULD NEVER MAKE.
A PROFOUND INSULT.
WHAT KIND OF HOUSE DOES HE RUN?
WE DON'T BEHAVE THIS WAY!

CAROLINE

I WANT TO KNOW.
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT SHE THINKS.

EDWARD

CAROLINE,
YOU ARE TOO WILLFUL.
SHE CAN'T ANSWER YOU.

(Arioso)

CAROLINE

WHY NOT?
SHE HAS LOVED ME,
SERVED ME,
TAUGHT ME.
PUT ME TO BED,
WATCHED OVER MY SLEEP,
~~STITCHED MY CLOTHES~~
~~AND FED ME WITH HER OWN HANDS~~
~~WHEN I COULD NOT MANAGE ON MY OWN~~
WHO KNOWS BETTER THAN SHE
HOW TO SAY WHAT LOVE IS?
CAN WORDS DO IT JUSTICE, MARGARET?
ENCOURAGE ITS SUCCESS?

OR, AS MY FATHER SAYS,
IS THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE
AN IMPOSTER?
A THIEF IN THE NIGHT?

MARGARET

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, MISS CAROLINE.
MR. GAINES IS THE EXPERT HERE.

EDWARD

YOU SEE?
SHE HAS NOTHING TO SAY ON THE MATTER.
LOVE IS NOT ... HER "CUP OF TEA".

(This line must be altered a bit. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, the "not someone's cup of tea" phrase originated in the early 20th century.)

in her vocabulary

CAROLINE (*to MARGARET*)

MY FATHER? THE EXPERT?
HIS LOVE IS ROUGH.
YOURS IS TENDER.

MARGARET

WORDS OF LOVE ARE MOTHS --
EASY FOOD FOR FLAME.
ACTIONS ALONE
SAY WHAT LOVE MAY BE.

EDWARD

ENOUGH!
WE HAVE ALL HAD ENOUGH
OF THIS NONSENSE.

GUESTS

YES, ENOUGH.
WHO IS INTERESTED
IN A SLAVE WOMAN'S VIEWS?

EDWARD

I REFUSE TO HEAR A SLAVE COMMENT
ON THINGS OUTSIDE HER SCOPE.
OF COURSE SHE IS TENDER TO A CHILD,
BUT WHAT CAN A SLAVE KNOW
OF ADULT LOVE, GIVEN FREELY?
OUR GUESTS ARE RIGHT.
HER VIEWS ARE WORTHLESS.

EDWARD (*to MARGARET*)

YOU ARE EXCUSED.
LEAVE US.

(MARGARET *exits*)

CAROLINE

FATHER, YOU SHAME ME.
SHE IS AS COMPLETE A HUMAN AS YOU ARE.

GEORGE

IF SHE IS A MOTHER,
MAYBE MORE SO.

GUESTS

COMPLETE? IMPOSSIBLE!
NOT AT ALL. OUTRAGEOUS!

EDWARD (*to CAROLINE*)

YOU DISAPPOINT ME.
HOW COULD LOVE EXIST IN A SLAVE?
PASSION, PERHAPS.
BUT WOULD SHE KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

CAROLINE

THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF LOVE, FATHER.

CAROLINE and GEORGE

AND MANY KINDS OF LOVERS.

GUESTS

THIS IS TOO SUBTLE FOR ME.
AND ME...
...AND ME...
PERHAPS IT'S TIME TO SAY GOOD NIGHT.
ARGUMENT CHILLS A PARTY.
GOOD NIGHT...
...GOOD NIGHT...
...AND GOOD NIGHT!

(The GUESTS leave, bowing stiffly. They disapprove of GAINES's behavior and act coolly towards him.)

EDWARD

(chagrined by the GUESTS' early departure)

FOOLS, IDIOTS.
WHAT DO THEY KNOW ABOUT QUALITY FOLK?

(with regret)

THIS WAS TO BE A PROUD MOMENT.
NOW YOU HAVE GIVEN MY NEIGHBORS
MORE REASON TO GOSSIP AND DESPISE ME.

CAROLINE

I AM SORRY, FATHER,
IF I UPSET YOU.

GEORGE

SO AM I.
DON'T THINK US UNGRATEFUL
FOR THIS CELEBRATION.

CAROLINE

FORGIVE US, FATHER.
WE DID NOT MEAN TO BE RUDE,
ONLY TO SAY WHAT WE BELIEVE.
HONESTY SHOULD NOT OFFEND YOU.

