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Contemporary Literatures of Exile

Title of the paper :

Of Exile and Immigration in America :

The Exilic Experience in Bruce Springsteen’s “American Land”(2006) and “The Ghost of Tom Joad”(1995)

Abstract

In *Reflections on Exile* (2002), Edward Said compares exile to: “death but without death’s ultimate mercy” and suggests that “it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family and geography” (Said, 138). Said was also torn from his motherland when he immigrated to the United States. He describes this personal experience in his famous memoir *Out of Place* (2000). The point is, unlike Said, many people in America lack the literary competence which enables them to describe their exilic condition. American rock singer and poet Bruce Springsteen seems to embody this idea of speaking for the ordinary people whether immigrants or Americans. The aim of this talk is to explore the experience of exile in two folk ballads by Springsteen: “American Land” (2006) and “The Ghost of Tom Joad” (1995). The talk examines the aesthetic and poetic aspects of the two ballads.

Key words: Exile - Springsteen - Immigration - Ballad - Tom Joad

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Introduction

In *Reflections on Exile* (2002), Edward Said suggests that :

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement (Said, 173).

Terrible, unhealable rift, sadness, and sorrow. Said uses strong and emotive words to describe the lamentations of exile. For him, there is no romanticism in this specific human experience. He compares it to: “death but without death’s ultimate mercy” and goes on to note that exile “has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family and geography” (Said, 138). Said views exile as collective sufferings that people undergo from the very first moment they are snatched from their countries. It marks a limit between home and estrangement, sameness and otherness, life and death. Said was also torn from his motherland when he immigrated to the United States.

It must be stressed that America has always been a land for exiles from the very beginning of its foundation. Pilgrims and Puritans of the seventeenth century settled in the New World seeking their religious freedom. In the mid-eighteenth century, millions of Germans, British, and Irish migrated to America due to religious troubles in addition to the Great Famine of Ireland. This flood of immigrants included also Italians, Greeks, and Jews among others. During the Thirties, in the context of World War Two, many intellectuals and writers escaped from Europe because of the Nazi-fascist persecutions and emigrated to the United States.

The theme of exile in contemporary literature has inspired many writers throughout the world, whether they ran away from their native country due to oppression, or because they were dissatisfied with their society and voluntarily chose to live elsewhere. Authors like: Theodor Adorno, Yoshiko Uchida, Carlos Bulosan, and Edward Said have written about exile in America and its implications. Theodor Adorno, the German-Jewish philosopher, describes his terrible exilic condition in the autobiography *Minima Moralia* (1951) subtitled *Reflections from Damaged Life*. Yoshiko Uchida, the daughter of Japanese immigrants, gives a personal account in *Desert Exile* (1982) on the uprooting of her family from their motherland and their imprisonment in internment camps after Pearl Harbor in 1941. Carlos Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart* (1946) presents the experience of Filipino immigrants who were searching for the promises of a better life in America. The autobiographical accounts of the above authors tell their experience from an exclusively first retrospective person ‘I’ whereby the narrator claims that : “I, and only I, am responsible for what I recall and see” (Said, 13). Each autobiography deals with the life and experience of one individual.

The point is that many immigrants to America are not intellectuals. They are not writers like Said, Adorno, or Uchida. They are ordinary people in the sense that they do not hold any academia. They lack the literary competence which enables them to portray their condition of exile. They come from different parts of the world and view America as a Promised Land in which every dream come true. Being physically displaced, trying to acclimatize to a new environment, encountering a new culture and language, all together contribute to render them unable to narrate their stories.

However, some authors and artists depict the lives and experiences of those immigrants in their literary works. American rock and folk singer Bruce Springsteen is one of them. He has given a voice to immigrants in American culture. The aim of this paper is to explore the experience of exile in two folk songs of Bruce Springsteen: “American Land” (2006) and “The Ghost of Tom Joad” (1995). First, a brief overview of exile in America, its backgrounds and implications will be given. A literary and philosophical approach will be followed to give a definition to this concept. Then, Springsteen’s two folk songs will be analyzed. I will show that Springsteen’s songs represent literary works on exile that embody some aesthetic and poetic dimensions.

Nicknamed *the Boss*, Springsteen was born in New Jersey in 1949. He is a singer-songwriter, a live performer along with his E Street Band, and a social activist. Springsteen is involved in several social causes and has participated in benefit concerts and philanthropic actions that raise money for food banks, cancer research centers, and Vietnam veterans¹. Springsteen is widely known for his Americana working class songs and has sold more than sixty four million albums in the United States putting him in fifteenth position of the *Recording Industry Association of America* top selling artists of all time (www.riaa.com).

Springsteen is a singer of exile rather than a singer in exile. Instead of focusing on the writers in exile, the paper takes into account the folk songs of exile that describe the lives and hopes of uprooted immigrants who settled in America. The paper tackles also another kind of exile, a metaphorical one. It is not a geographical exile because it is experienced by Americans, people who were born in the United States. They are in exile in their own homeland. They are ordinary working Americans who live in small hometowns and encounter hardships. They see themselves and their families sliding down out of the American middle class and away from the American Dream. They also include homeless and unemployed

¹ See Hamburger, Susan. “When They Said Sit Down, I Stood Up : Springsteen’s Social Conscience, Activism, and Fan Response.” *Glory Days : A Bruce Springsteen Symposium*. Monmouth University, West Long branch, New Jersey September 9, 2005.

Americans, the most deprived people of the country. Springsteen sings to and for them. All in all, the paper will show that Springsteen speaks for ordinary people whether they are Americans or immigrants.

