

Lady Day on Screen: What can the divided reception of *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* (2021) tell us about the malleability of posthumous fame?

Alice Masterson

University of York

alice.masterson@york.ac.uk

Abstract

Jazz singer Billie Holiday (1915 – 1959) is a hugely influential figure. The impact of her vocal craft – particularly her distinctive timbre, adroit use of rubato, and compellingly emotional interpretations – can be traced across subsequent generations of singers (Szwed 2015). However, details of her turbulent personal life often overshadow explorations of her musical legacy. The most recent depiction of Lady Day's life on screen, Lee Daniels' *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*, is arguably the latest retrospective to fall into this trap. However, this article argues that its mixed reception might be indicative of a small but significant alteration in how Holiday's life and work are understood. Drawing on critical reactions to the film, it explores the ways in which a narrative shift in storytelling around Holiday can be identified, and how this can contribute to our understanding of the malleability of the posthumous legacies of iconic musicians.

KEYWORDS: Billie Holiday, *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*, posthumous fame, biopics, biography.

Introduction

Media coverage of Billie Holiday's life has long been condensed into a few broad themes: the jazz singer with the striking voice; born into poverty; plagued by racism, alcoholism, drug addiction, and domestic abuse; culminating in a tragic early death. When Holiday's life is summarised into broad-brush strokes like this, the public discourse surrounding her becomes simplified and frequently

reductive, and there is a tendency to prioritise tawdry details over exploration of musical legacy.

Mediated retrospectives often depict Holiday as a passive figure without autonomy. As Farah Jasmine Griffin has pointed out, “[i]mages of Holiday that insist upon her tragedy, sexuality and appetites sustain and reproduce ideologies of black womanhood and of jazz music” (2001: 33). Framing Holiday’s personal travails centrally within her story is not only reductive but has harmful implications for Black women as it is based on and perpetuates a stereotype of tragedy and trauma. Angela Davis has similarly illustrated how “[t]he most common portraits of Billie Holiday highlight drug addiction, alcoholism, feminine weakness, depression, lack of formal education, and other difficulties unrelated to her contributions as an artist” (1998: 184). For Griffin, the rendering of “Holiday as tragic victim helps to contain and control black women who are multidimensional, talented and ambitious” (2001: 33). Formulations that frame her solely in terms of victimhood thus serve broader ideological functions by preserving limiting notions of Black womanhood. Another purpose of these framings, as I have argued elsewhere, is to neutralise the peril of “transgressive” femininity (Masterson 2022). During the Jazz Age, a female drug addict was commonly perceived to be more “deviant” than a male one (Shapiro 1988: 83) and there is evidence to suggest that alcoholism and drug abuse continue to be considered especially publicly unacceptable for women (Berkers and Eeckelaer 2014; Bogren 2008; Oksanen 2017). Public mediation of Holiday as helpless victim arguably diminishes her autonomy.

This article begins with a note on methodology, followed by a discussion of posthumous fame for female musicians. It lays out existing scholarship around Holiday and articles collected from newspaper archives from significant stages in her posthumous career to present some of the most common trends in life-writing around her. Finally, it will turn to the 2021 film and explore how its varied critical reception might mark an alteration in the mediated construction of Holiday’s posthumous legacy. After all, whilst the “complicated merging of truth and fiction ... [in] the popular music biopic reflects the socially constructed nature of stardom” (Marshall and Kongsgaard 2012: 346), so too do the ways in which audiences respond to them.

Methodology

In order to assess the shifting presentations of Holiday in the news media, I have collected a series of newspaper articles from across three significant points in her posthumous career this century: her 2000 entry into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the centenary year of her birth in 2015, and the release of *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* in 2021. I used the Nexis archive to source a maximum of fifty documents for each point on the timeline, which were then manually coded to extrapolate the most common themes. The method used adheres to the principles of critical discourse analysis (hereafter, CDA). Teun van Dijk has suggested that CDA be understood in terms of dominance, defined as “the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including ... gender inequality” (1993: 249-250). As many of the source materials collected constitute a removal of Holiday’s autonomy, I draw on

CDA to identify “what structures, strategies or other properties of text ... or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction” (ibid.: 250). One of the most significant themes to emerge from the documents collected was the interpretation of Holiday’s vocal timbre as exposing sadness and vulnerability, and the degradation of her voice over time as emblematic of her personal travails. This inextricable linking of the personal and the musical is arguably explicitly connected to Holiday’s womanhood. An understanding of this is aided by an understanding of the specific functions of posthumous fame for women.

