

- Tolnay, Stewart E., and E. M. Beck. *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.
- Turner, Victor. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1986.
- Weskamp, Ralf. *Fachdidaktik: Grundlagen & Konzepte: Anglistik—Amerikanistik*. Berlin: Cornelsen, 2001.
- Wood, Amy Louise. *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Sonderdruck aus

NASSIM WINNIE BALESTRINI (Ed.)

Adaptation and American Studies

Perspectives on Research and Teaching
With an Afterword by Linda Hutcheon

Universitätsverlag
WINTER
Heidelberg
2011

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments vii

NASSIM W. BALESTRINI
Adaptation Studies and American Studies: Interfaces i

JONATHAN ELKUS AND NASSIM W. BALESTRINI
Adaptation and the American Band Tradition:
A Conversation with Jonathan Elkus 31

DAVID STARKEY
Adapting the Unreal: Composing an
Alternate History for Emily Dickinson 69

SIOBHAN O'FLYNN
Designing for the Interactant:
How Interactivity Impacts on Adaptation 83

LESLIE C. DUNN
"Many Kinds of Music":
Adapting Shakespeare's Song/Play 103

KATHRYN S. KOO
Returning to the Source: Captain John Smith's
The Generall Historie and the Making of
Terrence Malick's *The New World* 117

UTE RITZENHOFEN
The English Patients: Teaching the Novel,
the Screenplay, and the Movie 133

MARK CANTRELL
Dark Soundings: Teaching
Heavy Metal Adaptations of *Moby-Dick* 147

DANIEL STEIN
Teaching Poetry through Song Adaptation:
Abel Meeropol's and Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" 171

JILL L. LEVENSON
The Adaptations of Juliet and Her Romeo 195

LINDA HUTCHEON
Moving Forward:
The Next Stage in Adaptation Studies 213

Index 218

List of Contributors 241

DANIEL STEIN

Teaching Poetry through Song Adaptation: Abel Meeropol's and Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit"

The teaching of poetry is frequently described as a problem for high school and college teachers. Generic characteristics such as increased aesthetic self-referentiality, deviations from everyday language, lack of plot, and complex textual structures tend to complicate established didactic approaches and teaching methodologies. But as Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater suggest, "poems offer a special kind of reward as well as a challenge all of their own" (14). In other words, while the teaching of poetry demands a didactic approach attuned to the complexities of the genre, it also promises particularly rewarding insights into processes of literary composition and cultural self-description. Focusing on the affective/emotive powers of poetry and on the productive processes involved in the adaptation of poetry into musical performance, this essay argues that the challenges involved in teaching poetry are best met when modes of formal analysis are combined with what I shall call a cultural didactics.¹

In order to illustrate the potential of such an approach, I will begin my investigation by offering preliminary thoughts on the goals of a cultural studies didactics. One of my central suggestions will be that students can be motivated to engage with poetry cognitively and affectively if teachers are willing to "supplement [...] the printed page" (Collie/Slater 8) with audiovisual material. This is followed by an exemplary close reading of Abel Meeropol's anti-lynching poem "Strange Fruit" (1937) and an analysis of Billie Holiday's vocal adaptations of this poem (1939, 1956, 1959). The final segment makes suggestions for teaching "Strange Fruit" in the German EFL-classroom (English as a foreign language in the "gymnasiale Oberstufe"), suggestions that could be taken up, with a few modifications perhaps, by high school teachers in other countries (including the U.S. and Canada) as well as those who teach American Studies courses at the university level.²

¹ Recent publications devoted to the development of such a cultural didactics are Delanoy and Volkmann; Donnerstag and Volkmann; Freese.

² In the tripartite German school system, the *Gymnasium* prepares students for an academic education. In the majority of these schools, students in the *Oberstufe* (grades

Teaching Literature, Teaching Culture

The methodologies we choose to teach literature depend to a significant degree on our didactic objectives. The primary objective in the EFL-classroom is to further students' linguistic, communicative, and intercultural competencies. Intercultural competence is understood here as a process in which students develop rational and emotional reactions to a foreign culture in order to reassess their own cultural dispositions (see Nünning and Surkamp, "Text" 159). As Ansgar Nünning and Carola Surkamp note, this entails the students' experience of empathy with literary characters from a foreign culture, the ability to see a foreign world from the perspective of others, the achievement of a cognitive and affective understanding of this foreign world, and finally the linguistic, social, and intercultural skills necessary to interact with members of a foreign culture (see *Englische Literatur* 13–15, 27–32). The point is not so much to merely present students with information about literary history, a particular literary text/genre, or specific sociopolitical conflicts of a foreign culture, but to motivate them to empathize with the experiences of members of a culture different from their own.³

In the EFL-classroom, students are generally encouraged to identify with the stories they read and the characters whose exploits they follow before they arrive at a more distanced and reflective understanding of literature. This kind of encouragement, while certainly justified, produces one major disadvantage: it motivates a personal investment with literature that may result in a naïvely empathetic illusion of understanding from which students have to be carefully weaned once they enter an academic environment. Ralf Weskamp, for instance, is critical of didactic approaches that focus too closely on the creation of empathy as a means of attaining intercultural understanding; he further argues that we have to acknowledge the fact that foreign cultures will always remain more or less oblique for the cultural outsider and will always resist attempts at being fully understood (see 91). Recognizing that the students' engagement with the fictional worlds produced by members of a foreign culture involves a difficult balancing act is an important step toward a culturally aware didactics. This

11 to 12) have studied English as a foreign language for six years. They are advanced speakers comparable to AP students in the American school system. Ideally, texts can serve as both educational resources and didactic models. For additional theoretical, methodological, and practical suggestions, see Stein, "American Cultural Studies."

³ Nünning and Surkamp speak of a "Didaktik des Fremdverstehens" (didactics of intercultural understanding) (see *Englische Literatur* 29–30). Collie and Slater refer to students learning "to 'inhabit' the text" (6).

balancing act involves, on the one hand, the wish to empathize and understand the Cultural Other (either fictional characters or empirical beings in non-fictional representations) and, on the other hand, the realization that literature and other forms of aesthetic expression are especially prone to creating romantic or sentimental pleasures and do not necessarily produce a deeper understanding of those whose fictional worlds and lived realities differ from ours. Nünning and Surkamp thus maintain that productive and creative approaches to literary and cultural interpretation should be combined with cognitive approaches so that the specificities of literary communication (form, content) and the cultural implications of these specificities can be grasped (see "Text" 156).

