**Tracing Sonic *Ethos*: Sampling Kanye’s Character**

Below is a transcription of the accretive audio composition that I use to conclude my presentation at SSRW. This piece weaves together five different recordings of “Strange Fruit” with the brash horns and drums from TNGHT’s “R U Ready” as well as excerpts of West and others speaking in public.

| **Jeff Buckley** | **Nina Simone** | **Billie Holiday** | **Labor Camp Orchestra****(later, Rene Marie)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| [Minor piano chord, then opening trumpet from Billie Holiday’s 1939 recording.] |
| Southern trees  |  |  |  |
| [Another minor piano chord, then more mournful trumpet from Billie Holiday’s 1939 recording.] |
| Bear strange fruit |  |  |  |
|  | Southern trees  |  |  |
| Blood on the leaves |  |  |  |
|  | Bearin’ strange fruit |  |  |
| ‘n’ blood at the root |  |  |  |
|  |  | Southern trees  |  |
| *KW: “George Bush doesn’t care about black people.”* |
| Black bodies swinging  |  |  |  |
|  | Blood on the leaves |  |  |
|  |  | bear strange fruit |  |
| In the southern breeze |  |  |  |
| *KW: “George Bush doesn’t care about black people.”* |
|  | and blood at the root |  |  |
|  |  | Blood on the leaves |  |
| Strange fruit hangin’  |  |  |  |
| *Malcom X: “They’ll lynch you in Texas as quick as they’ll lynch in you Mississippi.”* |
| [Enter the perky upbeat electronic of the Labor Camp Orchestra’s rendition of “Strange Fruit.”] |
|  |  | And blood at the root |  |
| From the popular trees |  |  |  |
|  | Black bodies  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Southern trees |
|  | Swingin’ in the southern breeze |  |  |
| *KW: “When you hear about slavery for 400 years…”* |
|  |  | Black bodies swinging  |  |
|  |  |  | Bear strange fruit |
| Pastoral scene |  |  |  |
| *KW: For 400 years? That sound like a choice.”* |
|  |  | in the southern breeze |  |
|  |  |  | Blood on the leaves |
| *MLK: “It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can restrain him from lynching me, and I think that’s pretty important also.”* |
| Of the gallant south. |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | And blood at the root. |
|  | Strange fruit hangin’ |  |  |
|  |  | Strange fruit hangin’ |  |
|  |  |  | Black bodies swinging |
| The bulging eyes |  |  |  |
| *KW: “For 400 years? That sound like a choice.”* |
|  |  | From the poplar trees |  |
|  | From the poplar trees |  |  |
|  |  |  | In the southern breeze |
| And the twisted mouth |  |  |  |
| *Donald Trump: “Kanye West must have some power.”*  |
| [Enter the low brass horns blasting a staccato rhythm from TNGHT’s “R U Ready.” This horn part is layered with a thumping bass drum and a tightly wound snare beat from the same song.] |
| [Another minor piano chord, then minor trumpet riffs from Billie Holiday’s 1939 recording.] |
|  |  |  | Strange fruit hangin’ |
| Scent of magnolias |  |  |  |
|  | Pastoral scene |  |  |
| Sweet  |  |  |  |
|  | Of the gallant |  |  |
| and |  |  |  |
|  | south |  |  |
| fresh |  |  |  |
| *MX: “They’ll lynch you in Texas…* |
| *KW: “George Bush doesn’t care about black people.”* |
| *MX: …as quick as they’ll lynch in you Mississippi.”* |
| And then the sudden smell |  |  |  |
|  |  | Pastoral scene |  |
| *MX: “In Texas they lynch you with a Texas accent.”* |
| *KW: “George Bush doesn’t care about black people.”* |