EDWARD

I AM NOT SO WEAK
AS TO BE OFFENDED BY INNOCENCE.
BUT I HAVE A REPUTATION TO MAINTAIN.

CAROLINE

FATHER, PLEASE TRY ...

EDWARD

...MY SWEET CAROLINE.
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
ALL IS WELL.
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES.
GOODBYE.
TAKE CARE.

(CAROLINE and GEORGE leave)

EDWARD

IT DOESN'T MATTER AT ALL.
I HAVE SUCCEEDED
JUST AS I SAID I WOULD.
ENVY IS THE TRUE PRICE OF WEALTH
WHICH I EASILY, HAPPILY PAY.
A RICH MAN HAS MANY REMEDIES.

(EDWARD begins to leave, but when he notices MARGARET returning to clear the glasses, he lingers in a hiding place. She picks up a glass and holds it up to the light, peering into it as if it were a crystal ball.)

MARGARET *(to the glass)*

IS IT TRUE?
ARE THERE MANY KINDS OF LOVE?
SHOW ME EACH AND EVERY ONE.
YOU CAN'T, CAN YOU?
FOR THERE IS JUST ONE KIND.

ARIA

MARGARET

~~{ONLY QUALITY LOVE CAN ENDURE
A HAND-ME-DOWN LIFE} ??~~

ONLY UNHARNESSED HEARTS
CAN SURVIVE A LOCKED-DOWN LIFE

LIKE A RIVER RUSHING
FROM THE GRIP OF ITS BANKS
AS LIGHT ESCAPES THE COLD STAR

QUALITY LOVE WILL BREAK AWAY

WHEN SORROW CLOUDS THE MIND
THE SPINE GROWS STRONG

NO PRETTY WORDS CAN SOOTHE OR CURE
WHAT HEAVY HANDS CAN BREAK

WHEN SORROW IS DEEP
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS

ITS QUALITY LOVE.

NO PRETTY WORDS CAN SOOTHE OR CURE
WHAT HEAVY HANDS CAN BREAK

WHEN SORROW IS DEEP
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS

ITS QUALITY LOVE.

(EDWARD emerges from his hiding place, and walks toward MARGARET. He takes the glass from her hand, deliberately smashes it on the floor, and then pulls MARGARET's red scarf from his pocket. He dangles it before her menacingly.)

EDWARD *(to MARGARET)*

SUCH FINE SENTIMENTS.
TOO FINE, I THINK
FOR A SLAVE.
BUT I HAVE REMEDIES.

MARGARET

THEY CAN NOT TOUCH
THE SECRET SOUL

EDWARD

YOUR SOUL
IS NOT REALLY ON MY MIND.

(He slowly wraps the scarf around her neck. In total command, EDWARD drags her to his quarters.)

(exit)

End of Act One

No Break between Acts I and II

[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE III]
the longest of the interludes

MARGARET GARNER

Act II, scene i

Winter, five years later. In the shadows beyond CILLA's cabin, CASEY can be seen assaulting a black man. Later, MARGARET goes to CILLA's cabin, anticipating a visit from ROBERT, who has been secretly visiting her there on Sunday nights. When she arrives, MARGARET finds CILLA packing a carpetbag.

MARGARET

HAS HE COME?

CILLA

NOT YET, BUT SOON.
ROBERT IS MY SON
AND HIS WORD IS GOLD.

MARGARET

(noticing CILLA's carpetbag)

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

CILLA

CALM YOURSELF.
YOUR DAUGHTER IS WITH KATE.
SO ARE THE TWINS.

MARGARET

WHY ARE YOU FOLDING THEIR CLOTHES?
YOU ARE PACKING THEM AWAY!
WHAT AREN'T YOU TELLING ME?
HAS CASEY BEEN HERE?

CILLA

YOU HAVE CHANGED SO, MARGARET.
EACH TIME YOU VISIT
I SEE LESS OF YOU
AND MORE OF A WET HEN.

MARGARET

BUT I SAW CASEY LURKING NEARBY.
IS HE TAKING THEM AWAY?
HAVE THEY BEEN SOLD?
HAVE THEY? HAVE THEY?

CILLA

DON'T CUT UP SO.
THE NEWS IS GOOD.

MARGARET

WHAT NEWS?
PLEASE, CILLA.
WHAT IS HAPPENING?