Posthumous fame for women

There is an enduring power to an iconic musician’s posthumous legacy. Existing research demonstrates how fandom surrounding various dead musicians has helped consumers to assert individual and social identities (Cagle 2005), as well as national identities (Stengs 2015). Such legacies also frequently come to reflect ideas about morality (Penfold-Mounce 2018). Because the dead musician can no longer actively alter their public image, their image and its attendant meanings can be simplified (Strong and Lebrun 2015). As Joli Jensen has pointed out, “the posthumous celebrity is constrained by the ever-simplifying story hook he or she has become” (2005: xxi).

For female celebrities, this process becomes entangled with their womanhood. Ruth Penfold-Mounce’s research demonstrates how female celebrities are less profitable than their male counterparts, and their posthumous legacies are frequently entwined with their youth and beauty, or “bodily capital” (2019: 502). Similarly, existing literature demonstrates how female posthumous legacies become emblems of gendered issues such as motherhood (Hearsum 2015), “redemption for women in death” (Hearsum 2012: 192), and ideas about sexuality and passivity (Beltrán 2005; Bowers and Houston Grey 2005). For the drug-addicted female artist, already generally perceived to be more “deviant” than the drug-addicted male artist (Shapiro 1988: 83), their posthumous media treatment is particularly loaded. Exploring the “trainwreck” female celebrity phenomenon, Jude Doyle writes that death is “the one permanent form of redemption for the woman who is mad, bad, and dangerous to know” (2016: 94). Having transgressed the boundaries of femininity during their lifetimes, retrospective examinations can rationalise their behaviours by presenting them as intrinsically vulnerable and thus attenuating the threat of “deviant” female behaviour (Masterson 2022).

As stated in the introduction, Holiday’s legacy has become bound up with her personal life to the point where it dominates the public discourse around her. Discussions of her musical output have commonly forged links between it and her private persona, “as if the events of artists’ lives are enough to explain their music” (Szwed 2015: 4). Griffin describes how “the stories of her arrests and drug addictions joined with her stage persona of the torch singer to create a new image, that of the tragic, ever-suffering black woman who simply stands center stage and naturally sings of her woes” (2001: 31). This not only undermines Holiday’s successes but has broader social implications in “the way that one-dimensional images become naturalized so that we accept their inevitability” (ibid.: 33). The posthumous mediation of Holiday’s biography provides a particularly nefarious example of the malleability of an iconic musician’s

posthumous legacy and the social and political ends it can be manipulated into serving. One common method of framing Holiday's story so that it fits into such narratives concerns the meanings assigned to the sound of her voice.

The voice

Holiday's vocal stylings cast a long shadow over the music industry. She has long been admired for her vocal craft, particularly her deft use of rubato, her ability to unearth the emotion in a song and communicate it compellingly, and her striking timbre. However, the appeal of Holiday's voice has frequently been framed by commentators as an inherent quality rather than one arising from musical skill or creative interpretation. Most commonly, it is framed as an essential expression of her personal life. Nina Sun Eidsheim has devoted a chapter of her book *The Race of Sound* to Holiday, identifying this phenomenon as "one which reduces her subjectivity and artistic agency" (2019: 159). Emily J. Lordi argues that this discursive conflation of Holiday's voice and personal life is a prominent pop cultural myth that has partly to do with a need for cautionary tales. She also, however, illustrates the problem with this approach. She explores why the word "haunting" is so frequently applied to the song "Strange Fruit" (aside from the subject matter) and in great detail, explains Holiday's unusual and striking approach to phrasing and the fact that she never performed the song in exactly the same way twice. There are several session and live recordings of Holiday's "Strange Fruit" from across her career, and so naturally the effects of time and lifestyle on her voice can be traced through the song. Drawing on Griffin, Lordi explains the effect that has on audiences, that "they figure Holiday's voice itself as expressing something 'directly to them'" (2013: 140, original emphasis; Griffin 2001: 17). She situates this within a broader cultural assumption that "black women sing what they feel", a reading that neglects "artistic agency" (2013: 8). This sentiment is central in much of the posthumous journalistic content.

