



Transatlantica

Revue d'études américaines. American Studies Journal

2 | 2019

Creating the Child Audience: Media and the Invention
of Modern American Childhood

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/14872>

DOI: 10.4000/transatlantica.14872

ISSN: 1765-2766

Publisher

Association française d'Etudes Américaines (AFEA)

Electronic reference

Khaled Chouana, “Of Exile in America: The Immigrant Experience in “American Land” (2006) and “The Ghost of Tom Joad” (1995) by Bruce Springsteen”, *Transatlantica* [Online], 2 | 2019, Online since 15 September 2020, connection on 01 February 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/14872> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/transatlantica.14872>

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Of Exile in America: The Immigrant Experience in “American Land” (2006) and “The Ghost of Tom Joad” (1995) by Bruce Springsteen

Khaled Chouana

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

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, 2002 173).

Said uses strong and emotive words such as “terrible, sadness, and sorrow” 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” (2002 138). Said views exile as collective sufferings that people undergo from the very first moment they have been 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 emigrated from Palestine to the United States.

- 2 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 immigrated to the United States.

- 3 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. In American literature, 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. These authors' autobiographical accounts tell their experience from an exclusively retrospective first person whereby the narrator claims that "I, and only I, am responsible for what I recall and see" (Said, 2000 13). Each autobiography deals with the life and experience of one individual.
- 4 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 academic title. 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 these factors contribute to disenable them 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.
- 5 The aim of this paper is to explore the experience of exile in two folk songs by 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 follow 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 and that they embody some aesthetic and poetic dimensions.
- 6 Nicknamed The Boss, Bruce Springsteen was born in New Jersey in 1949. He is a singer-songwriter, a live performer along with the 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 veterans. Springsteen is widely known for his Americana working-class songs and has sold 65.5 million albums in the United States putting him in sixteenth position of the Recording Industry Association of America top-selling artists of all time.
- 7 Springsteen is a singer *of* exile rather than a singer *in* exile. Instead of focusing on the writers in exile, this 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 a non-literal exile because it is experienced by people who were born in the United States. 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 Americans who are the

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

- 8 It is important to note that Springsteen is both a rock singer and a folk singer, but in this paper he will be regarded as a folk singer. American folk music is a 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 from 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 1920s until the 1950s, musicologists and collectors like John, 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, to name just a few, popularized the folk song and brought about the revival of American folk music from the 1940s. For instance, The Weavers, a folk music group founded by Pete Seeger and based in Greenwich Village in New York, sang American ballads, children's songs, and labor songs and sold millions of records including a version of Leadbelly's "Goodnight, Irene" (1950) which peaked at #1 on the Billboard's chart. The folk music revival reached its height with a new generation of singers-songwriters of the 1960s like Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Phil Ochs. Other artists like Steve Earle, Ani DiFranco, and Bruce Springsteen emerged subsequently as contemporary folk singers.
- 9 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 USA* (1984). Being an artist who uses popular culture to address the social injustices faced by 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 was particularly interested in the folk songs of Woody Guthrie, a folksinger from Oklahoma who was famous for his Dust Bowl ballads that deal with the Great Depression and the social injustice of the Thirties. Woody Guthrie is one of the most influential American folk singers of the twentieth century. Several folk singers have followed in his footsteps and engaged in social activism, including Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Bruce Springsteen among others.
- 10 Guthrie's songs 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.
- 11 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 covered thirteen folk music songs made popular by folk singer Pete Seeger. On this 2006 album, the eight stanzas of "American Land" tell the story of a new immigrant who settles in America and describes it as a Promised Land. "The Ghost of Tom Joad" is the title track of Springsteen's 1995 acoustic album and it 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. They undergo hardships and consequently they experience a metaphorical exile as they feel disenchanting with their own country. Their metaphorical exile, as I will demonstrate below, is also shared by John Steinbeck's protagonist Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* who expressed his anger and disillusionment during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

- 12 Springsteen has spent his artistic life judging the distance between American myths and real life in the USA. 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 rags-to-riches tales; rather, it is like Said's words: "death but without death's ultimate mercy" (2002 138). 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.

