**Kanye West’s “Blood on the Leaves” (*Yeezus*, 2013)**

In “Blood on the Leaves,” Kanye West samples Nina Simone’s 1965 recording of “Strange Fruit” and TNGHT’s “R U Ready” (2012). I provide a transcription of the song below.

Opens with the soft piano chords from Nina Simone’s “Strange Fruit.”

*NS:*

*Strange Fruit hangin’ from the poplar trees*

*Blood on the leaves*

Enter a grand piano playing very simple two- or three-note chords. This is not the same piano from Simone’s original recording. This piano is playing a different chord progression and a faster rhythm.

KW: (with a highly auto-tuned voice)

I just need to clear my mind now
It's been racin' since the summertime
Now I'm holdin' down the summer now
And all I want is what I can't buy now

*NS:*

*Blood on the leaves*

KW:
'Cause I ain't got the money on me right now
And I told you to wait
Yeah I told you to wait
So I'mma need a little more time now

*NS:*

*Blood on the leaves*

KW:
'Cause I ain't got the money on me right now
And I thought you could wait
Yeah, I thought you could wait
These bitches surroundin' me

*NS:*

*Black bodies swingin’ in the summer breeze*

KW:
All want somethin' out me
Then they talk about me
Would be lost without me
We could've been somebody

*NS:*

*Strange fruit hangin’ from the poplar trees*

KW:
Thought you'd be different 'bout it

*NS:*

*From the poplar trees*

KW:
Now I know you not it

*NS:*

*From the poplar trees*

KW:
So let's get on with it

Enter the low brass horns blasting a staccato rhythm from TNGHT’s “R U Ready.” This horn part is then layered with a thumping bass drum and a tightly wound snare beat from the same song.

KW:

We could've been somebody
Instead you had to tell somebody
Let's take it back to the first party
When you tried your first molly

And came out of your body
And came out of your body
Running naked down the lobby
And you was screamin' that you love me
Before the limelight tore ya
Before the limelight stole ya
Remember we were so young
When I would hold you

TNGHT’s horns drop out. Drums remain.

*NS:*

*Black bodies swingin’ in the summer breeze.*

KW:
Before the glory
I know there ain't wrong with me

*NS:*

*Strange fruit hangin’*

KW:
Something strange is happening

*NS:*

*From the poplar trees.*

*From the poplar trees.*

Enter TNGHT’s horns blasting again.

KW:

You could've been somebody
We could've ugh, we could've been somebody
Or was it all our first party
When we tried our first molly
And came out of our body
And came out of our body
Before they call lawyers
Before you tried to destroy us
How you gon' lie to the lawyer?
It's like I don't even know ya
I gotta bring it back to the 'Nolia

Fuck them other niggas 'cause I'm down with my niggas

*NS:*

*Black bodies swingin’*

KW:
Fuck them other niggas 'cause I'm down with my niggas

*NS:*

*In the summer breeze.*

KW:
Fuck them other niggas 'cause I'm down with my niggas
I ride with my niggas, I'll die for my…

*NS:*

*Strange fruit hangin’*

*From the poplar trees*

*From the poplar trees*

Drums cut out. Only the blasting brass remain.

KW:

To all my second string bitches, tryna get a baby
Trying to get a baby, now you talkin' crazy
I don't give a damn if you used to talk to Jay-Z
He ain't with you, he with Beyoncé, you need to stop actin' lazy

Bass and tight snare drum return to hammer home the beat.

She Instagram herself like #BadBitchAlert
He Instagram his watch like #MadRichAlert
He only wanna see that ass in reverse
Two-thousand-dollar bag with no cash in your purse
Now you sittin' courtside, wifey on the other side
Gotta keep 'em separated, I call that apartheid
Then she said she impregnated, that's the night your heart died
Then you gotta go and tell your girl and report that
Main reason 'cause your pastor said you can't abort that
Now your driver say that new Benz you can't afford that
All that cocaine on the table you can't snort that
That going to that alimony that the court got
Alimony, alimony, uh, yeah yeah, she got you homie, yeah
'Til death but do your part, uh,

Unholy matrimony

*NS:*

*Black bodies swingin’ in the summer breeze*

*Strange fruit hangin’*

*From the poplar trees*

*From the poplar trees*

TNGHT cuts off abruptly.

West sings open vowel sounds with unintelligible words that are exaggeratedly auto-tuned.

*NS:*

*Blood on the leaves*

*Black bodies swingin’ in the summer breeze*

*Strange fruit hangin’*

*From the poplar trees*

*From the poplar trees*

West sings even higher-pitched vowel sounds that are still exaggeratedly auto-tuned.