For example, Martin Longley praises her ability to bring expressive gravitas to a song and adds that this is compounded by the deterioration of her vocal ability over time, explicitly combining this with her personal life:

She had a way of fully inhabiting her songs (...) Much has been made of Holiday's hard-bitten life: the racism, the drugs, the passive acceptance of male abuse (...) [T]he decline in her health during the final years [resulted] in a technically frayed voice, which arguably sharpened the cutting edge of her emotional expression. (2000).

Here, Holiday's "frayed voice" and "hard-bitten life" are intertwined. Longley's problematic framing of Holiday's traumas, especially the "passive acceptance of male abuse" – Longley cannot make any claims as to how she handled it and the blame for the abuse should lie not with Holiday's supposed passivity but with the activity of those abusing her – speaks volumes about the importance of suffering to public reception of the diva, especially if it can be perceived aurally. "Frayed" itself is an interesting term, one which, whilst describing degradation, also suggests exposure and vulnerability. The adjectives used to describe timbre tell us a lot about perception because, as Cornelia Fales has illustrated, lack of academic

attention means that with “no domain-specific adjectives, timbre must be described in metaphor” (2002: 57) and in these cases the adjectives and metaphors used work in the context of Holiday’s biography. Descriptions of Holiday’s “frayed” voice render her vulnerable. Pauwke Berkers and Merel Eeckelaer have compared broadsheet coverage of the “rock and roll lifestyles” of Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty, finding that where Doherty becomes an “icon”, Winehouse becomes a “cause for concern” (2014: 9-11). Female addicts are perceived to be “dually licentious” (Bogren 2008) and removing autonomy can extinguish this threat to dominant moral codes by suggesting that the addict was not in full control of her actions, and vocal timbre can aid this construction (Masterson 2022). Projecting Holiday’s personal turmoil onto the sound of her voice suggests that her compelling performances have little to do with her craft – it removes her musical agency. This removal of agency over her work is consistent with a removal of agency over her personal life.

On a similar note, the degradation of her voice appears to have strengthened the potential for this association between voice and biography, allowing audiences to assign a certain authenticity. Stephen Holden describes how

Billie Holiday[’s] (...) vocal deterioration brought [her] greater emotional depth and realism. Studying a chronology of [her] records is like following a road map of [her life] that takes you deep into the mountains over increasingly rugged terrain. The bumpier the road gets, the longer the view. (2000).

Holden points to the increased “emotional depth” of the (perhaps prematurely) ageing voice, but once more this is framed through the lens of her life story. Ultimately, analysis of discussion of the degradation of the voice suggests that the voice becomes evidence of emotional authenticity and that this is bound up in knowledge of personal trouble.

Holiday is presented in the sources collected as a singer who could extrapolate the emotions of a song and convey them in a commanding and compelling way. Her striking tone and her unconventional phrasing are a large part of this and her ability to make songs take on “genuine” emotional expression is central to her legacy. Some discussions of this recognise Holiday’s musicianship yet many sources intrinsically link the musical and the personal. John Laycock writes that her “hard life could be heard in her questioning voice” (2000). Similarly, Michael J. Renner claims that

One could argue (...) that Holiday wouldn’t be the singer she was were it not for her tragic life filled with racism, failed romances, drugs and alcohol. By the time of her mid-1950s recordings, Holiday’s voice had deteriorated, but her approach to a lyric had deepened emotionally. (2000).