(Arioso)

CILLA

(pulling MARGARET into a dark corner of the room)

IT'S TIME, DARLING GIRL.
AT LAST,
THE TIME HAS COME.
THE PLAN IS SET.
THAT'S WHY YOUR HUSBAND IS LATE.
HE IS MAKING SURE
ALL IS IN PLACE.
BLANKETS, FOOD, WATER.
YOU'RE LEAVING TONIGHT.

MARGARET

SWEET JESUS!

CILLA

SWEETER THAN SYRUP
AND RIGHT ON TIME.

(MARGARET picks up some articles of her children's clothing and pretends to "dance" with them, as if they were a wealthy couple at a fancy ball. She reprises a verse of her "LULLABY.")

MARGARET

SLEEP MY BABIES IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP MY BABIES IN THE HAY
MY BABIES GOT SOME DREAMING TO DO
CAUSE FREEDOM'S ON THE WAY

3
(ROBERT arrives; he and MARGARET embrace)

MARGARET

YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD LAST SUNDAY.

ROBERT

I COULDN'T.
I HAD TO BE SURE.

MARGARET

WHEN DO WE LEAVE?

ROBERT

THREE HOURS.

MARGARET

OH LORD.
I'M GOING TO CRY.

ROBERT

YOU? NOT YOU!
MY SOLDIER GIRL'S GOING TO CRY?

(Several times, ROBERT tries to embrace MARGARET, but she pulls away, embarrassed to show her tears.)

ROBERT

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

ARIA

GO CRY, GIRL
YOU HAVE WON YOUR TEARS
GO CRY, GIRL
THE STRING IS CUT
THE TALE IS TOLD
I KNOW. I KNOW.
DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW.

4
GO CRY, GIRL
GIRL, GO CRY
THE GATE IS OPEN
THE WAY IS CLEAR
DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW
GO CRY, GIRL
GIRL, GO CRY

MARGARET

(recovering her composure, but still anxious)

WHERE WILL WE GO?
ARE THERE OTHERS?
WHO WILL LEAD US?
DO WE NEED MONEY?
WHERE WILL WE HIDE?
IS THERE ENOUGH FOOD?

ROBERT

SSHH. SSHH.
I AM IN CHARGE.
EVERYTHING IS READY
EXCEPT YOU.
NOW HELP MAMA FINISH PACKING.
I AM GOING FOR THE CHILDREN.

(ROBERT leaves)

CILLA

(locking the bag)

ALL DONE.
I'M THROUGH.

MARGARET

WHERE ARE YOUR THINGS?
I DON'T SEE YOUR THINGS, MAMA.

CILLA

DARLING GIRL,
I AM TOO OLD
TO TREAD NEW WATER.
I AM BOUND TO STAY HERE.

MARGARET

MAMA! YOU HAVE
TO COME WITH US.

CILLA

NO, I DON'T.
SEEING YOU,
MY SON AND MY GRANDCHILDREN
GONE FROM THIS PLACE,
AWAY FROM SATAN'S BREATH
IS MY BLESSING.
DON'T MOURN ME.
WHEN MY FAMILY IS SAFE,
I WILL BE ONLY *NEAR* THE CROSS --
NOT ON IT.

ARIA

CILLA

HE IS BY,
FOREVER BY ME.
IN HIS SHADOW
I WILL LINGER ON A WHILE
TIL HE CALLS ME.

NO TRUMPETS OR STREETS OF GOLD
HE WILL COME IN SILENCE
BAREFOOT IN THE GRASS
AND GATHER ME IN HIS ARMS

MARGARET

(sung in counterpoint with CILLA)

PLEASE DON'T CONFINE US
TO THE EDGE OF YOUR MIND
IN SHADOW.
WE DON'T WANT
TRUMPETS OR STREETS OF GOLD
AS WE LEAVE IN SILENCE
BAREFOOT IN THE GRASS
GIVE US YOUR ARMS

CILLA *(alone)*

AMEN.

MARGARET

IT WILL BREAK MY HEART
KNOWING YOU ARE STILL HERE.
WE CAN'T BE FREE
WITHOUT YOU.
ROBERT WILL INSIST.

CILLA

I WILL RESIST.
I AM HIS PARENT.
HE IS NOT MINE.
HUSH. HEAR ME NOW:
DON'T WASTE MUSCLE WHERE NONE IS WANTED.
YOU WILL NEED EVERY BONE AND SINEW
PLUS YOUR MIND
TO GET AWAY FROM HERE.
FOLLOW YOUR HUSBAND.
SAVE YOUR CHILDREN, MOTHER!