It is important to note that Springsteen is both a rock and a folk singer, but in this paper he will be regarded as a folk singer. The American folk music is the traditional music that consists mainly of the ballads and songs of English, Scottish, and Irish immigrants who settled in the region of Appalachia in the Eastern United States in the seventeenth century. Folk singers sing simple lyrics in structure and use basic musical instruments like: banjos, American fiddles, and guitars. It is the music of the common people that everybody can sing.

From the twenties until the fifties, musicologists and collectors like John and Alan Lomax and Harry Smith collected and recorded traditional folk songs from different regions in America. Folk singers like Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Leadbelly, and Susan Reed, just to name a few, popularized the folk song and brought about the revival of American folk music. For instance, The Weavers, a folk music group founded by Pete Seeger and based in the Greenwich Village of New York, sang American ballads, children's songs, and labor songs and sold millions of records including a Leadbelly's version of "Goodnight, Irene" (1950) which peaked at #1 on the Billboard's chart (www.allmusic.com). The folk music revival reached its height with a new generation of singers-songwriters of the sixties like: Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Phil Ochs. Other artists like Steve Earle, Bruce Springsteen, and Ani DiFranco emerged subsequently as contemporary folk singers.

Springsteen started his career in the mid-seventies by singing covers in local New Jersey clubs like *Stone Pony* and *Student Prince*. He became an international rock star with his most successful albums *Born to Run* (1975) and *Born in the U.S.A* (1984). Being an artist who uses popular culture to address the social injustices of the American working class, Springsteen became interested in traditional folk and country music. He listened to Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and Woody Guthrie. He is particularly interested in the folk songs of Woody Guthrie, a folksinger of Oklahoma who is famous for his *Dust Bowl* ballads that deal with the Great Depression aftermath and the social injustice of the thirties.² Woody Guthrie is one of the most influential American folk singers of the twentieth century. Several folk singers have followed his footsteps to social activism including Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Bruce Springsteen among others.

² The Dust Bowl was a period marked by a series of dust storms that forced thousands of American families to leave their farms during the thirties. Many of them migrated to California to look for jobs and opportunities.

The songs of Guthrie are simple in structure. The lyrics are uttered with an Oklahoman speech pattern. They are characterized by deletions, contractions, and no grammatical agreement. Guthrie plays with a single guitar to which he adds a harmonica riff. Springsteen covered Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" during his concerts of the early eighties. Guthrie wrote "This Land Is Your Land" as an angry response to Irving Berlin's 1938 patriotic anthem "God Bless America". Guthrie considered that Berlin's song did not reflect American reality during the Great Depression. Springsteen recorded his first folk and acoustic album, *Nebraska* in 1982, at his home with a tape recorder. Then, he released a second acoustic album, *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995). In 2006, Springsteen brought out *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*, in which he covers thirteen folk music songs made popular by folk singer Pete Seeger.

The eight stanzas of "American Land" (2006) tell the story of a new immigrant who settles in America and describes it as a Promised Land. "The Ghost of Tom Joad" (1995) is the title track of Springsteen's acoustic album which deals with the isolation of some people in America because of their social condition. The song suggests that ordinary people struggle just to get by in contemporary America. It is the same *socio-economic exile* that led John Steinbeck's protagonist Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) to express his anger during the Great Depression of the thirties.

Springsteen has spent his artistic life judging the distance between myths and real life in America. He shows that some Americans and immigrants who are so enthusiastic about fulfilling the American Dream and living a decent life may realize that exile is not like the Horatio Alger's tales of rags to riches; rather it is like the words of Said: "death but without death's ultimate mercy".

How does Springsteen explore exile in America? Who are the exiles he sings about? How can it be that one feels like a stranger in one of the most developed countries in the world? Is not America viewed as the best country for success, prosperity and the fulfillment of the American Dream? These are the main issues of this paper.

Some Backgrounds and Implications of Exile

What does the word exile mean? What are its types? What is at stake in trying to categorize exiles and to what extent shall immigrants be regarded as experiencing exile? A specific definition of exile needs to be given.

Exile comes from Latin *exilium* which is derived from the verb *ex-sulere*. It literally means "to take out" (Online Etymology Dictionary). It is defined as: "a situation in which you are forced to leave your country or home and go to live in a foreign country" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Exile is "a

geographical concept. It is a synonym of the uprooted experience of living abroad, away from one's motherland" (Zeng, 1). Exile is viewed as something involuntary and undesirable. It is a form of punishment imposed on individuals by their country. "To be exiled is not to be flung out of any door, but out of your own door; it is to lose your home where home suggests close emotional belonging and the gnarled roots of one's identity" (Gass, 97). Exiles experience uprootedness and homelessness. They are deprived of their identity and are unable to find any purpose or meaning in their lives because of this loss. The exilic condition of people who live in a foreign country is a ceaseless injury. The only healing for exiles is to regain their homes, the place in which everything makes sense for them.

Exile encompasses several types of geographical movements. One needs to distinguish between exiles, refugees, expatriates and émigrés as proposed by Said in his *Reflections on Exile*. Generally speaking, exiles are intellectual dissidents who flee their countries or are expelled due to political reasons or wars. Refugees are also forced to leave their country for the same reasons but millions of them have been driven out of their homes because of diseases and starvation. An exilic condition is a single departure of an intellectual or a writer. Exile can be constructive and fruitful because it produces a philosophical detachment, critical perspective and awareness that can be necessary for artistic creativity. The status of refugee, on the other hand, suggests a mass exodus of people who are uprooted from their homes in a hurry and are put into camps without any possibility of expressing this traumatic experience.