Renner recognises that there was work and skilful musicianship involved, yet this seems to come second to Holiday’s personal experiences. It is common for discussions of this kind to place biography and musical material next to each other as though they were inextricably linked, sometimes in ways that are somewhat simplistic, as per John Bungey: “Happiness, of course, was sometimes in tragically short supply in her life and that sorrow came out in her sad, sweet sound” (2015). Lordi suggests that it is reductive to posit her changing vocal

timbre merely as a result of time and various vices, and that it can in fact be read as a deliberate musical technique. She cautions against interpreting Holiday's "timbre as a window that can't help but express her tragic life" and calls for recognition of her as a "'timbral virtuoso' who continues to use her different vocal colors and textures" (2013: 141, original emphasis). With particular regard to "Strange Fruit", Lordi writes that to fuse her performances with her personal life "demeans her complex political commitments" (ibid.: 157).

There is clearly more to the unusual tone of Holiday's voice than an audible reflection of what spectators think they know about her personal life. Yet much life-writing around Holiday tends to prioritise personal trouble over musicality. Griffin discusses how framing Holiday's personal troubles centrally within her story is not only reductive but has harmful implications for Black women as it is based on and perpetuates stereotypes of tragedy and trauma. Additionally, the disproportionate focus on the extra-musical and the projection of tragedy onto vocal timbre has the effect of assuaging Holiday's musical agency and is thus reductive of her abilities as a musician.

Holiday's centenary

However, recent coverage may demonstrate a shift away from this kind of thinking, and more consideration of Holiday as a complex and multi-faceted person has emerged in some of the later source materials collected. Central framing of her musical legacy appears to have become a central concern. Her centenary in 2015 saw a significant shift in this, with some critics pointing out the imbalance between coverage of Holiday's personal life and musical influence. Ben Ratliff, for example, proposes that we "move beyond a singer's tragedy", claiming that

It's not enough to see her as a passive or static entity – a victim, a sufferer, a collection of vocal mannerisms. The closer you look, the less she seems stuck in her time. She (...) recorded "Strange Fruit" in 1939, a brave and piercing meditation on American racism (...) For decades after her death, she was understood as a doomed hero (...) The change in that understanding has come slowly ever since. (2015).

Ratliff here moves away from this conflation of song and biography, referring to the enduring power of the song and Holiday's courage in her persistence in performing it. Crucially, some of Holiday's agency is restored in this account. He recognises not only the song's power but also the personal and professional difficulties she opened herself up to by continuing to perform it. In this account, Ratliff recognises Holiday's autonomy as a musician, a consideration lacking in the earlier extracts examined.

In terms of academic discourse, John Szwed published *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth* in 2015, which primarily focuses on Holiday as a singer. The book provides a necessary corrective to life-writing that has served ideological ends and he provides a detailed musicological account of her vocal craft. Szwed lays out early on the various mythologies and narratives that have developed around Holiday, including public speculation about the authorship and veracity of the autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues* (Holiday and Dufty 1956),

the elements of her life that she discussed in television interviews, and the story told in the 1972 biopic *Lady Sings the Blues* (dir. Sidney J. Furie). However, discussion of Holiday's musicianship makes up the majority of the work. The book does not dispute the turbulence in Holiday's life, but celebrates her "discipline, an artist's complete devotion to her work, and a refusal to surrender to the demands of an insatiable world" (2015: 197). Reactions to this work point to a shift in perspective in journalistic discourse, such as this review from Seth Colter Walls, who points out that

Plenty of stars from yesteryear had crazy-juicy personal lives; very few left behind conceptual approaches that inspire in so many directions (...) [This book] encourage[s] us to consider musicianship as the defining characteristic of Lady Day's legacy. (2015).

Neil Spencer likewise claims that upon reading the book, "[w]hat the reader is left with ... is not Holiday's familiar, ravaged private life but the triumph of a unique creative talent" (2015). Additionally, the well-received 2019 documentary *Billie* (dir. James Erskine), based on the late journalist Linda Lipnack Kuehl's research for her unpublished Holiday biography, also challenges much of the mythologizing around her life. As Kuehl is heard saying at the beginning of the film, she is searching for a Holiday "beyond the romantic myth of the tortured artist and helpless junkie" (4.32). Indeed, the documentary focuses on interviews with those who knew and loved Holiday, and so offers a detailed and nuanced account of her life and work. Several sources examined here have either disregarded Holiday's musical legacy or else framed it as inextricably linked to her biography (particularly in terms of vocal timbre). In these sources, it appears that the imbalance between focus on personal strife and musical legacy might be beginning to be further redressed.