(they hear footsteps approaching the cabin)

CILLA

(smiling nervously)

REAR UP, NOW.
HELP ROBERT WITH THE CHILDREN.

(CASEY storms into the cabin. Shocked, MARGARET and CILLA recoil in fear.)

CASEY

(looking around)

PLANNING A LITTLE TRIP?
OR JUST CLEANING OUT THE STY?

ROBERT

(calling from outside)

THE CHILDREN ARE COMING!

(ROBERT enters the cabin and quickly halts when he sees CASEY)

THEY...

CASEY

WELL, I'LL BE.
LOOK WHAT CRAWLED OUT OF THE WOODS.
PAPPY BEAR.
COME TO GET MAMMY BEAR
AND ALL THE LITTLE CUBS?

(ROBERT, MARGARET, and CILLA freeze in terror.)

CASEY *(to CILLA)*

I GUESS YOU
MUST BE GOLDBLOCKS.
SEEMS THE PORRIDGE IS ALL ET UP.
LET ME SEE
WHAT I CAN OFFER YOU.

(pulling a pistol out of his coat)

GUN POWDER MIGHT BE A LITTLE DRY,
BUT GOLDBLOCKS GOT TO EAT,
DON'T SHE?

(pointing the pistol at CILLA's mouth, CASEY motions to ROBERT and MARGARET with his free hand)

LET'S JUST LINE UP OVER THERE.

(Impulsively, ROBERT attacks CASEY. A violent struggle ensues, during which ROBERT manages to wrest away CASEY'S pistol. He points the pistol at CASEY, yet hesitates to shoot him.)

CASEY

YOU KILL ME,
BOTH OF US IS DEAD.
YOUR FAMILY TOO.

ROBERT

AND IF YOU LIVE, WILL THEY?

MARGARET

DON'T KILL HIM.
HE IS ALREADY DEAD.

CASEY (*to MARGARET*)

BLACK SLUT!
DON'T YOU BEG FOR ME!

ROBERT

DOG WITHOUT TEETH!!
REMEMBER HELL?
GO HOME TO IT NOW!

(he shoots CASEY dead)

CILLA

LAP OF GOD, ROBERT.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

ROBERT

PROVED MY WORTH
AS A MAN AND YOUR SON.

CILLA

(clasping her hands)

FORGIVE HIM, FATHER.
THIS MAY BE THE END.

MARGARET

NO! WE CAN'T CHANGE WHAT IS DONE.
QUICK! ROBERT,
YOU HAVE TO RUN!

ROBERT

I CAN'T LEAVE YOU ALL HERE!

MARGARET

TELL ME WHERE TO MEET YOU.
THEN GO!

ROBERT (*agitated*)

IN THE BOTTOM...
BY THE MIMOSA.
THE GRASS IS TALL THERE.
WHEN THE MOON HITS
THE TOP OF THE PINES,
THE WAGON WILL BE THERE.

CILLA

HURRY, SON!
MAKE TRACKS. NOW!
WE'LL HANDLE GOD'S OUTCAST.

(she drags CASEY's body away)

ROBERT

MARGARET.
OH, MY SWEET WOMAN!

MARGARET

THE BOTTOM...
TALL GRASS...
MIMOSA...

ROBERT

BE THERE.
WHEN THE MOONLIGHT...

MARGARET

...TOUCHES PINE

ROBERT

LISTEN FOR THE WAGON WHEELS.
WATCH FOR...

MARGARET

MOONLIGHT.
THE MOONLIGHT.
WE'LL MEET YOU
IN THE MOONLIGHT. GO!

(ROBERT *exits*)

End of Act Two, Scene One

[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE IV]

Act II, scene ii

Three days later, on a riverbank at twilight. A storm threatens. ROBERT and MARGARET have escaped from their masters; they have successfully crossed the Ohio River and reached Cincinnati, a city in the Free State of Ohio. ROBERT is standing underneath a huge elm tree, near the entrance to an underground shed where he and MARGARET, now both outlaws, are hiding with their children in an attempt to avoid being recaptured and returned to their masters. Glimmering hot coals can be seen in a hole in the shed's earthen floor.

MARGARET

(emerging from the shed)

WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU HEARD?

ROBERT

THEY SAY THIS NEW PRESIDENT
DOESN'T HISS LIKE A SNAKE;
THAT HE TALKS LIKE A MAN.

MARGARET

WHAT HAS HE SAID?