In order to make a cultural didactics perspective productive and in order to produce theoretically sound suggestions for a cultural approach to the teaching of literature, it is necessary to delve into current conceptions of literary and cultural studies. An influential impulse for the transition from the traditional and fact-oriented Area Studies (Landeskunde) to a culture-oriented approach that informs all of our critical engagements with foreign cultures has been the cultural anthropology of Clifford Geertz. For Geertz, culture is "a system of [. . .] symbolic forms by means of which men [*sic*] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (89). Geertz proposes a method of "thick description" (6) through which symbolic forms can be studied like a literary text: "Believing [. . .] that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (5). The student of culture, in other words, becomes akin to the literary critic whose aim is to identify and interpret the ways in which literature generates and negotiates meaning.

Geertz's thick description seeks to interpret "the flow of social discourse" in an attempt to "rescue the 'said' of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms" (20). Thick description, as Louis Montrose puts it, "seizes on an event, performance, or other practice and, through the interrogation of its minute particulars, seeks to reveal the ethos of an alien culture" (399). Stephen Greenblatt therefore speaks of a cultural criticism that "will need to push beyond the boundaries of the text, to establish links between the text and values, institutions, and practices elsewhere in the culture" and to trace "symbolic materials from one zone of the culture [. . .] to another [. . .]" ("Culture" 12, 15). This view calls on scholars and readers "to look less at the presumed center of the literary domain than at its borders" and to become aware of historically specific

cultural poetics: “the collective making of distinct cultural practices and [...] the relations among those practices” (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean* 4–5).

In terms of teaching methodology, the implications of this perspectival shift are manifold. To examine “the flow of social discourse” (Geertz) means to read a literary text as part of a larger discourse and social environment. Pushing beyond the boundaries of the text entails turning to other texts (fictional and non-fictional) as well as expressions in other media: where, we may ask, is the horrific spectacle of lynching presented beyond Meeropol’s “Strange Fruit”? Answers include: in anti-lynching essays, novels, plays, and short stories; in newspaper articles; in academic studies; on photographs; in films; and in music. Coming to terms with the cultural poetics of lynching thus means tracing symbolic materials through different cultural zones, genres, and media and to connect these materials with the historical conditions (i. e., values, institutions, and cultural practices) from which they emerge: the history and legacy of slavery, lynching as an outgrowth of Reconstruction, the racial caste system of Jim Crow, the legal system in the South, and so forth. Investigating as closely as possible the “minute particulars” of Meeropol’s and Holiday’s creative answers to the horrors of lynching will help us “to reveal the ethos” (Montrose) of a culture that is doubly alien to us: as a culture foreign to our own and as a historical era that precedes our own time by several generations. Finally, recognizing the necessity of “look[ing] less at the presumed center of the literary domain than at its borders” (Greenblatt) can sharpen our sense of marginalized perspectives: the poem of a Jewish high school teacher and the jazz performances of a black female singer.

Moving from textual analysis to the study of a culture’s “webs of significance” (Geertz) implies a fluid corpus of texts and media. In order to be able to thickly describe the cultural poetics of lynching, we must identify specific “units of observation” that promise privileged insights into the ethos of a culturally and historically unfamiliar culture (Singer 70). This is where Milton Singer’s and Victor Turner’s concept of “cultural performance” comes into play. For Singer and Turner, theater, music, and other forms of artistic practices function as a culture’s “performative genres” and often gain their affective power as “orchestrations of media, not expressions in a single medium” (Turner 23). Performative “genres are instruments whose full reality is in their ‘playing,’ in their performance, in their use in social settings—they should not be seen merely as scripts, scenarios, scores, stage directions, or other modes of blueprinting, diagramming, or guiding” (24). In the context of a cultural didactics, the conclusions are twofold. First, we can use Meeropol’s poem as a script that comes alive,

as a performance, through Holiday’s creative adaptations, which make use of this script in specific social settings (night clubs, recording studio, television). Second, if performative genres like jazz orchestrate cultural media (song lyrics, the performer’s voice, the physical embodiment of musical material by the musicians, the mediation of music through instruments, the technology of sound recording, the materiality of music on vinyl/CD), then the adaptive process from poetry to jazz performance implies shifting “modes of engagement” for performer and audience alike (Hutcheon 22).

As Holiday’s renditions of “Strange Fruit” illustrate, a popular means of uniting script with actor and audience has long been the practice of adaptation. Adaptations frequently appear in the form of transpositions of material from one medium to another and result in new ways in which stories are communicated. A cultural didactics acknowledges these adaptive processes and finds in them the core of a specific interpretive practice. When we study an adaptation of a literary text, we should recognize its embeddedness in a larger, intermedial cultural sphere in which artistic expressions are produced by social agents (Meeropol, Holiday) for specific and often diverse audiences (listeners at the Café Society in New York, in Holiday’s case, as well as buyers of her records and viewers of her television appearances). Our task is to recognize that these adaptations are neither secondary nor inferior to an idealized original source (see Hutcheon 4) but that they trigger their very own “stereophony of echoes, citations, references” (Barthes 160). Linda Hutcheon therefore theorizes adaptation as a type of intertextuality: “we experience adaptations (as adaptations) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation” (8). In my view, this idea becomes particularly productive when it is enriched by a cultural dimension, especially since most of today’s listeners of Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” will not be familiar with Meeropol’s poem and will thus be unable—at least initially—to hear Holiday’s rendition as a “repetition with variation.” What they are able to hear, however, is a history of mediated representations of lynching: the photographs, newspaper articles, political speeches, paintings, sculptures, and fictional engagements with lynching that constitute its cultural poetics.

That we should think of the cultural poetics of lynching in intermedial terms should be clear by now. Yet it is important to emphasize what this intermediality entails. While many teaching methodologists advocate student engagement with different mediations of texts, they rarely opt for a media-sensitive perspective that recognizes music and film/photography as more than sonic or visual “texts” in the semiotic sense: as media that use

different material vehicles through which they mobilize different senses in the receiver. In Holiday's original recording of "Strange Fruit" (1939), we encounter a phenomenology of musical sound that is mediated by the recording technology of the 1930s, is filtered through digital sound reproduction, and serves our postmodern wish to consume music in shifting semi-private environments (listening to music on the iPod while riding the subway, for instance). Thus, the objective of a media-inclusive and culture-oriented teaching methodology must be to facilitate a media awareness, recognize the particular ways in which different media appeal to us, and achieve a kind of media literacy that enables students to listen for (and hear) cultural resonances in authentic expressions from a foreign culture (see Weskamp 158).⁴