The United States vs. Billie Holiday

This article argues that the critical reception of *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* may represent an additional stage in this process. As films, music biopics serve particular purposes. Whilst the perception of accuracy has been shown to be valuable to audiences (Frey 2018), as Lee Marshall and Isabel Kongsgaard illustrate, "the biopic can never be a 'real' truth as it is constrained by both the conventions of cinematic realism and broader ideologies of popular music stardom" (2012: 346). Music biopics tend to follow largely similar narrative trajectories. For example, Simone Varriale writes that previous Holiday biopic *Lady Sings the Blues* revolves around the tension between the public and the private for musicians, tying it to several other music biopics, particularly those centring around Black jazz musicians (2013). Further, the pursuit of verisimilitude is limited by the conventions of the genre and the medium of film (Stewart, Maloy and Halligan 2017). Yet biopics reveal much about the "socially constructed nature of stardom" (Marshall and Kongsgaard 2012: 346). With these considerations in mind, I turn to the film's themes and critical reception and what they can tell us about the malleability of Holiday's posthumous legacy.

The film focuses on a specific timeframe within Holiday's career, starting with her successes at the Café Society up until her death in 1959. Directed by Lee

Daniels and starring Andra Day, the three central plot points concern Holiday's performances of the anti-lynching lament "Strange Fruit", Holiday's legal and addiction struggles, and an alleged romance with Jimmy Fletcher, an undercover federal agent sent to spy on Holiday, as based on Johann Hari's claims in *Chasing the Scream* (2015: 23). Daniels' motivation for directing the film was to distribute her story as far as possible, to present her "as an undeniable force of nature, that will live on forever and is a role model to all" (Daniels and Cherelus 2021).

The divided critical reception of the film has interesting implications for the changing public perspectives of Holiday. Whilst the performances in the film were largely acclaimed (Andra Day received an Oscar nomination for her performance), critics have questioned whether it prioritises traumatic experiences over musical legacy – "wallow[ing] in cruelty, misery, and degradation" (Zoller Seitz 2021) and "leveraging its leading lady's woes" (Kivak 2021) – and why we seem to view Holiday from the perspective of the men in her life. For example, the audience first encounters Holiday discussing her performances of "Strange Fruit" with radio DJ Reginald Lord Devine (Leslie Jordan). The scene then cuts to Holiday performing "All of Me" as Fletcher (Trevante Rhodes) arrives at the Café Society – setting him up as a core character – whilst Reginald, Billie, and Freddy (Miss Lawrence) continue their discussion:

[Reginald]: Let's start where it all began, at the Café Society (....) The wrong kind of place for the right kind of people.

[Freddy]: Like Jimmy Fletcher.

[Billie]: Leave him alone. He didn't know what he was walking into.

[Freddy]: Yes, he did. (4.17–5.06).

Upon arrival, Fletcher is guided to a table where he sits and takes in Holiday's performance. Having followed him here from his walk up towards the venue, the audience is invited to watch her through his eyes. Fletcher is a constant presence throughout, and Holiday's encounters with him can be said to bookend the main body of the film, as the final scenes show him caring for her up until her death. Responsible for turning Holiday over to the authorities within the film's first half hour, Fletcher's redemption arc soon follows. After a reprimanding from his mother (Adriane Lenox), in which she points out that Holiday's imprisonment provides the authorities with a means of stopping her from performing "Strange Fruit", and insight into Holiday's psyche over breakfast with Freddy, Fletcher reflects on his actions and sets out to atone. We are exposed to Fletcher's interior troubles as a central theme, particularly his guilt over his role in imprisoning drug users, including Holiday. In the final images of them together, we see Fletcher protecting her from her former husband Louis McKay (Rob Morgan), trying to turn away the narcotics agents turning up to harass her, and as an ultimately loving and generous figure. Daniels has explicitly said that there is a degree of "creative licence" at play here, that he did not know if "[Fletcher] was with [Holiday] until the end" (Daniels and Cherelus 2021).