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of totalitarian regimes. Many European intellectuals rejected the ideologies of the Nazi fascist state. For instance, members of the Frankfurt School like Theodor W. Adorno, Friedrich Pollock, and Max Horkheimer, just to name a few, were forced into exile abroad. During his exile in America, Adorno wrote that "Every intellectual in emigration is, without exception, mutilated, and does well to acknowledge it to himself" (Adorno, 33). Said also endorses Adorno's view when he pointedly relates exile to displacement in which people are like strangers, the others. "Exiles look at non-exiles with resentment. *They* belong in their surroundings, you feel, whereas an exile is always out of place" (Said, 143). Exile enhances the state of being different, namely alterity. The 'self-other' dichotomy implies that the state of the other is being different to the identity of the self. People move to a foreign country where they experience self-estrangement and feel themselves inappropriate. Exile haunts their existence. Said's judgement on exile is derived from his personal life. He was born in Jerusalem and had to leave it and settle in America. This issue of non-belonging is crucial in his work. Despite spending most of his life in America, Said portrays himself as

the other, the outsider, a migrant whose main concern is to search for a place to belong to, a home. It is little wonder that his autobiography is entitled: *Out of Place: A Memoir*.

Unlike Said, Brian Treanor perceives the journey towards 'otherness' as a transcendental experience. "Transcendence is not a relationship of myself to myself wherein I sojourn among beings in the world only to, like Ulysses, return home and reclaim my rightful position by restoring my house to order. Rather, the movement of transcendence is from my home toward a land not of my birth, toward the absolutely other, the unknown" (Treanor, 21). Exile is like a religious experience. From a Levinassian perspective, the otherness of exiles has to be *absolute*. This also implies that the sameness of Americans has to be absolute. The notion of sameness will be meaningless if there is no otherness. For instance if an American meets an exile and looks at his face, he sees a foreigner, someone not like him who reminds him that he is the same and that the exile is the other. An exile is to remain an exile and there is no need to subordinate him to an American. If the other becomes the same, there will be no otherness at all.³

Expatriates voluntarily choose to live in a foreign country, mostly for social or artistic reasons. Writers of the *Lost Generation* such as Hemingway and Fitzgerald were not sent into exile in France. Their exile began after they witnessed the atrocities of the Great War. The authors made their home in Paris and found inspiration in their self-imposed exile. Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* epitomizes the post-war expatriate experience in Europe of an American who meets friends in the cafés of Paris and travels to Spain to watch the running of the bulls and the bullfights. Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* depicts the graceful and elegant life of the Fitzgeralds in the late twenties on the Riviera in southern France. James Joyce's self-exile in Paris, Italy and Zurich is embodied in his semi-autobiographical Bildungsroman *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The protagonist, Stephen Daedalus, is an artist whose self-exile from Ireland and its religion is the sine qua non condition for his artistic creation.

Finally, the term émigré is ambiguously subject to several interpretations. Are immigrants like exiles? It is important to note that émigrés (or immigrants) are not like exiles in the political sense. They are neither expelled from their country nor prevented from returning home. They have voluntarily left their homeland to settle in a foreign country for economic reasons. No one compelled them to leave their countries. Yet, they may face the same uprootedness and homelessness shared by all exiles. They are not exiles, but they may be considered as immigrants in exile.

³ From an ontological viewpoint, philosophers like Heidegger claim that otherness has to be eliminated. The being of the other is defined by the same and reduced to it. For more details on the concept of 'otherness' see: Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity*. "Trans."- Lingis, Alphonso. Duquesne University Press : Pittsburgh, 1969.

While exile is a phenomenon imposed upon people, immigration is a chosen movement that can often be the result of imposed circumstances. Exiles do not freely choose to abandon their homeland. They find themselves in a situation out of their control. However, immigrants prefer to leave their homes and seek a better future in a better country. Exile implies sufferings, displacement and fragmentation, while immigration connotes hopes, assimilation and hybridity. Still, immigrants endlessly think about the utopian place to which they once belonged. It is an exilic condition that connotes “alienation and longing, a life whose meaning lies in the past or in the future but never in the present” (Mbuvi, 30). They keep on thinking about this place of belonging that has been lost. It is the home that will fill their lives with meaning again.

After categorizing the different geographical phenomena related to exile and their implications, one needs to go back to one concept stated previously, the metaphorical exile. Springsteen is, as it has been said above, a singer of exile for both immigrants and Americans. But how come that some Americans who were born in the United States may live in exile? The fracture caused by immigrants being away from their homeland is also shared by the American lower class in many respects. Americans experience a metaphorical exile because of their social condition. They are not displaced geographically, but they are in fact displaced socially. They struggle with their low paying jobs just to make a decent life and pay their bills. Even worse, some of them face unemployment and homelessness. Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet once said: “Exile is more than a geographical concept. You can be an exile in your homeland, in your own house, in a room” (quoted in Shatz, 2001). Exile can be viewed as a postmodern metaphor of life. We all live in exile in a post-authentic contemporary era full of simulacra, a place in which “all modern thinkers are exiles” (“Suvin, Displaced Persons”).