How can we combine media awareness and media literacy with what I want to call an intermedial cultural poetics?⁵ The most promising method is to enlist students as cultural detectives. Like Geertz's cultural anthropologist who employs the literary scholar's tool kit in order to thickly describe the cultural webs of significances through which symbolic expressions travel, students can gain an understanding of the cultural poetics within which a poem like "Strange Fruit" resonates. As cultural detectives, they are presented with a mystery (Meeropol's poem) which they must "solve" by formulating hypotheses and seeking "proof" of their assumptions. What students may realize as a consequence of their detective work is that texts cannot be decoded in the sense that one definite answer to the riddle which they initially present to us can be found. Rather, they will inevitably follow what Moritz Baßler has called discursive threads ("Diskursfäden"), which lead from expressions in one medium to related expressions in other media. The purpose of analysis therefore is "Fäden zu entwirren, nicht Hieroglyphen zu entziffern" (16) (to disentangle threads, not to decipher hieroglyphs), and the work is not one of "Dechiffrieren" (decoding) but one of interpretation (34). In this sense, students will eventually recognize that they have been acting as postmodern detectives (think of Thomas Pynchon's Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Paul Auster's Daniel Quinn in *City of Glass*, or Ishmael Reed's PaPa LaBas in *Mumbo Jumbo*) who do not find conclusive answers to their questions but discover a proliferation of explanations and interpretations. This discovery should

⁴ Authenticity in this context implies that the students encounter actual historical documents and cultural artifacts (poems, photographs, musical recordings, films) rather than material created specifically for didactic purposes (textbooks, exercise sheets).

⁵ For a more theoretical and extended treatment of such an intermedial cultural poetics, see Stein, "From Text-Centered Intermediality to Cultural Intermediality."

not only allow them to recognize the existence of different perspectives but should also motivate them to seek out those perspectives that are most plausible.⁶ In the process, interpretive responsibility is transferred from teacher to students, who are encouraged to formulate and assess their own working assumptions and assemble their own source materials.⁷

"Strange Fruit": Close Reading of Poem and Song Adaptation

My exemplary analyses of Meeropol's poem and Billie Holiday's vocal adaptations are geared toward illustrating the usefulness of combining formal analysis with a cultural perspective.⁸ Meeropol's poetic response to a photograph of Abe Smith's and Thomas Shipp's lynching in Marion, Indiana, in 1930 first appeared in *The New York Teacher* in January of 1937 (under the title "Bitter Fruit"):

Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant South,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh,
And the sudden smell of burning flesh!

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,

⁶ Differentiating and coordinating among different perspectives is a central objective of the didactics of intercultural understanding (see Nünning and Surkamp, *Englische Literatur* 28–29, 32).

⁷ Thielking advocates a "shift from teaching to learning" (55) in the course of which the role of the instructor as the controlling agent of course schedules and of class discussions is curbed and the role of the student as active and motivated participant is expanded. The instructor's role is to provide a frame (posing questions, defining tasks, and setting time requirements) within which students can make their own decisions about the work process (see 67).

⁸ Margolick accounts for six versions of "Strange Fruit" recorded by Holiday: two takes for Milt Gabler's Commodore label in 1939, a live version from 1945 for Norman Granz's "Jazz at the Philharmonic," a nightclub recording by George Wein from 1951, a 1956 studio version for Verve, and the 1959 BBC telecast. I will be discussing the original take from the 1939 session (*Billie Holiday: Complete Original American Commodore Recordings*, CD, Disconforme 2001), the 1956 version (*Lady Sings the Blues: Billie Holiday Story*, CD, Verve 1995), and the BBC performance (see Katz, *Strange Fruit*; see also various postings on YouTube).

For the sun to rot, for a tree to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop.⁹

The poem consists of three quatrains. Grammatically, each stanza constitutes a sentence; in terms of rhyme scheme, we are dealing with rhyming couplets. The poem is obviously highly structured: in the first stanza, the s-sounds in “Southern” and “Strange” of the first and last lines embrace the b-sounds in the second and third lines (“Blood,” “Black”; see also the last stanza where the effect is achieved by the anaphoric use of “Here” and “For”). The lines have the same relative length and the same number of stressed syllables (the meter is indistinct), but it is the caesura in each line that produces the most striking rhythmic effect. This caesura is most obvious in “For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck” and “For the sun to rot, for a tree to drop,” where the comma indicates a speech pause, but it is present in all other lines as well, for instance in “Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,” which also employs repetition in order to move from the ambiguous opening line to the violent scene described in the remainder of the poem.¹⁰ The purpose of these caesuras could be to present the spectacle as a series of impressions that are reported as they register before the onlooker is able to convert them into a narrative (note the use of “and” instead of a causal conjunction such as “because”). As I shall illustrate below, reading the poem aloud, listening to jazz singer Abbey Lincoln’s reading of it in Joel Katz’s documentary film *Strange Fruit* (2002), and especially listening to Holiday’s renditions of the lines will provide additional interpretive handles on this stylistic device.

In terms of speech situation, we encounter neither an explicit lyric I nor an explicit lyric thou but only an anonymous speaker who processes and describes the spectacle of lynching. The anonymity of the speaker, who identifies the scene of the crime as the South (most lynchings occurred in the Southern states, even though the photograph that inspired Meeropol’s poem depicts a lynching in the Midwest), can be explained by the fact that the white Southerners who watched the spectacle would most likely have applauded it. The perspective, then, is a Northern one that looks at a me-

⁹ The poem is reprinted in Davis (181), Edelbrock (18), Margolick (1), O’Meally (133).

¹⁰ The contrast between the “strange fruit” borne by “Southern trees” and the shock of bloody leaves, bloody roots, and a black body swinging from a tree recalls the shock effect of T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915), where the opening lines evoke the conventions of love poetry (“Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky”) only to deconstruct them with the violent intrusion of a simile borrowed from the semantic field of clinical pathology: “Like a patient etherized upon a table” (1260).

diated representation of the spectacle. The gap between the immediate presence of those witnessing the scene and Meeropol’s geographically and medially removed stance is partly overcome by the choice of present simple and present progressive as narrative tenses (“bear”; “swinging”; “hanging”), which give the poem a transtemporal quality: the scene depicted here is no singular incident but a common sight in the American South. This choice is amplified in the final stanza, where the deictic repetition of “Here” imaginatively transports the implied reader to the actual scene of the lynching. The absence of an explicit lyric I further suggests a lack of control—the speaker cannot intervene and prevent the lynching; the lynching is already over when the poem begins—while the absence of an explicit lyric thou demands the reader’s active engagement with the poem: it challenges the reader to humanize the “Black body swinging in the Southern breeze” and reconcile the violent sight of the mutilated dead body with the human being to which it used to belong (see Davis 194–95).