| *MX: “In Mississippi they lynch you with a Mississippi accent.”* |
| Of burning  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Of the gallant south |  |
| Flesh  |  |  |  |
|  | And the twisted mouth |  |  |
| *KW: “When you hear about slavery for 400 years… slavery for 400 years…400 years”* |
|  |  | The bulging eyes |  |
| *KW: “For 400 years? That sound like a choice.”* |
| Ooh, ooh. |  |  |  |
|  | Scent of magnolia |  |  |
|  |  | ‘n’ the twisted mouth |  |
| *MLK: “It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me…”* |
| Oh. |  |  |  |
|  | Clean and fresh |  |  |
|  |  | Scent of magnolia |  |
| *MLK: “…but it can restrain him from lynching me, and I think that’s pretty important also.”* |
| Oh, oh, oh. |  |  |  |
|  |  | Sweet and fresh |  |
| *KW: “When you hear about slavery for 400 years…”* |
|  | Then the sudden smell |  |  |
| *KW: “For 400 years? For 400 years?”* |
| Ooooh, ooh,  |  |  |  |
| *KW: “For 400 years? For 400 years?”*  |
|  |  | Then the sudden smell |  |
| KW: “*That sound like a choice.”* |
|  | Of burning flesh |  |  |
| *DT: “Kanye West must have some power.”* |
|  |  | Of burning flesh |  |
| Ooooo (soft) |  |  |  |
| *KW: “George Bush doesn’t care…”* |
|  |  | Here is a fruit |  |
| *KW: “…care about black people.”* |
| *Malcom X: “They’ll lynch you in Texas as quick as they’ll lynch in you Mississippi.”* |
|  |  | For the crows to  |  |
| Aaay, ay (soft) |  |  |  |
|  | Crows to |  |  |
|  | Pluck  | Pluck  |  |
| [Drums and brash horns from TNGHT’s “R U Ready” still punching.] |
|  |  | For the rain to gather |  |
| Ah (soft) |  |  |  |
| *KW: “When you hear about slavery for 400 years…”* |
|  | Rain to gather |  |  |
| *KW: “For 400 years? For 400 years? For 400 years?”* |
|  |  | For the wind  |  |
| *KW: “For 400 years? That sound like a choice.”* |
|  | For the wind…. |  |  |
|  |  | To suck |  |
|  | …wind… |  |  |
|  *DT: “Kanye West must have some power.”*  |
|  | To suck. |  |  |
| *DT: “…power, power, power, power…”* |
|  |  | For the sun to rot |  |
|  | For the sun  |  |  |
| Oooohoooh. (loud) |  |  |  |
|  | To rot |  |  |
|  |  | For the trees |  |
| *MX: “They’ll lynch you in Texas as quick as they’ll lynch in you Mississippi.”* |
|  | For the leaves… |  |  |
|  |  | To drop |  |
|  | …leaves… |  |  |
| *MX: “In Texas they lynch you with a Texas accent. In Mississippi they lynch you with a Mississippi accent.”* |
|  | …leaves… |  |   |
| *KW: “Love can”* |
|  |  | Here |  |
| *KW: “cure”* |
|  |  | Is a strange |  |
| *DT: “Kanye West..”* |
| *KW: “…so much.”* |
| *DT: “must have some power.”* |
|  |  |  | RM: Oh, I wish I was in Dixie. |
|  | …to drop. |  |  |
| *KW: “Cure…”* |
|  |  |  | Hooray. |
|  |  | And bitter |  |
| *KW: “…so much.”* |
|  |  |  | Hooray…ay…ay…ay… |
| [Drums and horns from TNGHT still beating on but beginning to fade.] |
|  |  | Crrrro… |  |
| *KW: “Love can cure…”* |
|  |  |  | In Dixie land |
| *KW: “…so much.”* |
|  |  |  | I’ll take my stand. |
|  |  | …crop. |  |
| *MLK: “It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me…”* |
| Ah, ah, ah, ah, (softly falling) |  |  |  |
|  | and |  |  |
| *MLK: “…but it can restrain him from lynching me, and I think that’s pretty important also.”* |
|  | bitter |  |  |
| Oh, oh. (soft) |  |  |  |
| [All instruments fade out, leaving only the vocals.] |
| Now, here’s your fruit. |  |  |  |
|  | crop. |  |  |