ROBERT

THAT A HOUSE DIVIDED
CANNOT STAND.
AND THAT THE UNION IS SACRED.

MARGARET

THAT MEANS WAR...

(music to provide a shift in mood/drama)

MARGARET

OH ROBERT,
THE CHILDREN ARE TROUBLED.
THEY CRY IN THEIR SLEEP.

ROBERT

I KNOW.
BUT FREEDOM IS IN OUR TEETH.

MARGARET

TELL ME AGAIN.
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS PLACE?

ROBERT

OHIO.
IT MEANS 'BEAUTIFUL.'

MARGARET

IS IT?

ROBERT

SO I HEAR.
A BEAUTIFUL PLACE FOR A FUTURE.

MARGARET

TELL ME.
TELL ME WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BE LIKE.

ROBERT

IT WILL BE YOU AS MY WIFE
NO OTHER MAN CAN TOUCH OR CLAIM.
IT WILL BE
THE CHILDREN SEATED NOT BENT.
SEATED IN SCHOOL ROOMS
NOT BENDING THROUGH ROWS OF CORN.
IT WILL BE ME PAID FOR MY LABOR
WITH COIN OF THE REALM.

MARGARET

WILL I PLANT A GARDEN?
MEND YOUR SHIRTS BY LAMPLIGHT?
WILL I WATCH FROM A WINDOW
OUR CHILDREN TUMBLING IN CLOVER AND ROSEMARY?

ROBERT

TRUST ME, MARGARET.
IT WILL BE JUST SO.

MARGARET

WILL THEY SWIM IN CLEAR WATER
UNTIL THEIR SKIN GLITTERS LIKE BRASS?
TELL ME.

ROBERT

THEY WILL.
LOOK. SEE THIS TREE?
HOW ITS LOWERING BRANCHES PROTECT YOU
NO MATTER WHAT THE WEATHER BRINGS.
IMAGINE.
THAT IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS BE.

(MARGARET picks a leaf from the tree and caresses ROBERT'S face with it. They dance a teasing, catch-me dance around the tree.)

MARGARET

THAT IS HOW IT WILL ALWAYS BE.

ROBERT

THAT IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS BE.

(places the leaf in her hair)

COME INSIDE.
IT'S DANGEROUS OUT HERE.
SOMEONE MAY SEE US.

(They return to the shed. Soon, loud hoof beats are heard approaching. ROBERT grabs his pistol, and MARGARET runs to protect her children, sleeping in the corner behind a blanket. Accompanied by four SLAVE CATCHERS, EDWARD GAINES pounds on the shed door.)

EDWARD

OPEN! OPEN UP!

(no sound is heard from inside the shed)

4
IF BLOODSHED IS ON YOUR MIND,
DON'T WORRY.
I JUST WANT WHAT IS MINE.

EDWARD and SLAVE CATCHERS

NO HARM. COME SOFTLY.
NO HARM. OPEN UP.
THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.
WE CAN WAIT. WE WILL WAIT.
AS LONG AS WE HAVE TO.
THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.

(Intoxicated, GAINES breaks down the shed door and fires his pistol in the air. ROBERT shoots at GAINES, but misses his target. The SLAVE CATCHERS knock ROBERT to the ground and tie him up. Screaming, MARGARET emerges from behind the childrens' blanket.)

MARGARET

NO! NO MORE!
WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US BE?

EDWARD

LEAVE MURDERERS BE?
I OWN HIM!
I OWN YOUR CHILDREN!

(in an angry tone, although in his drunken state he thinks he is being tender)

I OWN YOU.

(EDWARD roughly grabs MARGARET from behind, twirling her around)

MARGARET

(moaning as she sees ROBERT being dragged out)

SOMEBODY HELP US! SOMEBODY!

EDWARD

MY BED IS COLD, GIRL.
IT WANTS HEATING.
REMEMBER THE BEDWARMER YOU RAN OVER MY SHEETS?
FIRST YOU FILLED IT WITH HOT COALS AS I RECALL...

MARGARET
(breaking loose)

HERE THEY ARE!
TAKE THEM! TAKE THEM!

(MARGARET plunges her hand into the smoldering fire, and grabs a piece of coal to throw at GAINES. She continues to throw bits of coal at him, but he successfully dodges them. Grabbing MARGARET'S wrists, GAINES looks at her scorched hands, then forces her to her knees.)

EDWARD

PRETEND TO BE CRAZY AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE.
MANGLE YOURSELF, I DON'T CARE.