Exile: Background and Implications

- 13 What does the word exile mean? What types of exile are there? What is at stake in trying to categorize various forms of exile, and to what extent shall immigrants be regarded as experiencing exile? A specific definition of exile needs to be given. Exile comes from the Latin *exilium* which is derived from the verb *ex-sulere*, which literally means "to take out." It is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as "a situation in which you are forced to leave your country or home and go to live in a foreign country." Exile is "a geographical concept. It is a synonym of the uprooted experience of living abroad, away from one's motherland." (Zeng 1) The previous definitions have a negative connotation. 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 may be 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.
- 14 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 the 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.

15 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 "[e]very 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, 2002 143). Exile enhances the state of being different, namely alterity. It creates a "self-other" dichotomy where the self is different from the other. People move to a foreign country where they experience self-estrangement and feel inappropriate. Exile haunts their existence. Said's judgment 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 2000 autobiography is entitled *Out of Place: A Memoir*.

16 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.¹

17 Expatriates voluntarily choose to live in a foreign country, mostly for social or artistic reasons. Writers of the Lost Generation such as Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott 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* (1926) 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* (1934) 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* (1916). 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.

18 Finally, the term émigré is ambiguously subject to several interpretations. Are émigrés like exiles? It is worth mentioning that émigrés, points out the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, are persons who "emigrate for political reasons". Said adds that when it

comes to émigrés "Choice in the matter is certainly a possibility. Colonial officials, missionaries, technical experts, mercenaries and military advisers on loan may in a sense live in exile, but they have not been banished" (2002 144). As a matter of fact, émigrés are not expelled from their country. Besides, they are free to return home whenever they want. Yet, they may face the same uprootedness and homelessness shared by all exiles. Therefore, they may be considered as immigrants in exile.

- 19 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. Immigrants and exiles therefore share similar experiences as they leave their homeland. That is why this paper will mainly consider what they have in common.
- 20 After categorizing the different geographical phenomena related to exile and their implications, one needs to go back to one concept stated previously: metaphorical exile. Springsteen is, as it has been said above, a singer of exile for both foreign 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. 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 Shartz). 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," notes Darko Suvin.
- 21 Indeed, many people experience a metaphorical exile without leaving their country. Michael Boss defines exile as "the status or experience of individuals and collectives who, against or with their own will, are subject to exclusion, expulsion, removal, severance, marginality, dislocation, and estrangement for political, religious, cultural, sexual, and economic reasons" (19). This holistic definition includes symbolic uses and accordingly it can give us a full understanding of the complex social, economic, and psychological structures of exile.
- 22 In *Finite Transcendence*, Steven A. Burr argues that existential exile "arises when one recognizes one's fundamental otherness with respect to the world. In this sense, exile is the loss not of 'home' but of 'being-at-home' in the world" (49). Burr then concludes by contending that exile "cannot be limited to reference to the purely physical and immediate separation of an individual from one's home. [...] the *solum* of exile refers not to the physical ground of one's homeland but instead to relation as a more fundamental ground of *being*" (54). Thus, being in exile can mean more than being displaced from one's place of birth. Exile has also an existential dimension that one needs to take into consideration in order to fully understand what this concept truly means.

