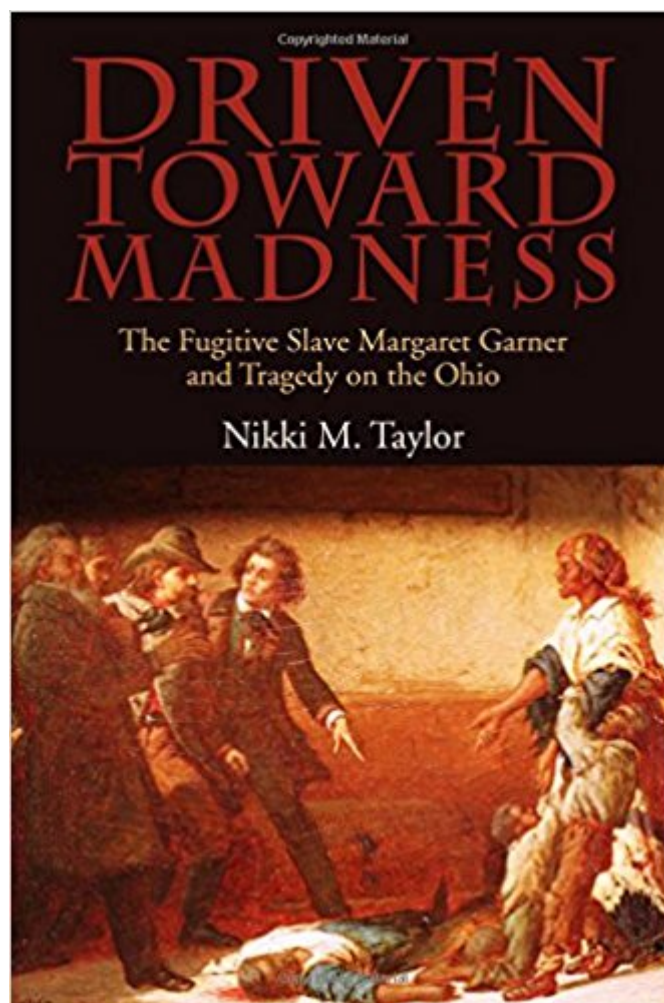




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Driven Toward Madness: The Fugitive Slave Margaret Garner And Tragedy On The Ohio (New Approaches To Midwestern History)



Synopsis

“Taylor crafts a book that should be read by all who have an interest in understanding the roots of slavery and oppression of women during the pre-Civil War era.”

•Library Journal (starred review) The story of Margaret Garner—the runaway slave who, when confronted with capture, slit the throat of her toddler daughter rather than have her face a life in slavery—has inspired Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, a film based on the novel starring Oprah Winfrey, and an opera. Garner’s story has defied solid historical treatment and Nikki M. Taylor’s fierce, poetic history of Garner brilliantly captures her circumstances and her transformation from a murdering mother to an icon of tragedy, resistance, and motherhood. As an enslaved woman, Garner left only faint traditional historical footprints: she could not read or write, and left no diary, letters, or personal papers, obliterating the opportunity to know with certainty what she thought or believed. Although she is one of the few runaway slaves ever to testify at her own hearing, there are no extant official transcripts. Local papers covered it, but summarized her testimony. In the wake of the killing, various factions appropriated her as differing symbols, each with its own audience and purpose (from hero of slave resistance to black bogeyman). A black feminist interpretation of Garner’s life—as an enslaved woman, wife, and mother—offers a more holistic picture of who she truly was and what drove her to kill. Taylor—the first African American woman to write a history of Garner—grounds her work in this interpretation and also melds trauma studies and literary criticism with history to account for shortcomings in the written record. In so doing, she rejects distortions and fictionalized images; probes slavery’s legacies of sexual and physical violence and psychic trauma in new ways; and finally fleshes out a figure who had been rendered an apparition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Taylor vividly portrays the sufferings Garner and her family endured under slavery and in their attempt to escape from it, placing their experiences in the wider context of the antebellum Midwest. . . . Readers of [Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*] will . . . appreciate the ways that Taylor illuminates the gendered experience of enslavement.” • Publishers Weekly

Nikki M. Taylor is a professor of African American history at Texas Southern University. Her other books include *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati’s Black Community, 1802–1868* and *America’s First Black Socialist: The Radical Life of Peter H. Clark*.

Deeply moving!

Driven Toward Madness is a wonderfully written and brilliantly crafted book. I have yet to read a history book with such strong insight and a unique perspective. This is an instant classic and leaves the reader with room to make some tough conclusions about the Margaret Garner narrative. A must read for years to come!

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