(He throws her flat on the ground. The children cry loudly.)

EDWARD

CASEY WAS NOT ENOUGH?
YOU WILL KILL ME TOO?
OH NO, MY LITTLE CROW.

(A SLAVE CATCHER returns to the shed.)

SLAVE CATCHER

HE'S BOUND AND READY, SIR.

MARGARET

DAMN YOUR MARBLE EYES,
YOUR PUTRID, PUTRID HEART.
DAMN YOUR SLITHERING SOUL!

EDWARD
(to SLAVE CATCHER)

TAKE THE YOUNG ONES TO THE WAGON.
THEN LIGHT THE FIRE.
THE NIGHT IS COLD
AND PROMISES TO BE LONG.

(In silhouette, ROBERT is seen standing outside on a tall box underneath the elm tree. A noose is hanging around his neck.)

ROBERT

MARGARET! MARGARET!
I LOVE YOU! I LOVE ...

(As the box is kicked away, ROBERT's voice is cut off abruptly. In the sudden stillness, MARGARET pulls the leaf from her hair, and holds it in her scorched hands, weeping.)

CURTAIN

END OF ACT TWO

-- INTERMISSION --

An explanation of changes made, and the use of various ink colors:

A reminder that **RED INK** indicates changes made by Richard Danielpour.

PURPLE INK used on detailed comments by Toni Morrison about stage direction and/or design.

Scene 1: The excised text is listed in **Appendix A**.

Scene 2: Originally there was discussion of an extensive cut being made from right after the point Casey announces that Margaret is going up to the main house until the beginning of Robert-Margaret's love duet. Now, some of the text suggested to be cut has been reinstated; the portion that remains deleted is printed in **Appendix B**.

In the libretto, this section's new incarnation appears in **MUSTARD-COLORED** ink.

Also, in the "Oh, Mother ..." refrain, you'll notice the added phrase "rich-brown" (dirt/soil) printed in **GREEN** ink. "Rich-brown" merely indicates a desired two-syllable insert describing the color of the Kentucky soil; these specific words are not necessarily the ones suggested.

In **II: ii (the "old" Scene 5)** - A large cut has been made from Robert's 1st line ("What else have you heard?") and from p. 2, 4th entry down (Robert's line "No poison like blood poison...") to the top of p. 7 (Margaret's line "OH ROBERT, THE CHILDREN ARE TROUBLED.")

Please note, however, that a portion of this deleted speech (the 1st 5 entries) has been reinstated as a dialogue between Margaret and Robert (formerly assigned to Elijah - Robert). This revamped text, as printed in **MUSTARD-COLORED** ink, emphasizes the Civil War as the opera's backdrop.

In the "new" **II: ii/scene 5**, also in **MUSTARD COLOR**, a large cut is made after Margaret's opening "Oh, Robert"... speech -- from Robert's subsequent "It's hard for them ... through Margaret's "There can be no going back..." a page later.

Speculation over Margaret's declining mental state is why Edward's phrase "Pretend to be crazy as much as you like" - found in a previous draft of the libretto - was reinstated at **the end of scene 5**. This suggestion (in **TEAL**) that Margaret might be feigning mental illness (as she "mangles herself") is a good clue for the audience to begin considering this option (if they haven't already).

Also, Edward's line "I have a reputation to keep up..." from that same speech in **II: ii** has been moved to **I: iii/scene 3's** engagement party (as "But I have a reputation to maintain"). The audience therefore will hear Edward *verbalize*, in an indirect manner, both his social aspirations and fear of being ostracized by the townspeople. (appears in **TEAL** ink)

Edward's opening speech in **I: iii (TEAL)** has a very minor switch in pronouns.

APPENDIX B: Section cut from I:ii

~~BUT SOON, SOON. YOU'LL BE A MAN TO EVERY MAN AND I'LL BE A MOTHER TOO.
SOON, BABY, SOON. THE MESSAGE WILL COME AND WE WILL BE READY. JUST A
LITTLE BIT MORE. WE CAN TAKE A LITTLE BIT MORE, CAN'T WE?~~

~~ROBERT
This is not a little bit ...~~

~~MARGARET

YOU KNOW ME. YOU HAVE SEEN HOW I DEAL.~~

~~ROBERT

THIS IS KILLING ME! I OUGHT TO BE KILLING HIM! I CAN! I WILL! I CAN!~~

~~MARGARET

NO. NO. REMEMBER OUR PLANS! I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF...~~