Stepping outside of the scope of formal analysis for a second, I suggest that we examine the photograph of this scene. This photograph portrays the dead bodies of Abe Smith and Tom Shipp dangling from a tree as a crowd of dressed-up Southerners has gathered to celebrate the event.¹¹ In the foreground, it depicts a man who looks directly into the camera while pointing his finger at one of the dead bodies as if to say: “Look here and make a visual document of what we will do to those we find guilty of any racial transgression.” Here, then, the missing lyric thou is supplied visually; it is the person who took the photograph, but it also directly addresses us, the empirical readers of this image.¹² One could argue further that an awareness of the poem’s doubly mediated nature—Meeropol writes the poem (one medium) about a photograph (another medium)—appears on the levels of grammar and vocabulary: the fragmentary sentence that constitutes the second stanza underscores the power of photography to capture a singular expressive moment. Since there is no verb and thus no agency, responsibility for establishing causes and effects is transferred to the reader.¹³

¹¹ The poem does not mention the victims’ names and depicts only a single victim, most likely because Meeropol meant to protest against lynching as a widespread practice rather than an isolated incident.

¹² The photograph was taken by Lawrence Beitler; it is reproduced on the cover of James Madison’s book about this lynching (*A Lynching in the Heartland*). A simple Google images search (“lynching”) produces several links to pages on which this photograph is posted. See also the images provided in Edelbrock.

¹³ This is an example of “rezeptionsästhetisches Fremdverstehen,” an intercultural understanding based on the aesthetics of reception (Nünning and Surkamp, *Englische Literatur* 29).

The poem's most prominent stylistic device is the extended metaphor of the "strange fruit." It associates the lynched body with romantic tributes to the beauties of nature but also with the Southern myth of racial benevolence (signified by the ironically white magnolias), with images of sexuality and motherhood (the trees "bear" a strange fruit; the body is plucked, sucked, and dropped), and with the biblical story of the fall of mankind (the forbidden tree/fruit of knowledge).¹⁴ Nature imagery appears throughout: "trees," "strange fruit," "leaves," "root," "breeze," "poplar trees," "magnolia," "fruit," "rain," "wind," "sun," "tree," "strange and bitter crop." Significantly, this imagery does not evoke a nature untouched by human hand but reinforces the violation of nature by mankind. Southern trees produce strange fruit, which is an oxymoron since it connects an image of man-made death with the perpetual rebirth of nature. It is a bitter crop, indeed, which reveals the disgraceful practice of lynching as a peculiarly Southern fall from grace that is rooted in a long history of racial violence.¹⁵ Note also the ironic reference to the "Pastoral scene" and the expression of disenchantment in "bitter crop," which reduces the body of the lynched man to a piece of carrion, a strange "fruit for the crows to pluck." Furthermore, we can identify personifications (the sucking wind, the trees that bear fruit), alliterations ("Black body," "sudden smell"), and assonances ("trees," "leaves," "breeze," "trees," "scene," "sweet"; "fruit," "root"; "body," "poplar"). The sound effects created by these alliterations and assonances add to the poem's heightened sensuality, and they also make "Strange Fruit" an ideal vehicle for Holiday's vocal adaptations.

Finally, a stark contrast is established by the disparate semantics of the second stanza, in which the rhymed couplets suggest grammatical and structural harmony but at the same time violently juxtapose the self-serving ideology of the South with the grotesque realities of racial hatred and persecution ("gallant South" vs. "twisted mouth"; "Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh" vs. "the sudden smell of burning flesh"). The contrast is amplified

¹⁴ The image of Jesus on the cross provides another subtext and intermedial reference, and John 15:5 constitutes an important intertext: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (Coogan 173, New Testament). On the religious connotations of "Strange Fruit," see Pramuk.

¹⁵ A possible classroom activity would be to divide the class into two large groups and have one group debate the depiction of nature in a romantic poem such as John Keats's "Bright Star! Would I Were Steadfast As Thou Art" (1819) while the other group discusses the depiction of nature in "Strange Fruit." Results could be collected on the blackboard or on a transparency in order to illustrate the discrepancies between Keats's romantic and Meeropol's non-romantic understanding of nature.

by the onomatopoetic sounds in "fresh" and "flesh" (which conjure up the sizzling of human flesh) and in "pluck" and "suck" (the explosive k-sounds suggesting the violent breaking of the neck) as well as by Meeropol's use of synesthesia: the sight of the black body hanging from a tree, the smell of the burning bodies of the victims as well as the sweet and fresh scent of the magnolia blossoms, and the physical sensations created by the "Southern breeze" and the sucking of the wind.¹⁶

This is about as far as a formal analysis and interpretation of the poem can carry us. In fact, my observations have already ventured beyond formally analyzing and interpreting the poem. Maybe teachers could encourage and enable students to formulate at least some of the insights provided above if they approached the poem exclusively on a cognitive level. I believe, however, that we would take away much of its emotional power if we confined our analysis to the introduction of analytical concepts (poetic structure, stylistic devices, speech situation, etc.) and terminology (stanza, rhyming couplets, lyric I and lyric thou, synesthesia, etc.). Only when students begin to dig more deeply into the cultural poetics of lynching by looking beyond the poem at other historical and creative engagements with lynching will they be able to understand its social energy and evocative power. Why, we should ask, does Meeropol make reference to magnolia blossoms, and not to other plants native to the South? Why does he refer to the South as pastoral and gallant? How widespread were lynchings, and how did people defend or attack this extralegal practice of executing African Americans? How did historical readers of the 1930s respond to this poem? To which extent is the poem typical or atypical of literary and popular representations of lynching?

A first step toward answering these and similar questions is to look at the processes of adaptation that shape Billie Holiday's multiple performances of "Strange Fruit," which she once called her "personal protest" against lynching (qtd. in Davis 181). While the poem itself is already charged with emotional images, Holiday's adaptations foreground a personal involvement with the poetics of lynching that is useful for didactic purposes because it anticipates the students' potential reactions to the material. In addition, by personalizing Meeropol's poem—Holiday personifies the empirical and implied author—and by adding an autobiographical di-

¹⁶ Note also the eminence of colors: red (blood), black (skin color, crows), white (magnolia blossom), and—only implied—blue (the mood of the poem, the sadness of the blues). These colors connect the black speaker and the lynching victims of the poem to the American flag and thus foreground the discrepancy between national ideas and the realities of lynching.

mension to the otherwise anonymous mise-en-scène, Holiday's renditions of "Strange Fruit" remediate the poem in ways that will offer students a variety of new perspectives on its form and structure as well as on its manifold cultural implications.¹⁷

So how does the process of adaptation as remediation work, and how can Holiday's performances of "Strange Fruit" shed new light on Meeropol's poem? First of all, the indistinct speech situation of the poem is dramatically changed in the vocal performance. When Holiday began to perform the song for politically progressive audiences at the Café Society in New York in 1939, the submerged lyric I of the poem was substituted by the person of Billie Holiday herself, who enunciated the words to a group of lyric thous physically present. This is a complex idea: while Holiday sticks to the lyrics and thus neither speaks of herself in the first person singular ("I") nor addresses her audience in the second person plural ("you"), the sound of her voice and her physical presence express a black "I" that sings to a racially integrated audience and thus provides the victims of the lynching with a voice.¹⁸

When we listen to Holiday's recordings of the tune, the connection between performer and audience is obviously less immediate, but it shapes our reception nonetheless. The performance may be historical (and thus already over), but the medium of sound recording brings it to us as it is unfolding in time. Furthermore, photographs, images, and liner notes compel us to reconstruct Holiday's stage presence, and they entice us to connect Holiday's historical performance with our own cultural predispositions and reactions as listeners of the twenty-first century. That Holiday had planned to echo the poem by titling her autobiography *Bitter Crop* (and not *Lady Sings the Blues*) and that she used the autobiography to explain her personal connection to the song illustrates the powerful impact this musical piece had on her career as well as her popular reception.¹⁹

¹⁷ Hutcheon speaks of remediation (see xv) as well as of transposition and transcoding (see 7).

