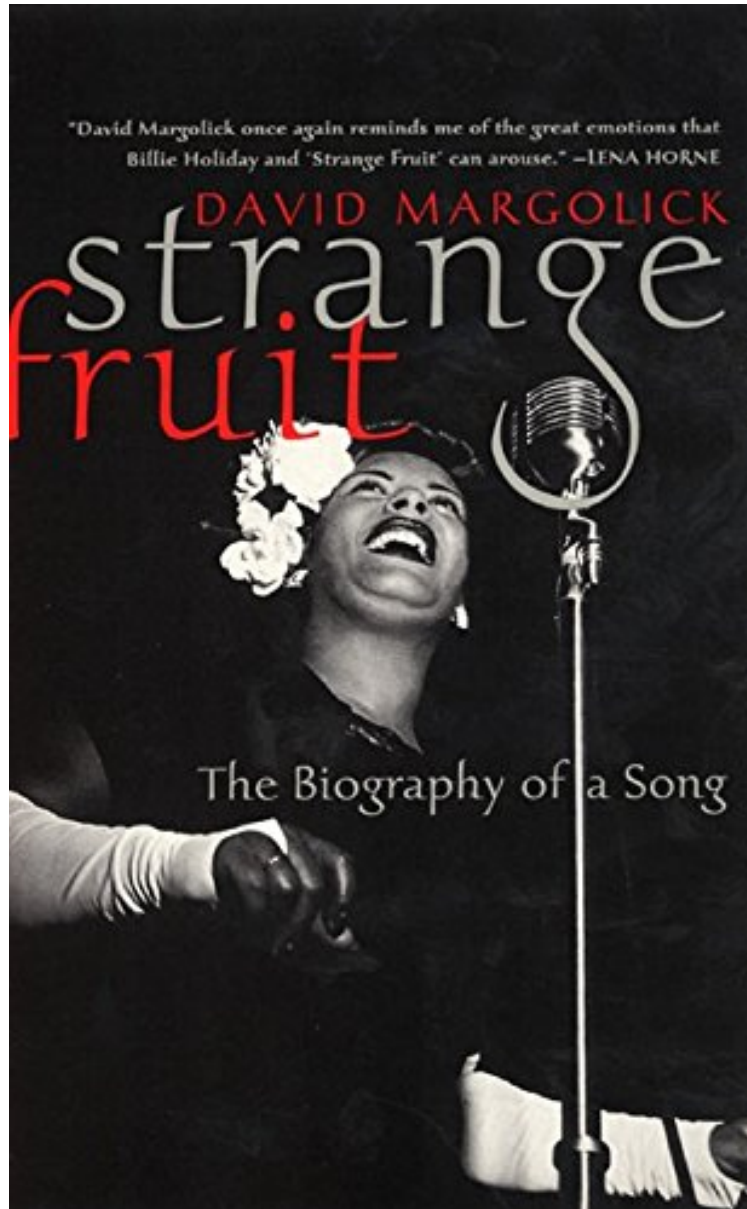


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## Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song

*David Margolick, Hilton Als*

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#148621 in Books David Margolick 2001-01-23 2001-01-23Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x .38 x 5.311, .33 #File Name: 0060959568168 pagesStrange Fruit The Biography of a Song | File size: 56.Mb

**David Margolick, Hilton Als : Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Truth is stranger than fiction!!By The DudeA fascinating story about one of the most fascinating and important songs ever written."Strange Fruit", without being tiresome or pedantic in

any way, insidiously and irresistibly gave a major boost to the nascent Civil Rights Movement through the seductive medium of song. People who would never have listened to any graphic recounting of the truly ghastly horrors of America's history of racial atrocities, were beguiled by this seemingly strange and innocent little ditty. Made famous by a very reluctant blues legend, Billie Holiday in 1939; "Strange Fruit" had an even stranger origin. The book itself is fascinating, yet short; bursting with a creation story that surely suggests the hand of a much higher inspiration than ever inspired a blues song, ever. After you read this fascinating little primer, you will never ever listen to this song the same way!!! Definitely a must-have book for serious collectors of cultural and socially significant esoterica. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "There was a certain willful purpose when she sang that tune." (p.102) By Eddie Hutchinson Abel Meeropol, white Jewish schoolteacher in New York City, after being so moved by an image of a lynching (speculated that the photo is the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith in Marion Indiana) wrote a poem about it. After being set to music, Meeropol's poem became the song ultimately known as Strange Fruit. The song was played for jazz singer, Billie Holiday, and she sung it for the first time in front of an audience in 1939. Billie said she was nervous at first and "...was scared people would hate it." But from that point on, Strange Fruit and Billie Holiday became intertwined in jazz history. Sure, others sang it, others certainly tried, but no one could sing it like Billie Holiday: "When Billie sings it, you feel as if you're at the foot of the tree." p.78 "Not only did you see the 'fruit' evoked in all its graphic horror, but you saw in Billie Holiday the wife or sister or mother of one of the victims beneath the tree, almost prostrate with sorrow and fury..." p.76-77 "...and with every defeat she suffered, with every additional increment of abuse she endured or inflicted upon herself, the more personal the song came to seem. The confidence with which she'd first sung it gave way to pure pathos." p.89-90 According to Meeropol, who heard her sing the song, said: "She gave a startling, most dramatic and effective interpretation, which could jolt an audience out of its complacency anywhere[sic]." p.305 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Short... But Worth the Read By Franklin Johnson 'Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song' does a great job of dispelling the myths about the song and pinpointing the truth about one of the most famous American songs of the 20th century. Not only that but it also does a great job at pin-pointing why the song still has a shroud of mystery about it, and how it impacted generations of African-Americans and whites. It seems like a bit of light reading, but since the song is an important one, the book is a gem.