What is more, exile here refers to the isolation of the common people when they confront social and economic hardships. It is an existential condition that concerns both ordinary Americans and immigrants. Americans that live in exile mainly include: blue-collar factories workers, part time workers holding odd jobs that require little training or skill, single mothers receiving welfare, and people facing unemployment and homelessness. Supposing that I was born in the United States, I have the right to fulfill the American Dream like all the middle class families. Unfortunately, I have no skills and no education outside the years of high school. There is a small chance that I get a well-paid job. So I take part time odd jobs to pay my basic living expenses. My life is a constant day-to-day struggle in a midst of uncertainty as I can become poor and homeless. I am an American and yet I live in a kind of denaturalized world in which nothing makes sense for me. I feel I am a foreigner in a country that does

not give me the opportunity to enjoy a good life. I live on the margin of the society. Given this situation, it is not surprising that I feel like an exile in my own country.

Immigrants on the other hand, are twice isolated, first, geographically, since they live in a foreign country far from their homeland, then socially, because like low income Americans, they face the same difficulties in trying to make a living. They start a long process of immigration from their country. They prepare the trip and the settlement in the United States. They take all their savings out of their bank. Some of them need to sell their house to make sure they have sufficient funds to support themselves until they find a job in America. They need to acclimatize to a new environment, a new culture and practices, and a new foreign language that they do not master. Immigration in America as it will be shown contains no heroic or romantic events. It is the beginning of the exilic condition. Springsteen's "American Land" explores the issue of immigration in the United States.

The Ballad of Immigration and Exile in: "American Land" (2006)

Springsteen celebrates the experience of immigration in his joyful song "American Land" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HdNY7y8j8s>). Immigrés in the United States may attempt to accomplish the American Dream, one of the founding myths of this country. It can be summarized in the following statement: anyone can achieve prosperity and success through hard work, courage and good opportunities. The dream is a major factor that draws people from all over the world. The United States was founded on immigration and accordingly the country welcomed people from all nations regardless of their origin, religion or culture. Even today, no one can deny that millions throughout the world apply to come to the United States and share the dream. Over 14.6 million applicants for the 2014 Diversity Visa Lottery were submitted ("U.S. Department of State", 2014). However, the United States only gives 55,000 permanent resident visas annually. It must be noted also that the federal government voted several laws that restricted immigration to the United States. For instance, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited all immigration of Chinese laborers. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 established the use of a quota system to each European country in order to limit the number of immigrants ("U.S. Immigration Legislation Online").

"American Land" is a bonus track on Springsteen's 2006 *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions (American Land Edition)*. The tribute album includes some famous folk songs like "Jesse James" and "Mrs. McGrath" that Pete Seeger made popular. The song is inspired by *I Lie in the American Land*, a poem written by Slovak immigrant steelworker Andrew Kovaly. In 1947, Pete Seeger met

Kovaly who told him that the poem was about the death of a colleague. The man had saved enough money to bring his family from Slovakia but when they were on their way to America, he was killed in the factory before Kovaly’s eyes. This is one of the first implications of the exilic condition in America. Some immigrants lost their lives and were buried anonymously in a cemetery without any family member to mourn them. Seeger recorded an English version of the poem that inspired Springsteen. “American Land” uses the first stanza of Seeger’s “He lies in the American Land” but the phrase ‘he lies’ from the original title is removed because it connotes death and funeral ceremony. Kovaly’s friend is unfortunately dead and buried, but not Springsteen’s character.

What’s this land America, so many travel there
 I’m goin’ now while I’m still youn’, my darlin’ meet me there
 wish me luck my lovely, I’ll send for you when I can
 n’ we’ll make our home in the American land (Springsteen, 1-4)

With a first person point of view, Springsteen tells the story of this new arrival. The narrator uses an informal language of folk songs with contractions like: *I’m*, *I’ll*, and *youn’*. It is the language of common people which makes use of simple and short structures. It reflects a traditional way of life of people who are pejoratively depicted as belonging to the uncultured classes.

The above stanza is called ballad stanza or quatrain, a grouping of four lines, each with a consistent metre and a particular rhyme scheme. Thus, “American Land” is a folk ballad. The term ballad derives from the Old Provençal *ballada*, meaning ‘dancing’ (“Larousse Dictionary”). Ballads are originally medieval dance songs that narrate a story. They include popular poems and songs of unknown authorship and are transmitted orally. They deal with topics about life, love, hardships and heroic deeds by famous characters like Robin Hood for instance. They were used extensively in Europe and later in America. The scansion of the first quartain reveals its metrical patterns and rhyme schemes as shown.

× × /		× / ×		× / ×		/ × /		
What’s this land		A meri ca		so man y		trave l		there 1
× / ×		× × /		× / ×		/ × /		
I’m goin’ now		while’m still youn’		my dar lin’		meet me		there 2
/ × /		× / ×		× / ×		× × × /		
Wish me luck		my love ly		I’ll send f’you		when I		can 3

× × / × / × × / × × /
 n' we'll make | our home | n' the A mer | i can **land** **4**
 × × /: anapest × / ×: amphibrach / × /: amphimacer × /: iamb

The process involves the division of each line of poetry into syllables, stressed (/) and unstressed (×), and the demarcation of those syllables into metrical units known as feet. It is important to note that scansion is a complex task. It requires a good listening of the quatrain as sung by the singer. The result comes more from the listener’s interpretation rather than a typical syllable pattern. For example, the phrase ‘while I am’ in the second line includes three syllables: /waɪl/, /aɪ/, and /əʃm/, but when listening to the song, Springsteen makes use of contraction and elision with the apostrophe and missing letter resulting in a monosyllabic word /waɪlm/. The purpose is to make sure each line has twelve syllables. Poets usually mispronounce words for metrical effects.