The film has proved controversial in this portrayal of Fletcher and the centring of him as a love interest. It is a disputed claim and so critics have questioned

Fletcher's prominent framing, particularly the ways in which he is presented as a caring and positive influence. As Roxana Hadadi has pointed out, even fictional men seem to play a more central role in the biopic than its subject (2021). Peter Bradshaw claims that

there is something tonally very odd about elevating this imagined love affair to an accepted part of her life, with sensitive G-man dreamboat Fletcher supportively hanging around (...) That is especially so when, in real life, Billie Holiday's magnificent courage and defiance took place in spite of men and their reactionary bullying. (2021).

This framing follows a trajectory where the men in the story are the ones with power. In narrative framings like this, autonomy and agency lie in the male domain. As Bradshaw observes, this "cheapens [Holiday's] courage". Holiday is allowed little autonomy in the overall trajectory of the film; as Hadadi says, "it uses men to speak about Holiday's importance, aura, and appeal, without giving the same opportunities to the character herself" (2021).

Another criticism involves the extent to which Holiday's hardships are fixated on. Indeed, over the film's running time, we see Holiday shooting up, beaten up, framed, a fabricated scene in which she witnesses a lynching, and finally hounded by authorities on her deathbed. Responses to the film make frequent reference to its portrayal of Holiday as "helpless victim" (Whittington 2021) and the "pornographic" laying on of "suffering and degradation" (Shone 2021). Crucially, such concerns overshadow musical explorations: "tragedy (...) doesn't have to define [her life]" (Butler 2021). A. O. Scott points to the film's tendency to diminish artistic technique:

We see Holiday as a heroin user, a devoted but not always reliable friend, an operatic figure of towering pain and sublime resilience. But not really as an artist (...) *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* shows little interest in the discipline and craft that made those indelible nightclub and concert-hall moments possible. (2015).

Likewise, K. Austin Collins identifies "a deep incuriosity about the song itself" (2021) despite the central framing of the difficulties Holiday faced in her persistence in performing "Strange Fruit". Bonnie Greer observes that Holiday's "great instrument (...) is secondary to requirements" (2021) while Rebecca Kivak claims that "[t]he movie portrays her as a wretched figure instead of the groundbreaking artist and activist that she was" (2021).

Whilst the film can be understood as a continuation of the public fixation on Holiday's personal travails, the backlash to this could be said to indicate a change in discursive direction. In contrast to the earlier documents collected for analysis in this article, these more recent texts seem to call for a reconsideration of nuance in discourse surrounding Holiday's life and legacy.

Conclusion

To conclude, the complexities in Holiday's biography have been repeatedly streamlined, resulting in an "ever-simplifying story hook" (Jensen 2005: xxi) that encompasses negative stereotypes around Black women and jazz musicians.

Despite her remarkable, ongoing influence on the art of jazz singing, considerations of and speculation around her personal life remain disproportionate. *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* contains moments that can be said to be consistent with an unequal balance between extra-musical and musical factors. However, many of the critical reactions to the film question these framings, especially with regard to the positioning of an unconfirmed love affair as a central part of Holiday's story and missed opportunities to unpack her musical legacy. As can be seen from existing research, the posthumous legacies of women often come to be imbued with meanings about issues surrounding femininity, including motherhood and sexuality. Such concentration on personal matters serves to distract from professional successes. Thus, these indications of emerging nuance in public discourse surrounding Holiday are important. Whilst much academic work has called for reconsideration around what we talk about when we talk about Holiday, the proliferation of this sentiment in recent public discourse may show these reconsiderations gaining prominence. These alterations in trend remain in their early stages and further investigation is needed here to discover whether this shift in narrative trajectory is likely to continue or if it is an anomaly. I intend to trace this beyond the scope of this article as these changes in discourse are often long-term, slowly moving shifts. This change is small but significant, and further proof of the malleability of posthumous reception and the social and ideological ends that its construction often serves. Such legacies rarely remain static, rather, they are shaped and moulded by the context in which an audience encounters them.