Recorded by jazz legend Billie Holiday in 1939, "Strange Fruit" is considered to be the first significant song of the civil rights movement and the first direct musical assault upon racial lynchings in the South. Originally sung in New York's Cafe Society, these revolutionary lyrics take on a life of their own in this revealing account of the song and the struggle it personified. Strange Fruit not only chronicles the civil rights movement from the '30s on, it examines the lives of the beleaguered Billie Holiday and Abel Meeropol, the white Jewish schoolteacher and communist sympathizer who wrote the song that would have an impact on generations of fans, black and white, unknown and famous, including performers Lena Horne, Eartha Kitt, and Sting.

"Show-stopper. To hear Billie Holiday sing 'Strange Fruit' was to be forever haunted. Like Holiday's performance, Margolick's book is understated but intense, suffused with grace, power and dignity. It works on several levels: as tribute, elegy, homage and cultural history." -- "New York Times Book" "Margolick recreates the tense web of bitterness, guilt, denial and anger that surrounds Holiday's charged performances of 'Strange Fruit.' With thorough research and the smooth writing of a journalist, Margolick has produced a superb piece of cultural history." -- "Publishers Weekly" ["Strange Fruit"], written by an outstanding journalist, David Margolick (New York Times; Vanity Fair), is a fast and fascinating read. It is written with great sincerity and dedication. This book will evoke stirring images of Ms. Holiday and the emerging jazz scene. It will also provide another link showing how modern jazz emerged in tandem with the Civil Rights movement, and how music can be a powerful political statement." -- "allaboutjazz.com" "With reportorial finesse, Margolick also restores 'Strange Fruit' to its deserved stature in the public consciousness as a piece of shocking reportage--a dispatch from battlefields where the price of racism and ignorance was tallied in blood." -- "Boston Globe" "Margolick has nonetheless performed a valuable service: by illuminating the importance of this one song, he has captured an era in microcosm." -- "The Providence Sunday Journal" "For jazz buffs and anyone interested in popular culture, this slender book by Margolick offers several surprises and revelations within its pages... This is indeed a job well done." -- "Book Page" "Strange Fruit explores how just 12 lines of lyrics and an unobtrusive score captivated nightclub audiences, terrified promoters and radio stations, and inspired activists in the 1940s... The effect of Margolick's storytelling technique is nearly as powerful as the song itself, employing the veneer of art to convey a very harsh reality." -- "Baltimore City Paper" "David Margolick's brief account of how 'Strange Fruit' came to be written and first performed is timely and illuminating." -- "Ottawa Citizen" "David Margolick takes us back to that time and makes a persuasive case for the importance of that performance--not just musically but socially as well. Small though it is, 'Strange Fruit' is an outsized piece of reporting and a satisfying work of history." -- "Legal Times" "The biography of a song is an intriguing project, and David Margolick carries it off, fitting great masses of musical and social history into a tiny volume." -- "City Paper" "Margolick presents a quick, fluent survey of the times and characters that formed

'Strange Fruit'--a song that inspired and enraged many listeners in those days before the Civil Rights movement and changed Holiday as a performer."--"Library Journal"Margolick does an admirable job of disentangling the myths Holiday wove about herself."--"National "Strange Fruit sets the record straight with some fascinating background to go along with it...it is a quick read of a story that has to be told."--"Billboard"David Margolick offers an absorbing history and analysis of the song."--"Sunday Sun, Toronto"David Margolick's exceptional book, "Strange Fruit, is a biography of an extraordinary work, the singer who made it famous and its sustaining impact as one of the great protest songs of the 20th Century."--"MiamiHerald"Margolick has actually created a snapshot of a particular moment in time when jazz, social discontent, and fashionable liberalism came memorably together."--"Sunday RecordAbout the AuthorDavid Margolick is a contributor to Vanity Fair and the former National Legal Affairs Editor for the New York Times. A four-time Pulitzer Prize nominee, he is the author of Undue Influence and At the Bar. He lives in New York City.