Each line of the quatrain is a tetrameter, i.e., it contains four feet. The first line is an anapestic tetrameter with amphibrachic and amphimaceric variation. The last line is also an anapestic tetrameter with iambic variation having three anapests and an iamb. The anapestic tetrameter is significantly used in the above quatrain, six anapestic feet out of sixteen. The anapestic foot (× × /) is classified as rising meter because the stressed syllable follows two unstressed syllables producing an effervescent effect. Springsteen makes use of the anapest in the introductory quatrain to show the high spirit of the new immigrant as he intends to settle in America. He wants a better future for him and his family. He has never seen America and still he believes deeply it is a land of milk and honey in which every dream come true. The rhyme scheme in each quatrain is *aabb* as shown.

× × × × **a**
 × × × × **a**
 × × × × **b**
 × × × × **b**

The use of rhymes (there/ there, can/ land) which is the repetition of similar sounds in the final syllables is pleasant to hear and also serves as a poetic device to clarify the metrical structure for the listeners and help them to remember the song better.

There’s diamonds in the sidewalk, the gutters line in song
Dear, I **hear** that **beer** flows through the faucets all night long
 There’s treasure for the **taking**, for any hard **working** man
 Who’ll make his home in the American land (5-8)

The above stanza is the chorus, also called refrain. It is the most repeated part in the song's structure and gives a summary of the song's story. It is sung by Springsteen and his band in unison. In fact, folk music stresses performing a song collectively rather than individually. Folk music forms an inclusive community which gives a voice to all its members. When Pete Seeger asks the audience to sing with him the chorus of anti-Vietnam songs like "Bring Them Home" or "Where have All the Flowers Gone?", he symbolically creates a community with only an acoustic guitar and a unified group of people singing together and having the deep conviction that their sociopolitical cause is right.

Springsteen humorously depicts America as a paradise, a place in which one enjoys life to its fullest without doing anything. But, he reminds us that immigrants will not literally find diamonds in the streets, nor will they drink beer gratuitously; they, rather, have the guarantee of achieving a successful life through perseverance and hard work. Springsteen uses assonance in the second line by repeating the diphthong /iəʔ/ in the words: dear, hear, and beer. He also creates an internal rhyming in the third line (taking / working), and thus, links the idea of achieving a successful life in America to the principle of hard working.

The music of "American Land" is similar to the traditional Scottish song "Gallant Forty Twa" which was popularized by Irish folk group The Glancy Brothers (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQd7sSXVw3U>). The Forty-Twa is the famous 42nd Highland Regiment of Scotland which is also called the Black Watch. By imitating an Irish folk group, Springsteen indicates that immigration to America brings also an aesthetic dimension found in new sounds of music. He himself is of European descent. His father was of Dutch and Irish ancestry, while his mother was of Italian ancestry.

After the long transatlantic voyage, the main character finally arrives at New York City. "I docked at Ellis Island in the city of light and spire" (13). Springsteen uses metonymously the expression 'the city of light and spire' to describe New York City with its lights and its skyscrapers. Ellis Island was an immigrant inspection station in Upper New York Bay (1892-1954). Arrivals were processed by government officials who checked their health and background. Some applicants were not admitted and had to go back home. The protagonist is on a boat and as he docks on Ellis Island; he must certainly be overwhelmed by seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time. This feeling is reflected in the scene of Don Corleone in *The Godfather* part two, where the boy Vito flees from Sicily and arrives at New York City in 1901. He stares at the Statue of Liberty which symbolizes the free country where every dream can come true.

This spontaneous impression of America as experienced by many immigrants was criticized by some American intellectuals, who decided to radically reject their country and leave it once for all. In 1894 on an immigrant ship, Du Bois expressed his feeling of seeing the Statue of Liberty: “I know not what multitude of emotions surged in the others, but I had to recall a mischievous little French girl whose eyes twinkled as she said: ‘Oh yes the Statue of Liberty! With its back toward America and its face toward France!’ ” (Du Bois, 182). In 1963, Du Bois symbolically became a citizen of Ghana and was buried in its capital, Accra, in the same year. In his essay *I Choose Exile*, Richard Wright described his emotions when he left the United States: “I felt relieved when my ship sailed past the Statue of Liberty!” (Wright, 1951). Wright’s gesture can be interpreted as an ironic Ellis Island scene in which the destination of his journey is not America but France. This Jerusalem for Plymouth Pilgrims and New England Puritans obviously segregated its African American citizens who found in exile the only way of salvation.

Springsteen’s ballad is also an underlying criticism of America. He implicitly reveals that perhaps this country promises too much to immigrants who choose it as their home. He also criticizes rich and greedy businessmen without mentioning their names, because they benefit enormously from the work of immigrants as he asserts:

The McNicholas, the Posalski, the Smiths, Zerillis too
 The Blacks, the Irish, Italians, the Germans and the Jews [...]
 They died building the railroads, they worked to bones and skin
 They died in the fields and factories, names scattered in the wind
 They died to get there a hundred years ago, they’re still dying now
 Their hands that built the country we’re always trying to keep out (21-22, 25-28)

Springsteen utters the names and the nationalities of immigrants with an emphatic stress to express the disenchantment of the protagonist who was very enthusiastic in the beginning when he sailed to America. This country was built by immigrants who died on its soil, but there is no doubt that some of them enjoyed a great life and had much better opportunities for themselves and their children.

The current situation of American society indicates that there is no significant disparity between Americans and immigrants. While, it is true that green card holders can neither vote in U.S. elections nor remain out of the country for unlimited periods of time, both Americans and permanent residents have almost the same rights and benefits. They have a Social Security Number (SSN) with which they pay taxes. They have also the same opportunities of holding a full-time job, starting a business or having

access to property. However, the less fortunate among them face the same difficulties as Americans, who also struggle just to make ends meet.