- 23 In this paper, the term exile will be applied to the socioeconomic situation of the American poor in a non-literal manner as it can be relevant in a non-geographical context and from a symbolical perspective, exile is but an extension of poverty. Some characters of Springsteen's songs, as it will be shown, are not exposed to a geographical exile; rather, their social exclusion creates the existential conditions of estrangement and hopelessness that are encountered by exiles. This exile, I argue, is metaphorical and therefore I will be using the concept exile in the geographical and the non-literal sense throughout this article.
- 24 Exile, whether geographical or metaphorical, means the isolation of the common people when they confront hardships. It is an existential condition that concerns both immigrants and ordinary Americans. My point is that ordinary Americans and immigrants share the same hopelessness and disenchantment caused by their social exclusion. Immigrants experience the state of being in exile from the very moment they leave their homeland to settle in poor neighborhoods. Americans on the other hand experience a metaphorical exile as they face poverty. They may include blue-collar factories workers, part-time workers holding odd jobs that require little training or skill, single mothers receiving welfare, and unemployed and homeless people. These categories of Americans do not face a geographical exile, yet they are symbolically exiled subjects as a result of how economic and political institutions deal with them. Everyone has the right to fulfill the American Dream; however, lack of skills and education beyond high school leaves a person far fewer chances to get a well-paid job. When someone takes a part-time job to cover basic living expenses, this person's life is a constant day-to-day struggle in the midst of uncertainty. These American citizens live in a kind of denaturalized world in which nothing makes sense for them. They feel like foreigners in a country that does not give them the opportunity to enjoy a good life, which results in the experience of metaphorical exile, of feeling like an exile in one's own homeland.
- 25 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. They need to adjust to a new environment, a new culture and customs, 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 exile that results from immigrating to the United States.

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

- 26 Springsteen celebrates the experience of immigration in his joyful song "American Land." Immigrants 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 23 million applications were submitted for the Department of State's 2018 Diversity Immigrant Visa Program). However, the United States only gives 55,000 permanent resident visas annually. It must be noted also that the federal government passed 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.

- 27 "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 speaks the 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 meter and a particular rhyme scheme. Thus, "American Land" is a folk ballad. The term ballad derives from the Old Provençal *ballada*, meaning "dancing." 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 quatrain reveals its metrical patterns and rhyme schemes as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Scansion of the first quatrain in "American Land"

× × / × / × × / × / × /	
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 carefully listening to the quatrain as sung by the artist. The result comes more from the listener's interpretation rather than a typical syllable pattern. For instance, the phrase "while I am" in the second line includes three syllables: /waɪl/, /aɪ/, and /æm/, but when listening to the song, Springsteen uses contraction and elision resulting in a monosyllabic word /waɪlm/. The purpose is to make sure each line has twelve syllables.

- 28 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 uses the anapest in the introductory quatrain to show the new immigrant's high spirit 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 deeply believes it is a land of milk and honey in which every dream come true. The rhyme scheme in each quatrain is aabb as shown in figure 2:

Figure 2: Rhyming pattern of the first quatrain in "American Land"

×	×	×	×	a
×	×	×	×	a
×	×	×	×	b
×	×	×	×	b

- 29 The use of rhymes 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.

- 30 Springsteen ironically 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 for free; rather, they have the guarantee of achieving a successful life through perseverance and hard work. Springsteen uses assonance in the second line by repeating the diphthong /iəʳ/ 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 work.
- 31 The music of "American Land" is similar to the traditional Scottish song "Gallant Forty Twa" which was popularized by Irish folk group The Clancy Brothers in 1964. 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 song's main character finally arrives at New York City. "I docked at Ellis Island in the city of light

and spire" (13). Springsteen uses the expression "the city of light and spire" metonymously to describe New York City with its lights and skyscrapers. Ellis Island was New York's immigrant inspection station (1892-1954) where 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. In American popular culture, this feeling is also represented in the scene from *The Godfather Part II* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1974) where the boy Vito Corleone 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.

- 32 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 and for all. In 1894 on an immigrant ship, W.E.B. Du Bois expresses his feeling on 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!'" (182). In 1963, Du Bois symbolically became a citizen of Ghana and was buried in its capital, Accra, in the same year. In his unpublished essay *I Choose Exile*, Richard Wright describes his emotions when he left the United States: "I felt relieved when my ship sailed past the Statue of Liberty!" Wright's gesture can be interpreted as an ironic Ellis Island scene in which the destination of his journey is not America but France.
- 33 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 workers' surnames and national, ethnic, or racial origin 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.