¹⁸ In addition, audiences are faced with an interracial transposition. Abel Meeropol's cultural background was revealed as Eastern European (and possibly Jewish) when the poem was published under his birth name in *The New York Teacher*, but it became Americanized when he published the song under the pseudonym Lewis Allan. When Holiday sings the song, however, the narrative perspective is undoubtedly African American.

¹⁹ In *Lady Sings the Blues*, Holiday recalls: "The germ of the song was a poem by Lewis Allen [sic]. I first met him at Café Society. When he showed me that poem, I dug it right off. It seemed to spell out all the things that had killed Pop" (84). The actual circumstances of her father's death are murky. Jazz historians maintain that Clarence Holiday died of a lung disease because he was treated inadequately in a racially segregated hospital in Texas (see Davis 187; Margolick 17; O'Meally 136, 138).

As a jazz singer, Holiday was known for her ability to twist and tweak the melodies of songs she performed. Her interpretations of "Strange Fruit," David Margolick has argued, enabled her to "own" the song in a way that indelibly connected her voice and persona with Meeropol's music and lyrics (see 11). An exemplary analysis of Holiday's adaptations shall reveal the processes through which she attained metaphorical ownership of the poem.²⁰ In the 1939 recording, the overall mood is established by the musical accompaniment (muted trumpet, alto sax, tenor sax, piano, guitar, bass, and drums), which creates an elegiac atmosphere of mourning through the slow ballad tempo, the restrained volume of the introduction and interludes, and the brooding tone of the ensemble playing in the verses. What we have here is a musical representation of the poem's setting that reiterates the contrast between the "Pastoral scene of the gallant South" (the music has a pastoral quality) and the sight of the lynching (Holiday describing the scene) but also points to the poetic subgenre of "Strange Fruit" more decisively than the poem itself: the funereal atmosphere of the music suggests the poetic form of the elegy.²¹

Holiday's vocals may be described as both intensely personal and eerily restrained. The fact alone that the words of the poem follow a specific melody (in B-flat minor) gives them a sound and shape different from the printed words on the page. The way Holiday delays phrases like "bulging eyes" and "twisted mouth" reinforces the horror of the scene. It seems as if she is unable to sing them on the beat because she is so deeply stunned by what she is witnessing that verbal expression cannot keep up with the regular progression of time. By singing the phrases "laid back," Holiday creates a swinging sensation that transliterates the visual image of the swinging body to musical expression. In terms of the adaptive process, the performance moves from the mode of telling (poem) to the mode of showing (interactive, physical/kinetic live performance) and involves a transition from the poem's relative temporal indeterminacy (the reader decides on the speed with which he or she reads the poem) to music's progression in real time.

²⁰ Holiday claims in her autobiography that Meeropol (as Lewis Allan) wrote the poem but that she and her piano player Sonny White composed the music with the help of arranger Danny Mendelsohn (see 84). Critical consensus now holds that Meeropol composed both the lyrics and the music but that the song has become so closely associated with Holiday's renditions that her claim to ownership makes sense on a metaphorical level.

²¹ Chilton hears "Strange Fruit" as an "agonizing recital of the aftermath of a lynching" (liner notes 8). Katz's documentary refers to "Strange Fruit" as "elegiac and a song of mourning."

In the BBC telecast of 1959, Holiday's vocal inflections are supported by facial expressions that mimic the twisted mouth of the lynched man and substitute his bulging eyes with the singer's graceful opening and closing of her eyes, which signify the painfulness of the subject matter and communicate a depth of feeling in visual terms.²² Vocal inflections in the 1939 version include the descending note in "sweet and fresh," which contrasts the positive image of the fresh magnolia blossom with a bluesy downheartedness; the subtle vibrato and the melisma in "Southern breeze," which evoke the physical sensation of the wind and the swinging movement of the lynched body; the increased volume in "For the sun to rot," which indicates an imminent climax and is followed by a pause (the music stops; the caesura prepares for the delivery of the final line); the climactic rendition of "drop," which is extended over several beats and ends in a descending note that suggests the image of the wasted body dropping from the tree; and the enunciation of the final word "crop," which recalls the victim's screams and is visualized by Holiday's body language in the telecast, where her mouth is wide open and her head faces upwards, as if dangling from a rope tied to the poplar tree of the lyrics.²³

Much more could be said about Holiday's vocal performance—for instance that the crackling of the needle over the shellac which digital mastering technology was unable to eliminate inscribes a specific historical mediality and materiality. But at this point I want to contextualize my previous analysis with another adaptation of the song recorded in 1956. Here, we encounter a very different singer. Holiday is in her early forties now (she was 24 in 1939), and she has endured more than a decade of spousal abuse and drug addiction. Listening to this recording, we immediately recognize that her voice has grown frail and that the restrained delivery of the earlier recording has given way to an agonizingly raw tone and a more reflective stance toward the material she is performing. Moments in which the performance is clearly marked as a new adaptation of the poem include Holiday's pained intonation of "bear" and "burning," the slight cracking of her voice in "gallant South," and the languid enunciation of a Southern ac-

²² Margolick notes that many of Holiday's contemporaries recounted how she seemed to enter "into a world of her own" when she sang the song (88). This is visualized in the BBC telecast, where Holiday rejects the black performer's traditional role as an entertainer. She does not move around on stage and does not acknowledge the camera, which stays focused on her face and upper body throughout the entire performance.

²³ See Margolick, who writes that "the intensity mounts until she reaches the word 'crop,' which dangles for a time back and forth on a strangely unresolved note like the dead man on the branch" (48). Benny Green speaks of Holiday's "feeling for a dying cadence" (qtd. in Margolick 62).

cent in the phrase "an' the twisted mouth." Not only has Holiday become a more self-controlled singer, but her attitude toward the lynching depicted in the poem seems to have changed as well. If the 1939 version remained wholly within the elegiac mode, the 1956 version foregrounds an attitude of incredulity about the continued practice of lynching in the 1950s despite the early successes of the civil rights movement.²⁴ In 1955, only a year before Holiday recorded the song, the fourteen-year-old African American Emmett Till was brutally lynched in Mississippi because he had allegedly wolf-whistled at a white woman.