It must be noted that even if immigrants become American citizens, it is difficult for them to leave the United States. They find themselves trapped in their adopted country. They work nine to five, forty hours a week, fifty two weeks a year. They have no annual leave since America is the only developed country in the world that does not require employers to provide paid vacation time. However, some employers offer ten paid days off a year at best. Employers can fire them at their discretion at any moment because most of American states have adopted the *at-will employment* principle that allows the employers to fire or lay off employees without having to provide a justification for that. On top of that, these employees rent a house in a peripheral neighborhood far from the center of the city because of their modest incomes. Their exilic condition of living literally on the margin of the center represents a deterritorialization, a movement from the developed area to the undeveloped one as noted by Deleuze and Guattari. “[...] the center itself has its organized enclaves of underdevelopment, its reservations and its ghettos as interior peripheries” (Deleuze and Guattari, 231). The authors of *Anti-Oedipus* give the example of the United States by quoting Pierre Moussa, the French economist, who has defined America as: “a fragment of the Third World that has succeeded and has preserved its immense zones of underdevelopment” (231). The deterritorialization of immigrants in America produces a displacement within a displacement. First, they have left their motherland to settle in a foreign country, then; they live in an underdeveloped area of a developed country. Such a place includes the poorest and most deprived people who live on the margin of the American society. They live in a socio-economic exile in one of the most developed countries in the world. The next ballad, “The Ghost of Tom Joad”, examines the condition of this category of people.

The Socio-economic Exile in “The Ghost of Tom Joad” (1995)

“The Ghost of Tom Joad” is a folk ballad released on Springsteen’s 1995 eleventh studio album of the same name. The album peaked at #11 on the *US Billboard 200* (<http://www.billboard.com/>) and won the 1997 Grammy Award for *Best Contemporary Folk Album* (<http://www.grammy.com/>). Springsteen also rerecorded an electric, hard rock version of the song with Tom Morello, the lead guitarist of *Rage Against the Machine* on his eighteenth studio album *High Hopes* (2014). “The Ghost of Tom Joad” depicts the depression and hopelessness of some people in America because of their social condition (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF9jQHwRbDk>).

Tom Joad is the main character of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel which portrays the plight of migrant farm workers during the Great Depression. The Joads, a poor family of tenant farmers are driven from their Oklahoma home because of the Dust Bowl drought and bank foreclosures. Tom is paroled from McAlester prison for homicide. He meets Jim Casy, a former preacher, who tells him that the Joads have left their home. Tom asks Casy to be his companion. They join the Joads and Tom takes leadership. The family decides to set out for California with the thousands of other Okies (people from Oklahoma) to seek jobs and a better future. However, when they reach the state they settle in a farm workers camp that offers low paying jobs. Additionally, they are being harassed by the deputies of California. Casy inspires Tom with his philosophical views on life. He becomes a labor organizer and forms a labor union. He is killed by a deputy in front of Tom. In return, Tom kills the deputy and runs away as a fugitive. Tom Joad embodies the Great Depression anti-hero who fights against oppression and injustice. He is a man of the working class America, an inspirational figure who shows his anger and refuses to be broken by the hopelessness surrounding him.

Springsteen read *The Grapes of Wrath*, watched John Ford's film adaptation of Steinbeck's novel and listened to "The Ballad of Tom Joad", a song that Woody Guthrie wrote in 1940 just after seeing John Ford's motion picture. Springsteen's song can be viewed as a Guthrian Dust Bowl ballad set in contemporary America. It explores the socio-economic exile of people who are trapped in poverty and deprivation.

Men walking 'long the railroad tracks
 Going someplace and there's no going back
 Highway patrol choppers coming up over the ridge
 Hot soup on a campfire under the bridge (1-4)

Shelter line stretching 'round the corner
 Welcome to the new world order
 Families sleeping in their cars in the southwest
 No home, no job, no peace, no rest (5-8)

In the first two stanzas, Springsteen describes people who try to get by in today's America by all means. They find themselves waiting for a bowl of soup offered by the Salvation Army or looking for a place in a homeless shelter. These people are homeless, starving, and do not feel safe at all. Their condition is worse than the American working class, a category considered to be at the bottom of American society. The narrator is psychologically fragmented and desperate as shown in the sentences he uses. He deletes the auxiliary verb 'to be' in the first line ('Men walking' instead of 'Men are walking') and utters a series of negative phrases (No home, no job, no peace, no rest) to show his hopelessness. Musically, the song starts with a series of notes on the harmonica over a minor chord acoustic guitar

playing. The minor key and Springsteen's softening voice produce a somber and gloomy atmosphere in which there is not much light for excluded Americans.

Springsteen's ballad is also about criticizing politicians in a subtle way as he ironically mentions George H.W. Bush's New World Order (line 6), a phrase the President used in the aftermath of the Cold War to redefine international relationships among countries. The understatement suggests that decision makers in America are supposed to focus on domestic affairs, not on America's foreign policy. Springsteen has spent his artistic life examining the social condition of the most deprived and disadvantaged people of his country. In an interview, he told journalists: "My work has always been about judging the distance between American reality and the American Dream- how far is that at any moment?" (*Wrecking Ball: A Conversation with Bruce Springsteen*). This distance is also a major theme in *The Grapes of Wrath* when Steinbeck examines the gap between the Joads' idealistic expectations and real life for migrants in California. Both Steinbeck and Springsteen examine the exile of the downtrodden people of America. Steinbeck's protagonist Tom Joad shows his anger by confronting California deputies and the social injustice of the thirties, whereas Springsteen's unnamed character is paralyzed by the depressed scene he portrays. Steinbeck's novel urges the reader to be angry and dissatisfied with Dust Bowl America, whereas Springsteen's ballad invites the listener to reflect on contemporary America by conveying a covert statement of political disapproval.