- 34 There is currently a rather high level of equality between Americans and immigrants in the United States. While even green-card holders can neither vote nor remain out of the country for unlimited periods of time, both Americans and permanent residents have almost the same economic and social 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.
- 35 It must be noted that even if immigrants become American citizens, it can be difficult for them to leave the United States. Many find themselves trapped in their adopted country as they work nine to five, forty hours a week, fifty two weeks a year. Many

have no annual leave since the United States 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 time because most states in the USA have adopted the "at-will employment" principle that allows employers to lay off employees without having to provide a justification. On top of that, many immigrant and non-immigrant working-class families live far from the urban centers because of their modest incomes. Their exilic condition of living literally on the margin represents a form of deterritorialization, a movement from the developed area to the undeveloped one as noted by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: "the center itself has its organized enclaves of underdevelopment, its reservations and its ghettos as interior peripheries" (231). The authors of *Anti-Oedipus* give the example of the United States by quoting Pierre Moussa, the French economist, who defined the United States as "a fragment of the Third World that has succeeded and has preserved its immense zones of underdevelopment" (quoted in Deleuze and Guattari 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 experience a metaphorical 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.

Metaphorical Exile and Hopelessness in "The Ghost of Tom Joad" (1995)

- 36 "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 and won the 1997 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Folk Album. 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.
- 37 Tom Joad is the main character of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel which depicts 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 rest of his family 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 thousands of other Okies to seek jobs and a better future. However, when they reach California they settle in a farm-workers' camp that offers low-paying jobs. Additionally, they are being harassed by the California police deputies. 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 becomes a fugitive. Tom Joad embodies the Great Depression anti-hero who fights against oppression and injustice. He is a Robin Hood for working-class America, a man of the people and 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 Woody Guthrie wrote in 1940 just after seeing John Ford's motion picture. Springsteen's song can be viewed as a Guthrie Dust Bowl ballad set in contemporary America. It explores, I argue, the metaphorical 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
 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 (1-8)

In the first stanza, Springsteen depicts a contemporary America similar to the Dust Bowl era. The people described above 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. The narrator is psychologically fragmented and desperate, as shown in the sentences he uses. He uses a nominal phrase rather than a full sentence 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. The minor key and Springsteen's soft voice produce a somber, gloomy atmosphere in which there is not much light for excluded Americans.

- 38 Springsteen's ballad is also about subtly criticizing politicians as he ironically mentions George H.W. Bush's New World Order, a phrase the president used in the aftermath of the Cold War to redefine international relationships among the world's countries. The understatement suggests that American decision-makers' priority should be to focus on domestic affairs, rather than 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" (Tom Zimny). This distance is also a major theme in *The Grapes of Wrath* when Steinbeck examines the gap between the Joads' idealistic expectations and migrants' real life in California. Both Steinbeck and Springsteen examine the metaphorical exile of the downtrodden in 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.

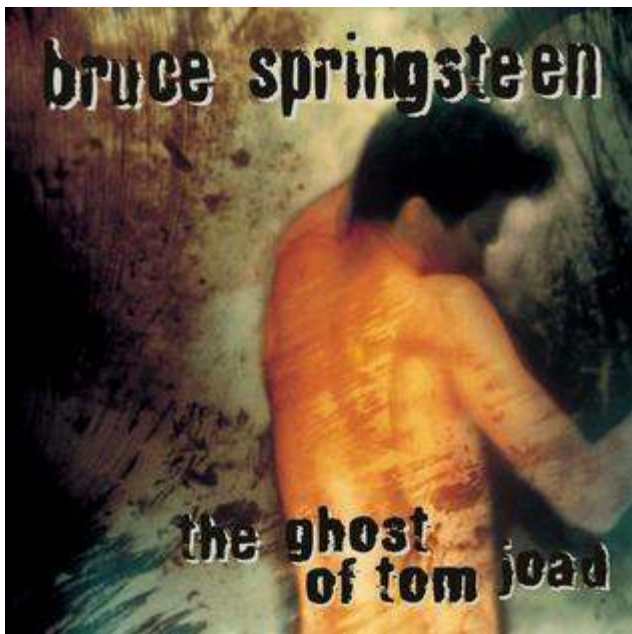
Well the highway is alive tonight
 But nobody's kidding nobody about where it goes
 I'm sitting down here in the campfire light
 Searching for the ghost of Tom Joad (9-12)

The lyrics of the refrain suggest that little has changed 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 tell the difference between ghosts and real persons, appearances 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.