Holiday's subtle vocal techniques and her strategic deviations from the scripted melody make the most of this difficult song.²⁵ But if we go beyond formal musical analysis and consider the effects of her performances, we will quickly recognize the song's potential for controversy. As Angela Davis writes: "'Strange Fruit' is a song that poses serious problems for its singer. Its metaphors are so forceful that an overly dramatic rendition might have transformed its powerful emotional content into histrionics" (194). The difficulty, then, was to communicate the song's painful subject matter without degrading the humanity of those lynched by abusing them as simple source material for a popular song or by turning the performance into a melodramatic spectacle. "If those who were touched by 'Strange Fruit' were left feeling pity for black victims of racism instead of compassion and solidarity," Davis maintains, "this pity would have recapitulated rather than contested the dynamics of racism" (194). The divided reactions of jazz critics illustrate the thin line between an excessively sentimental rendition, which may offer emotional relief by allowing listeners to undergo a cathartic experience of virtual suffering, and a sociopolitical statement that confronts listeners with their own complicity in the Southern lynching regime (i. e., lynching as an American problem, not merely a Southern peculiarity) and motivates political engagement without pandering to the theatrics of agitprop. As Barry Ulanov put it, Holiday "was not [...] simply making a social or political plea," but "[s]he was saying something

²⁴ Among the early successes of the civil rights movement one could discuss in class are the U.S. Supreme Court decision on racial integration in the educational system (*Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka*, 1954) and the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott initiated by Rosa Parks and supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

²⁵ It might also be a good idea to include a music teacher in the classroom activities (i. e., "fächerübergreifender Unterricht" [teaching across subjects]). Students could analyze the composition with their music teacher; learning and performing the song in a choir (perhaps with musical accompaniment) could facilitate an affective and emotive understanding of the material.

in her own complex way” (qtd. in Margolick 37). Yet the singer’s white sponsor John Hammond strongly disliked “Strange Fruit” because he preferred his black artists to be unmannered, unintellectual, and apolitical. Her record company, Columbia, refused to let her record the song, and the project only came to fruition because the Jewish record producer Milt Gabler organized the session and released the record on his Commodore label. What is more, the influential jazz critic Martin Williams spoke of the song as “[m]oving propaganda, perhaps, but not poetry and not art” (qtd. in Margolick 60). The controversy regarding the artistic value of Holiday’s performances, which is recounted in great detail in Margolick’s *Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song* (2000), presents an ideal basis for class activities (for example a mock television debate: MTV goes political) and writing assignments (an argumentative essay).

These struggles over the historical significance and artistic value of “Strange Fruit” can only be comprehended adequately once we move from formal to cultural analysis. This kind of analysis demands an involvement with the song and its cultural politics and poetics. One way to get involved would be to investigate the popular and critical reception of Holiday’s renditions; another way would be to examine the cultural moment in which the song was initially written and performed (in late-1930s New York; in a Depression-ridden and racially divided America; at a moment when many American Jews, including Meeropol, began to support the Communist Party). A third way would be to amend one’s formal interpretation of the performances with a biographical inquiry into Holiday’s life.²⁶ Moreover, in order to get an idea of what it would have meant for a young black jazz singer like Holiday to perform a song about lynching in the late 1930s, one should dig as deeply as possible into the intermedial cultural archive and seek to reconstruct the cultural poetics of lynching that encode the song and its performance with historical significances and social energies. The idea is to conduct a thick description of “Strange Fruit” in order to complicate our personal reactions to poem and music and provide a deeper sense of American cultural history, including an awareness of the pervasiveness of lynching (more than 3,000 lynchings are documented).²⁷

²⁶ Biographies of jazz musicians are notoriously tendentious and often hagiographical. In order to gain an adequately complex understanding of Holiday’s life, it will be useful to compare different Holiday biographies, especially the ones that carefully contextualize her life and draw on previously unpublished sources (see Blackburn, Griffin, O’Meally). Holiday’s autobiography was largely ghostwritten, which exemplifies the degree to which the singer’s life story was publicly mediated.

²⁷ For historical, sociocultural, and literary investigations of lynching, see Brundage, Carigan, Madison, Tolnay and Beck, Wood.

Suggestions for Teaching “Strange Fruit”

Despite the richness of cultural resonances of “Strange Fruit” and despite its intriguing structural and formal properties as poem and song, we need to ask ourselves whether it is suitable as a didactic tool in the EFL-classroom. I believe that it is, and this belief is supported by a recent textbook on *“Strange Fruit” and Other Songs: Cries for Social Consciousness and Civil Rights* (2009). The textbook, which was edited by Iris Edelbrock for the “EinFach Englisch: Unterrichtsmodelle” series of the Schöningh Verlag, includes a host of historical and literary sources about lynching that contextualize the song and poem, biographical information on Meeropol and Holiday, exercises for classroom use, sample exams, and a CD with musical adaptations of the song (by Holiday and other artists). While this textbook is a treasure trove for those interested in teaching “Strange Fruit,” it does not specifically address the didactic concerns and considerations teachers of the poem and performance confront. Moreover, since it is a textbook, it does not make its didactic premises and aims explicit, which is why I want to use the remainder of this essay to supply the necessary theoretical and practical observations.

Rock and pop songs, teaching methodologists have noted, are useful as authentic sources for the EFL-classroom because they appeal to the students’ emotional and affective senses, and therefore offer an intimate musical experience. As didactic tools, they also provide incentives for class discussion and activities (see Timm 178). While jazz recordings may seem to be less useful since they might sound old-fashioned and thus irrelevant to most students, I am confident that a recording such as “Strange Fruit,” with its somber mood, heightened emotions (Holiday’s inflections and timbre), and expressive lyrics (especially the extended metaphor of the strange fruit but also its strong emphasis on the visual effects of lynching) can appeal to young listeners unfamiliar with this style of music. Like other authentic media, musical recordings have to be defamiliarized if they are to be used productively in a learning environment, and the fact that jazz will already sound unfamiliar to many students may actually reinforce the music’s value as a didactic tool.²⁸ In addition, watching Holiday’s performances on video, researching her life story, and investigating the history of lynching should suffice to spark student interest.