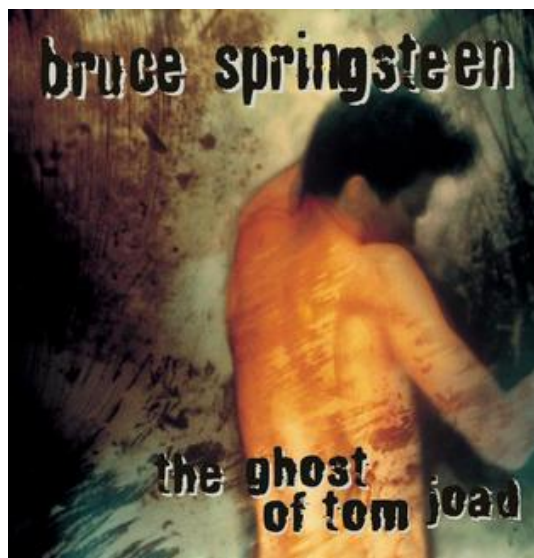
Well the highway is alive tonight
But nobody's kidding nobody about where it goes
I'm sitting down here in the campfire light
Searching for the ghost of Tom Joad (9-12)

The lyrics of the refrain suggests that little has changed in America since the Depression era because the narrator is looking for the ghost of Tom Joad to help him face his exilic condition. The imagery of the ghost, a disembodied spirit, is used to connote the internal conflict and alienation of the narrator as he is no longer able to make a distinction between ghosts and real persons, appearance and reality. The narrator is waiting for a ghost to bring about his deliverance, but one understands that the man sitting by the campfire will wait a long time before his savior comes.

On the other hand, looking for the ghost of Tom Joad means looking for the values and ideals of Steinbeck's main character. Throughout *The Grapes of Wrath*, Tom Joad is transformed from a man only interested in his needs to another devoted to his family and community. He becomes a social activist and man of people who finds in anger a sense of dignity. Springsteen's use of the ghost can be regarded as a transcendental entity as echoed in the beginning of Steinbeck's novel when Casy sets up a secular belief that all human experience is holy and that they form one big soul. "I figgered, 'maybe it's all men an' all

women we love; maybe that's the Holy Spirit- the human spirit- the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul" (Steinbeck, 32). Casy, a former preacher who lost his faith makes an allusion to Emerson's oversoul, that man is a part of one soul. "We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE" (Emerson, 55). Springsteen also views the ghost as a spirit, as one big soul. The old English *gast* means supernatural being ("Online Etymology Dictionary"). The morals of Tom Joad embodied in his ghost connect all poor Americans and unify them. Exile becomes meaningless for those people who form one big soul and find in the poetry of Springsteen a refuge, a home.

The album's cover art is a painting which represents a homeless sleeping on the pavement. It can also stand for the ghost of Tom Joad as written on the picture (See below).



Cover art of Bruce Springsteen's album : *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (Designed by Eric Dinyer, 1995)

The painting is an allegory for the ghostly return of the depressed era of the thirties in contemporary America. The spectral Tom Joad has come from the past to share the loneliness of this category of people who live on the margin of the American society. Unlike the ghost of Hamlet's father which reveals Claudius' crime and command Hamlet to seek revenge, Tom Joad does not seek any revenge. The ghost is a silent witness who contemplates America and gives inspiration for the detached narrator who in the successive refrains is 'searching for' (12), 'waiting for'(24), and 'sitting with the ghost of Tom Joad' (36). Tom Joad is the one big soul that includes the underprivileged, the underpaid, and the misfits of America.

In the second verse, Springsteen tackles the issue of illegal immigration in America by describing the condition of a Mexican who wants to cross the American border.

Got a one-way ticket to the promised land
 You got a hole in your belly and gun in your hand
 Sleeping on a pillow of solid rock
 Bathing in the city aqueduct (16-20)

It must be noted that an estimated 6.8 million (59%) of the total 11.5 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2011 were Mexicans, making Mexico the leading source country of illegal immigrants in America (Department of Homeland Security). For economic reasons, many Mexicans leave their country and look for jobs in America so that they can send dollars to their families in Mexico. Springsteen reminds us that illegal migrants risk their lives and come to the United States thinking it is the land of milk and honey. And even if they get in the Promised Land, they will be forced to take low paying jobs in the underground economy of the country in addition to the fact that they can be caught at any moment by officers of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and be removed from the United States. Again, Springsteen sings about the condition of illegal migrants who are literally put in exile by examining the distance between their idealistic dreams and real life in America.

Tom said, “ Mom, wherever there’s a cop beating a guy
 Wherever a hungry newborn baby cries
 Where there’s a fight against the blood and hatred in the air
 Look for me, Mom, I’ll be there (25-32)

Where there’s somebody fighting for a place to stand
 Or a decent job or a helping hand
 Wherever somebody’s struggling to be free
 Look in their eyes, Mom, you’ll see me” (29-32)

In the last verse, Springsteen inserts the words of Tom Joad in the famous ‘I’ll be there’ speech. It is the passage that Tom says to his mother, Ma Joad, just before he has to leave to escape California deputies. “I’ll be all aroun’ in the dark. I’ll be ever’where—wherever you look. Wherever they’s a fight so hungry people can eat, I’ll be there. Wherever they’s a cop beatin’ up a guy, I’ll be there. [...]I’ll be in the way guys yell when they’re mad an’—I’ll be in the way kids laugh when they’re hungry an’ they know supper’s ready. An’ when our folks eat the stuff they raise an’ live in the houses they build—why, I’ll be there” (Steinbeck, 376). Tom explains to his Ma that he is leaving the family in order to struggle for the dignity of the underclass.