Bibliography

- Austin Collins, K. 2021. "The United States vs. Billie Holiday" Fails to Take Into Account the Life of the Woman We Still Love. *Rolling Stone*, 26 February. <https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-reviews/billie-holiday-lee-daniels-streaming-hulu-andra-day-1131313/>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Beltrán, M. C. 2005. Commemoration as Crossover: "Remembering" Selena. In S. Jones and Joli Jensen Eds. *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. 81-96.
- Berkers, P., and Eeckelaer, M. 2014. Rock and roll or rock and fall? Gendered framing of the rock and roll lifestyles of Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty in British broadsheets. *Journal of Gender Studies* 23 (1): 3-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2012.754347>.
- Bogren, A. 2008. Women's intoxication as 'dual licentiousness': An exploration of gendered images of drinking and intoxication in Sweden. *Addiction Research & Theory* 16 (1): 95-106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16066350701668895>.
- Bowers P. J., and Grey, S. H. 2005. Karen: The Hagiographic Impulse in the Public Memory of a Pop Star. In S. Jones and Joli Jensen Eds. *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. 97-120.

- Bradshaw, P. 2021. The United States vs Billie Holiday review – Lee Daniels' misguided biopic. *Guardian*, 19 February. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/feb/19/the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday-review-lee-daniels-misguided-biopic>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Bungey, J. 2015. Billie Holiday: The Centennial Collection. *Times*, April 18. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/billie-holiday-the-centennial-collection-zp8r9f0qzn5>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Butler, B. 2021. Tragedy was part of Billie Holiday's life. It doesn't have to define it. *Washington Post*, 26 February. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2021/02/26/billie-holiday-film/>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Cagle, V. M. Flaunting It: Style, Identity, and the Social Construction of Elvis Fandom. In S. Jones and Joli Jensen Eds. *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005. 41-60.
- Cherelus, G., and Daniels, L. 2021. Lee Daniels on Dramatizing Billie Holiday's Battle With the U.S. Government: "I Owed It to Her Legacy". *GQ*, 24 February. <https://www.gq.com/story/lee-daniels-billie-holiday-movie-interview>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Colter Walls, S. 2015. Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth review. *Guardian*, April 2. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/02/billie-holiday-musician-myth-john-szwed-review>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Davis, A. Y. 1998. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Getrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Doyle, J. E. 2016. *Trainwreck: The Women We Love to Hate, Mock, and Fear... and Why*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House.
- Eidsheim, N. S. 2019. *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fales, C. 2002. The Paradox of Timbre. *Ethnomusicology* 46 (1): 56-95. <https://doi.org/10.2307/852808>.
- Frey, M. 2018. The Authenticity Feeling: Language and Dialect in the Historical Film. *Research in Film and History New Approaches*: 1-48. <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14811>.
- Greer, B. 2021. Billie Holiday would have hated her canonisation at the hands of Hollywood. *New European*, 27 March. <https://www.thenewuropean.co.uk/united-states-vs-billie-holiday-wrong-bonnie-greer-7841084/>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Griffin, F. J. 2001. *In Search of Billie Holiday: If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

- Hadadi, R. 2021. Hulu's United States vs. Billie Holiday cheats its fantastic star and subject. *Polygon*, 26 February. <https://www.polygon.com/hulu/2021/2/26/22303082/the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday-review>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Hari, Johann. 2015. *Chasing the Scream: The Search for the Truth about Addiction*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Hearsum, P. 2015. Three Faces of Musical Motherhood in Death: Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston and Donna Summer. In Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun Eds. *Death and the Rock Star*. Abingdon: Routledge. 119-133.
- Hearsum, P. 2012. A musical matter of life and death: the morality of mortality and the coverage of Amy Winehouse's death in the UK press. *Mortality* 17 (2): 182-199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2012.674305>.
- Holden, S. 2000. Something's Lost and Something's Gained. *New York Times*, 13 February. 29.
- Holiday, B., and Dufty, W. 1956. *Lady Sings the Blues*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Jensen, J. 2005. On Fandom, Celebrity, and Mediation: Posthumous Possibilities. In S. Jones and Joli Jensen Eds. *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. xv-xiii.
- Kivak, R. 2021. Review: "The United States vs. Billie Holiday". *Times-Tribune*. March 8. <https://accessnepa.com/take2/review-the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Laycock, J. 2000. Popular Music is International; Americana Spin on Music. *Windsor Star Ontario*, 30 December. 4.
- Longley, M. 2000. It's still a difficult life for a lady singing the blues. *Birmingham Post*, 7 June. 15.
- Lordi, E. J. 2013. *Black Resonance: Iconic Women Singers and African American Literature*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Marshall, L., and Kongsgaard, I. 2012. Representing Popular Music Stardom on Screen: The Popular Music Biopic. *Celebrity Studies* 2012 (3): 346-361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2012.679455>.
- Masterson, A. 2022. "A woman left lonely": pariah femininity and the posthumous career of Janis Joplin. *Feminist Media Studies*, ahead of print. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2110605>.
- Oksanen, A. 2017. Female Rock Stars and Addiction in Autobiographies. *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 30 (1-2): 123-140. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nsad-2013-0009>.