The cultural and sociopolitical relevance of “Strange Fruit” is relatively easy to demonstrate. *Time Magazine* selected Meeropol’s composition as

²⁸ Timm distinguishes between a mood-oriented and sentimental-associative form of *hearing* music and a more self-reflexive and self-aware practice of *listening* to music (see 178).

the song of the century in its final December 1999 issue. What is more, as the first popular song recorded by an American artist that expressed an overtly critical stance against racism, “Strange Fruit” foreshadowed and made possible the protest music of the civil rights movement, such as Nina Simone’s “Mississippi Goddamn” (1964, *Live and Kickin’*, CD, Synergie OMP 2001) and Max Roach/Abbey Lincoln’s *Freedom Now Suite* (1960, CD, Candid n. date). As part of a teaching unit on the American Dream, “Strange Fruit” could be used to introduce and contextualize Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech (1963), Lorraine Hansberry’s play *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), and Langston Hughes’s poem “Harlem” (“What Happens to a Dream Deferred?” 1951).²⁹ Moreover, Joel Katz’s documentary makes a most effective plea for the currency of the images and messages transported by “Strange Fruit.” The film ends with Cassandra Wilson’s live performance of the tune, which is interspersed with images from our present time that connect the theme of “Strange Fruit” with instances of racially and sexually motivated violence such as the killing of James Byrd, Jr., in Jasper, Texas; the homophobic murder of Matthew Shepard; the shooting of Ahmed Diallo by a member of the New York City Police Department; and a post-9/11 placard that reads “Avenge USA—kill a Muslim now!”³⁰

The poem and song versions of “Strange Fruit” are obviously short enough to allow an in-depth formal analysis as well as culture-oriented student-centered activities. Apart from discussing poetry and song lyrics, teachers could introduce—or have students select among—various intertexts and intermedia (all adaptations in one way or another): Chris Abani’s recent poem of the same title (*Callaloo* 26.3 [2003]: 708) or Lillian Smith’s novel (1944) and play (1945) of the same title (both of which were inspired by Holiday’s recording of the song); the many adaptations of “Strange Fruit” by other musicians (including a powerful version by Nina Simone³¹); as well as paintings and sculptures inspired by Holiday’s performances of the song or by the practice of lynching more generally.³² Two documentaries

about the song, by Joel Katz and Daniel Weidlein respectively, provide additional material. Katz’s one-hour film includes Holiday’s BBC performance as well as renditions of the song by other artists, interviews with cultural historians and eye-witnesses (including Meeropol’s sons and Milt Gabler), as well as a selection of visual representations of lynching (photographs, paintings, sculptures, political cartoons). Weidlein’s ten-minute documentary (2006; available on YouTube) is especially interesting because Weidlein is an American high school student whose engagement with the issue of lynching in poem and song illustrates the potential of student-centered activities.

As pre-reading and pre-listening exercises, several options promise rewarding results: a brainstorming session on the title (also: creating a mind map), sketching the title (i. e., drawing “strange fruits”), and responding verbally to visual prompts (a painting or an image of a sculpture depicting a lynching; a photograph of Holiday).³³ It will be important to activate existing semantic fields and work toward new ones (including technical terms and concepts of poetry analysis already covered in German or earlier English classes). In order to further pique the students’ interest, it might be helpful to listen to jazz recordings from the 1930s (Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Count Basie). One could also contrast the somber mood and subject matter of “Strange Fruit” by comparing it to “Fine and Mellow,” the bluesy love lament that made up the original B-side of “Strange Fruit.” Since narrative texts are generally considered more accessible than poetry, one could also read selections from Holiday’s autobiography as a warm-up exercise. Yet another option would be to play the brief spoken reminiscence by African American singer and songwriter Bill Withers that introduces Marcus Miller’s recording of “Strange Fruit” (*Tales*, CD, PRA 1995). Withers recalls the fear he felt as he was traveling at night in the Deep South around 1955 and was stopped by a mob of Ku Klux Klan members.

Turning to while-reading and while-listening activities, the central question is in which order poem and song are introduced. I would suggest introducing the song first since its elegiac mood and Holiday’s voice will most likely produce a more emotional response than the poem. The idea

²⁹ Edelbrock makes additional suggestions: Erskine Caldwell’s short story “The End of Christy Tucker” (1940), Langston Hughes’s narrative poem “The Bitter River” (1942/1943), and Claude McKay’s poem “The Lynching” (1922).

³⁰ An interesting student project could be to conduct a comparative musical and cultural analysis of “Strange Fruit” and Bruce Springsteen and the E-Street Band’s “American Skin (41 Shots),” which memorializes Diallo (*Live in New York City*, CD, Columbia 2001).

³¹ Nina Simone, “Strange Fruit” (1965; *Pastel Blues*, CD, Verve 2006).

³² Many of these paintings and sculptures are featured in Katz’s documentary, which is distributed as a DVD by Klett and which includes a segment on American high school students discussing the poem. The DVD also comes with a list of key terms and web links. The biopic about Holiday’s life, *Lady Sings the Blues* (dir. Sidney J. Furie, 1972),

presents a naively autobiographical motivation behind Holiday’s renditions of “Strange Fruit.” Students could watch the movie and discuss its myth-making strategies. Watching *Mississippi Burning* (dir. Allen Parker, 1988) and relating it to “Strange Fruit” could also produce valuable insights.

³³ On pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities, see also Nünning/Surkamp, *Englische Literatur* 82.

is to make poetry come alive for the students, and as Elijah Wald remarks pointedly: “When Billie sings it, you feel as if you’re at the foot of the tree” (qtd. in Margolick 78). In order to facilitate the students’ understanding of the lyrics, exercises such as filling in blanks and identifying semantic fields (nature imagery vs. references to the human body, for instance) could be used as a first step toward formal analysis. Once the students have successfully reconstructed the poem and are familiar with its subject matter, I would suggest a series of reading exercises (training pronunciation and intonation) as well as creative activities as part of which students are asked to dramatize their oral delivery of the poem.³⁴

In terms of formal analysis, I think that it makes little sense to give students a list of analytical terms and ask them to apply these terms in their encounter with the text. The poem’s formal structure (quatrains, rhyming couplets, etc.) and stylistic devices (anaphora, synesthesia, etc.) can be recognized without knowledge of the actual terms, and students can be asked to research the technical terms on their own (the teacher might provide handbooks or suggest useful Internet sites). Concerning musical analysis, one of the most daunting tasks will be to find an appropriate language with which to discuss Holiday’s performances. While a basic musicological terminology will be helpful (vibrato, melisma, inflection), finding personal and emotional access by developing one’s own language (i. e., sad, touching, heart-wrenching) may be more effective because it allows a more affective response to the music. In terms of cultural analysis, the project of detection is best begun on the Internet. Google searches on “Billie Holiday,” “Abel Meeropol,” “Strange Fruit,” and “lynching” will produce a gamut of textual, visual, and aural material that can serve as the basis for the students’ more sustained critical engagement with the issues. Library search engines will also unearth valuable secondary sources, which can be used for oral representations and research projects.