By paraphrasing *The Grapes of Wrath*, Springsteen exposes his philosophy of social justice and demonstrates the importance of Tom Joad for contemporary America. He believes that people of his country have the right to be able to live their lives “with some decency and dignity” (Marsh, 254). This

principle is shared by George Orwell who developed the concept of ‘common decency’. “It is the liberty to have a home of your own, to do what you like in your spare time, to choose your own amusements instead of having them chosen for you from above” (Orwell, “ the Lion and the Unicorn”). Like Orwell, Springsteen views common decency as some basic standards that give people a sense of balance and a meaning for their lives. People who live in a literal or a metaphorical exile have also the right to live with some decency.

Conclusion

If we look deeply at Springsteen’s career the past forty years, we will find out that many of his songs deal with social issues of the most deprived and disadvantaged people of America. He analyses their condition and gives clues to understand their situation, but never judges them. Springsteen sings about Americans and immigrants trapped in all broken-down small towns. Those people include young and old, single mothers, blue-collars, and people that face unemployment and homelessness. He voices their disillusionment and discontentment. He sings for them and utters their hardships. He gives them a sense of meaning for their lives. His ballads on exile convey covert statements of social or political disapproval. His method is to narrate a story with characters and a social context to make the listeners feel what it is like to be a new immigrant trying to acclimatize in a neighborhood on the edge of the city or a deprived American looking for some food or a place in a homeless shelter. He provides the listeners with reflections on social issues to reveal the contradictions that shape America.

Despite being an American and not a foreigner, Springsteen is able to create a poetics of exile in his ballads. Exile is first linked to geography, a place of belonging, a homeland. It is an estrangement from the origin, a displacement. This idea is exemplified in Orson Welles’s *Citizen Kane*. It is the enigmatic last word uttered by Charles Foster Kane: *rosebud*, when he dies in his mansion of *Xanadu*. It is Kane’s childhood which begins in poverty in Colorado and yet it is the happiest moment of his life as he plays with a sled in the snow. Living away from one’s homeland is like a piece of a jig saw puzzle, a *rosebud*, a missing piece in a man’s life⁴. Mustapha Tahmi, the bohemian and Chaabi musician of *El Gusto*, depicts the Casbah of Algiers as a paradise despite the fact the neighborhood is in a state of neglect. He contends that he “would not change this place for Las Vegas” (*El Gusto*, 2012). People find it

⁴ Orson Welles issued a press statement on January 15, 1941 in which he explained the meaning of the enigmatic word ‘rosebud’ in his motion picture *Citizen Kane*. For him, “ ‘Rosebud’ is the trade name of a cheap little sled on which Kane was playing on the day he was taken away from his home and his mother. In his subconscious it represented the simplicity, the comfort, above all the lack of responsibility in his home, and also it stood for his mother’s love which Kane never lost” (Welles, 1941).

difficult to give up the place in which they were born because it represents who they are. Exile is a journey to the unknown, but it is also a search for an identity and for a sense of meaning, and at the end of the day, exile implies reconciliation with one's self. Even if people live in their own country, they may live in exile. Consequently, they try to acclimatize and to create balance in their lives. The other should remain the other and one's otherness should be respected. They build their own *Xanadu* with a 'no trespassing!' sign and a motto that says: 'Good fences make good neighbors'.

When people are deprived from basic standards, they also live in exile within their own homeland. Springsteen encountered this exilic condition earlier in his childhood when he grew up in Freehold, New Jersey in a poor working class environment. Springsteen's artistic work has always been about exploring the exilic condition of ordinary people in America. He protests the hardships American characters face in "Born in the USA" (1984) claiming that they are "born down in a dead man's town" (1). He examines the distance between American reality and the American Dream in "The Promised Land" (1978) suggesting that his protagonist is so desperate that "The dogs on Main Street howl"(8) when they see him. He shows his anger after the 2008 financial crisis in "Death to My Hometown" (2012) and blames greedy bankers, who according to him, "destroyed our families, factories, and they took our homes" (11).

Springsteen is America's underclass poet. As a folk singer-songwriter, he follows the path of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, two folk singers who created ballads and believed strongly in their effectiveness. Springsteen summarizes the idea of creating poetry or "the genesis and power of creativity" in the following definition: "It's all about how you are putting what you do together. The elements you're using don't matter. Purity of human expression and experience is not confined to guitars, to tubes, to turntables, to microchips. There is no right way, no pure way, of doing it. There's just doing it" ("Springsteen's Keynote speech at South By Southwest in Austin, Texas, March 15, 2012").

Springsteen sings ballads about exile, injustice, and hopelessness for people in America and all over the world. He also sings about hope, happiness and the fulfillment of the American Dream as he typifies the successful American artist of European descent. Springsteen is the American Dream. He is Steinbeck's one big soul. He is the ghost of Tom Joad who will be there singing for any deprived human being. He is America, an all-inclusive country in which each member has the right to enjoy a share of the national pie, a land of hope and dreams, a journey on a train that carries "saints and sinners, losers and winners, whores and gamblers, lost souls" (Springsteen, 19-22). I can almost hear it coming. Here is the train...

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