- 39 On the other hand, looking for the ghost of Tom Joad can be viewed as looking for the values and ideals of Steinbeck's main character. Throughout *The Grapes of Wrath*, Tom Joad is transformed from an individual only interested in his needs to a man devoted to his family and community. He becomes a social activist, a man of the 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 Sperit—the human sperit—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, the notion 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—"ghost" having an etymological connection with "soul" through the old English *gast*, which means supernatural being. The morals of Tom Joad embodied in his ghost connect all poor Americans and unify them. Exile becomes relevant for those people who form one big soul and find in the poetry of Springsteen a refuge, a home.
- 40 The album's cover art is a painting which represents a homeless person sleeping on the pavement. It can also stand for the ghost of Tom Joad as written on the picture (figure 3).

Figure 3: Cover art by Eric Dinyer for *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (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 returned from the past to share the loneliness of this category of people who live on the margins of American society.

Unlike the ghost of Hamlet's father which reveals Claudius's crime and commands 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 oversoul that includes the underprivileged, the underpaid, and the misfits of America.

- 41 In the second verse, Springsteen addresses the issue of illegal immigration in America by describing the condition of a Mexican who wants to cross the US-Mexico 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 recognized that five of the songs on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* focus on Mexican immigration, "The Ghost of Tom Joad," "Balboa Park," "The Line," "Sinaloa Cowboys," and "Across the Border." The latter is of particular relevance and deserves deep examination. In fact, "Across the Border" is a lover's prayer for two Mexicans who attempt to cross illegally onto American soil. Womack and Zolten suggest that "Across the Border" deals with the story of the Promised Land: "The song does not mention the Bible story explicitly, but just as the Jordan separated the Israelites from their destination, so does the Bravo separate the would-be immigrant from his destination" (153). However, Springsteen pointedly omits to mention whether the narrator, who is also the protagonist of the song, seeks to return back to his homeland or escape from an alienating one. This illustrates both forms of exile discussed in this paper.

Someday we'll drink from God's blessed waters
 And eat the fruit from the vine.
 I know love and fortune will be mine
 Somewhere across the border. (33-36)

Springsteen personalizes and humanizes migrant stories in "Across the Border" and suggests that love transcends boundaries. He also offers a clever means to overcome literal and figurative exile.

- 42 "The Ghost of Tom Joad" is also about the geographical exile of undocumented migrants who enter the United States out of economic necessity. According to the Department of Homeland Security, an estimated 6.5 million (55%) of the total 11.9 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2015 were Mexicans, making Mexico the leading source country of illegal immigrants in America. For economic reasons, many Mexicans leave their country and look for jobs in the United States so that they can send dollars to their families in Mexico. And even if they get into the Promised Land, they will be forced to take low-paying jobs in the underground economy, in addition to the fact that they can be caught at any moment by the officers of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and 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
 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." (25-32)

- 43 In the last verse, Springsteen inserts the words of Tom Joad in his famous "I'll be there" speech, where just before he has to run away from the California deputies, Tom explains to his mother, Ma Joad, that he is leaving the family in order to struggle for the dignity of the underclass:

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)

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 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). Like Orwell, Springsteen views common decency as a set of basic standards that give people a sense of balance and a meaning for their lives. People who live in exile—whether geographical or metaphorical—have also the right to live with some decency.