The options for post-reading and post-listening activities are plentiful. Initial reactions can be put to paper by a free writing exercise in which students write down their spontaneous thoughts after having listened to the recording. Another option would be to present a series of images and ask students to identify the image they think expresses their understanding of the poem/song lyrics best: Southern trees, a Klan rally, Martin Luther King, or even Barack Obama are possible examples (see Edelbrock for further suggestions and visual sources). Ideas for creative projects are easy to

³⁴ It might be a good idea to tape these oral deliveries and compare the results with Abbey Lincoln’s recitation of the poem in the Katz documentary (she is on the verge of crying when she finishes).

come by, especially once we think of them in terms of adaptations: writing a court scene during which the lynch mob is brought to justice, writing newspaper articles about the lynching (from both pro-lynching and anti-lynching standpoints), rewriting the poem from the perspective of a pro-lynching Southerner, or rewriting the poem as a short story. Additional activities may include writing a CD review, creating a cover design for a reissue of “Strange Fruit,” composing a letter to Congress lobbying for federal anti-lynching legislation, and making a music video.

The objective of all of these efforts, as outlined at the beginning of this essay, is to help bring about a cognitive *and* an affective understanding of racial injustice and violence. As David Margolick’s reference to “Strange Fruit” as an example of “the redemptive, ameliorative power of art” (6) suggests, Holiday’s adaptation of the poem is suited especially well for a didactics of intercultural understanding. The words with which actress Billie Allen Henderson describes her reactions to Holiday’s performance of the song at the Birdland club in 1952 emphasize Holiday’s ability to create empathy and a sense of intercultural understanding (here: between a white and a black American woman): “I was trying to be sophisticated and all of a sudden something stabs me in the solar plexus and I was gasping for air. It was so deeply felt. I understood it. I understood it. I could smell the burning flesh” (qtd. in Margolick 92–93). Yet lest we succumb to the lure of a sentimental cleansing, we should realize that audiences can exhaust themselves in the act of consumption: “It was thrilling. That song was bloodcurdling and wonderful and she did it so beautifully,” one of the audience members of Café Society recalled (qtd. in Margolick 40), reverting to a register of language that privileges the pleasures of virtual suffering (“wonderful,” “so beautifully”) and travels to the bloody roots of the poplar tree in order to enjoy a “thrilling” and bloodcurdling” spectacle. The “bloodcurdling” and “thrilling” effects of Holiday’s performances of “Strange Fruit” can certainly be used as a didactic tool. Students will be compelled to confront the horrors of lynching emotively and affectively, and they will possibly adopt Holiday’s perspective: they will most likely empathize with the victims of the lynching. But in order to prevent a naïve and sentimental notion of cultural understanding, students must eventually learn to venture beyond this emotive/affective experience, to act as cultural *detectives* and conduct a fuller and thicker investigation of poem and performance as part of an intermedial cultural poetics of lynching.

Works Cited

- Baßler, Moritz. *Die kulturpoetische Funktion und das Archiv: Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Text-Kontext-Theorie*. Tübingen: Francke, 2005.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image—Music—Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill, 1977.
- Blackburn, Julia. *With Billie: A New Look at the Unforgettable Lady Day*. New York: Vintage, 2006.
- Brundage, W. Fitzhugh, ed. *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Carrigan, William D., ed. *Lynching Reconsidered: New Perspectives in the Study of Mob Violence*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Chilton, John. Liner Notes. *Lady Sings the Blues: Billie Holiday Verve Story* Vol. 4. CD. Verve/Polygram, 1995. 3–8.
- Collie, Joanne, and Stephen Slater. *Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities*. 1987. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Coogan, Michael D., gen. ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. 3rd. ed. New Revised Standard Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. New York: Pantheon, 1998.
- Delanoy, Werner, and Laurenz Volkmann, ed. *Cultural Studies in the EFL Classroom*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2006.
- Donnerstag, Jürgen, and Laurenz Volkmann, ed. *Media and American Studies in the EFL-Classroom*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2008.
- Edelbrock, Iris, ed. *"Strange Fruit" and Other Songs: Cries for Social Consciousness and Civil Rights*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2009.
- Eliot, T. S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." 1915. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Vol. 2. 4th ed. Ed. Nina Baym et al. New York: Norton, 1994. 1260–63.
- Freese, Peter. "American Studies and EFL-Teaching in Germany: A Troubled Relationship." *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 50.1/2 (2005): 183–229.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. 1973. New York: Basic, 2000.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. "Culture." 1990. Rpt. in Michael Payne, ed. *The Greenblatt Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. 11–17.
- . *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988.
- Griffin, Farah Jasmine. *In Search of Billie Holiday: If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery*. New York: Ballantine, 2001.
- Holiday, Billie, with William Dufty. *Lady Sings the Blues*. 1956. London: Penguin, 1992.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Katz, Joel, dir. *Strange Fruit*. DVD. California Newsreel/PBS, 2002.
- Madison, James H. *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America*. New York: Palgrave/St. Martin's, 2001.
- Margolick, David. *Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song*. 2000. New York: Ecco/HarperCollins, 2001.
- Montrose, Louis. "New Historicisms." *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn. New York: MLA, 1992. 392–418.
- Nünning, Ansgar, and Carola Surkamp. *Englische Literatur unterrichten: Grundlagen und Methoden*. Seelze: Kallmeyer/Klett, 2006.
- . "Text—Literatur—Kultur: Handlungs- und produktionsorientierter Literaturunterricht." *Englischunterricht*. Ed. Gerhard Bach and Johannes-Peter Timm. 3rd ed. Tübingen: Francke, 2003. 149–71.
- O'Meally, Robert. *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday*. New York: Arcade, 1991.
- Pramuk, Christopher. "'Strange Fruit': Black Suffering/White Revelation." *Theological Studies* 67.2 (2006): 345–77.
- Singer, Milton. *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization*. New York: Praeger, 1972.
- Stein, Daniel. "American Cultural Studies, Media Studies, and Intercultural Competence: Morgan Spurlock's *30 Days* as Educational Resource and Didactic Model." *Education and the USA*. Ed. Laurenz Volkmann. Heidelberg: Winter, 2011. 207–26.
- . "From Text-Centered Intermediality to Cultural Intermediality; or, How to Make Intermedia Studies More Cultural." *American Studies as Media Studies*. Ed. Frank Kelleter and Daniel Stein. Heidelberg: Winter, 2008. 181–90.
- Thielking, Sigrid. "Lernen oder Studieren? Überlegungen zur universitären Ausbildung in Sachen Literaturvermittlung." *Literatur—Lehren—Lernen: Hochschuldidaktik und germanistische Literaturwissenschaft*. Ed. Susanne Hochreiter and Ursula Klingeböck. Wien: Böhlau, 2006. 55–71.
- Timm, Johannes-P. "Pop- und Rocksongs als 'Lernschrittmacher.'" *Englisch lernen und lehren*. Ed. Johannes-P. Timm. Berlin: Cornelsen, 1998. 178–84.