- Penfold-Mounce, R. 2019. Value, Bodily Capital, and Gender Inequality after Death. *Sociological Research Online* 25 (3): 490-506. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780419883297>.
- Penfold-Mounce, R. 2018. *Death the Dead and Popular Culture*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.
- Ratliff, B. 2015. For Billie Holiday's 100th Birthday, Tributes and New Releases. *New York Times*, April 3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/03/arts/music/for-billie-holidays-100th-birthday-tributes-and-new-releases.html>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Renner, M. J. 2000. Packed House Hears Moving Tribute to Billie Holiday. *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 7. 2.
- Scott, A. O. 2021. 'The United States vs. Billie Holiday' Review: Singing for Her Life. *New York Times*, February 25. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/25/movies/the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday-review.html>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Shapiro, H. 1988. *Waiting for the Man: The Story of Drugs and Popular Music*. New York, NY: Quartet Books.
- Shone, T. 2021. Film reviews: The United States vs Billie Holiday; The Dissident; Coming 2 America. *Times*, March 7. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/film-reviews-the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday-the-dissident-coming-2-america-9jjkr6ljc>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Spencer, N. 2015. Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth review – a celebration of a true original. *Observer*, May 3. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/03/billie-holiday-musician-myth-review-john-szwed-celebration-true-original>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.
- Stengs, I. 2015. The Afterlife of the People's Singer: Bodily Matters in a Dutch Sing-along Culture. In Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun Eds. *Death and the Rock Star*. Abingdon: Routledge. 17-31.
- Stewart, J., Maloy, L., and Halligan, B. 2017. Practices of Verisimilitude in Pop Music Biopics: A Conversation with Todd Eckert and James Anthony Pearson on Control, and Nick Moran on Telstar. *IASPM Journal* 7 (1): 11-28. [https://doi.org/10.5429/2079-3871\(2017\)v7i1.3en](https://doi.org/10.5429/2079-3871(2017)v7i1.3en).
- Strong, C., and Lebrun, B. 2015. The Great Gig in the Sky. In Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun Eds. *Death and the Rock Star*. Abingdon, Routledge. 1-14.
- Szwed, J. 2015. *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth*. New York, NY: Penguin.

van Dijk, T. A. 1993. Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society* 4 (2): 24-83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>.

Varriale, S. 2013. Rockin' the jazz biopic: changing images of African American musicians in Hollywood biographical films. *Jazz Research Journal* 6 (1): 27-46. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jazz.v6i1.27>.

Whittington, P. 2021. The United States vs. Billie Holiday review: Woozy drama fails to do the jazz singer justice. *Irish Independent*, 26 February. <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/movies/movie-reviews/the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday-review-woozy-drama-fails-to-do-the-jazz-singer-justice-40133124.html>. Accessed: 24 January 2022.

Zoller Seitz, M. 2021. The United States vs. Billie Holiday. *Roger Ebert*, 26 February. <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday-2021>.

Videography

The United States vs. Billie Holiday. 2021. Dir. Lee Daniels. Hulu.

Billie. 2019. Dir. James Erskine. Altitude Film Entertainment.

Lady Sings the Blues. 1972. Dir. Sidney J. Furie. Paramount Pictures Studios.