Conclusion

- 44 In the past forty years of Springsteen's career, many of his songs deal with the social issues faced by the most deprived and disadvantaged people in the United States. He analyses their condition and gives clues to understand their situation, but never judges them. Springsteen sings about people trapped in broken-down small towns. They include Americans and immigrants, young and old, single mothers, blue-collar workers, and people that face unemployment and homelessness. He voices their disillusionment and discontentment. He sings for them and expresses their hardships. He gives them a sense of meaning for their lives. His ballads on exile convey covert statements of social and 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 adjust 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 twenty-first-century America.
- 45 Throughout this paper, I have assumed that Springsteen is a singer of exile rather than a singer in exile. Further reflection is necessary to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of exile from an artistic perspective. This can be achieved by having a critical look at the music of several singers who lived or still live in exile. Musicians like Bonga (Angola), Yungchen Lhamo (Tibet), Inti-Illimani (Chile), Iham al-Madfai (Iraq), and Miriam Makeba (South Africa), to name but a few, released albums that addressed their experience of exile. Analyzing these musicians' songs can help us understand their human experience of living in exile.
- 46 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. It is a displacement, an

estrangement from one's origin, place of belonging, and homeland. This idea is exemplified in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941). It is "Rosebud," the enigmatic last word uttered by Charles Foster Kane 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 jigsaw puzzle, a rosebud, a missing piece in a man's life.² Mustapha Tahmi, the bohemian and Chaabi musician of *El Gusto* (dir. Safinez Bousbia, 2012), 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." People are reluctant 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 a sense of meaning, and at the end of the day, exile implies reconciliation with one's self.

- 47 When people are deprived of basic standards, they also live in a metaphorical exile within their own homeland. Consequently, they try to acclimatize, to create balance in their lives. The other should remain the other and one's otherness should be respected. Like Kane in Welles's film, they create their own Xanadu with a "no trespassing!" sign and a motto that says "Good fences make good neighbors."
- 48 Springsteen's artistic work has always been about exploring the condition of ordinary people in America. He protests against 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 the American Dream and the American reality 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), blaming greedy bankers who "destroyed our families, factories, and they took our homes" (11).
- 49 Springsteen is America's underclass poet, a contemporary Woody Guthrie. 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 summarized the idea of creating poetry or "the genesis and power of creativity" when he gave a keynote address at South By Southwest in Austin, Texas, on March 15, 2012: "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."
- 50 Springsteen keeps on singing ballads about injustice and hopelessness for people in the United States 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, in the words of "Land of Hope and Dreams" (1999), carries "saints and sinners, losers and winners, whores and gamblers, lost souls" (19-22). I can almost hear it coming. Here is the train...

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NOTES

1. From an ontological viewpoint, philosophers like Martin Heidegger claim that otherness has to be eliminated. The being of the other is defined by the same and reduced to it (cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. 1927).
2. 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*. He stated that "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" (quoted in Mulvey 82).

ABSTRACTS

The aim of this paper is to explore the experience of exile in two folk ballads by Bruce Springsteen, "American Land" (2006) and "The Ghost of Tom Joad" (1995). The paper examines the aesthetic and poetic aspects of the two ballads. "American Land" tells the story of a new immigrant who settles in America and portrays it as a Promised Land. In "The Ghost of Tom Joad," Springsteen suggests that ordinary people undergo a metaphorical exile that has led John Steinbeck's protagonist Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) to express his anger against the injustice of the Great Depression.

L'objet de cet article est d'explorer l'expérience de l'exil dans deux ballades de Bruce Springsteen, « American Land » (2006) et « The Ghost of Tom Joad » (1995). Il sera question d'examiner les aspects esthétiques et poétiques de ces deux ballades. « American Land » aborde le thème de l'immigration aux États-Unis et propose le récit d'un nouvel immigrant qui dépeint son nouveau pays d'accueil comme une terre promise. Dans « The Ghost of Tom Joad », Springsteen suggère que les gens ordinaires en Amérique contemporaine subissent un exil métaphorique qui a conduit Tom Joad, personnage principal du roman de John Steinbeck *Les Raisins de la colère* (1939) à exprimer sa colère contre les injustices de la Grande Dépression.

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Subjects: La boîte à musique

Mots-clés: exil, Bruce Springsteen, immigration, ballade, Tom Joad, désespoir, altérité

Keywords: exile, Bruce Springsteen, immigration, ballad, Tom Joad, hopelessness, otherness

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