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MA Dissertation

“Searching for the Ghost of Tom Joad”: Resurrecting Steinbeck’s Gaze

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INTRODUCTION

What is this land America? So many travel there,
I'm going now while I'm still young my darling meet me there
Wish me luck my lovely I'll send for you when I can
And we'll make our home in the American Land.¹

The words "American Land", made famous by the US singer-songwriter Pete Seeger and translated from a 1940's song by Andrew Kovaly, a Slovakian immigrant, would appear to point to a sense of hope and plenty, referring to a place where the poem's protagonist could fulfill his desire of a decent job and a home in the promised land.

The same might be said when the grandfather of Steinbeck's Tom Joad, in the opening chapters of *The Grapes of Wrath*, was obliged— contrary to his will—to follow the family and head for California in search of the promised land and "his dream of eating as many grapes as he could" (Steinbeck: 83).

But this concept of the American Land as a land of opportunities and dreams that also symbolizes a vision of justice and fairness becomes, instead, a place of injustice and social unconsciousness. From the first immigrants that populated the American Land up to Steinbeck's time, the country underwent a transformation from a place that welcomed newcomers and their aspirations to an aggressive marketplace in which the weak were pushed aside and where the traditional values of rural America—hospitality, opportunity, equality—were ignored. Steinbeck was a voice that warned about the suffering of innocent people at the time of the Great Depression (1929-39). He depicted the plight of poor Okie² farmers forced to migrate to California. *The Grapes of Wrath* was not just an epic novel but was also something of a journalistic documentary based on non-fictional characters. The aim was to tell as wide an audience as possible that this America land was not such a utopia after all. This is exactly the approach taken by Bruce Springsteen in the album entitled *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995). Springsteen's characters evolve from being self-absorbed to being

¹ Bruce Springsteen, *American Land (The Seeger Sessions, 2006)*, is inspired by Pete Seeger's *He Lies in the American Land*, in turn based on a song by the Slovak-born US steelworker Andrew Kovaly. See <http://www.labornotes.org/node/1400>

² 'Okie' was the term given to rural migrants from Oklahoma. For further information, see Donald Worster's *Dust Bowl, The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (1979).

socially conscious. In this sense, the whole album is a legacy of the character of Tom Joad, by which I mean that, just as Joad’s personal suffering develops into a focus for exposing injustice, so too Springsteen’s album moves beyond describing personal issues to considering the more general suffering that these issues reveal.

Springsteen’s lyrics speak of failed dreams in the Promised Land, relating the same social injustices as Steinbeck did, but—with the presence of Tom Joad’s spirit pervading the songs—placing these stories in the social and historical context of the 1990s. The album describes the lives of Mexican immigrants trying to cross the border, and the change in American values; it speaks of the rise of urban decay and the loss of dignity and hope. Through his characters’ sense of failure and disillusion, Springsteen underlines the decay, darkness and emptiness of modern America, a frighteningly dehumanized society that has remained invisible to the eyes of many but which these songs—the veritable ghost of Tom Joad—bring to our attention and understanding. Reminding us of the social purpose of Steinbeck’s Joad, Springsteen’s character observes:

...Wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy
Wherever a hungry newborn baby cries
Where there's a fight'gainst the blood and hatred in the air
Look for me Mom I'll be there
Wherever there's somebody fightin' for a place to stand
Or a decent job or a helpin' hand
Wherever somebody's strugglin' to be free
Look in their eyes Mom you'll see me.³

My intention in this dissertation is to trace the ways in which Springsteen in effect echoes Steinbeck by revealing the injustices of his country. My aim is to show that Springsteen adapts the same approach as the novelist and covers many of the same themes, with the purpose of heightening our sensitivity to an underprivileged ‘other’ America in search of its Tom Joad to tell its story.⁴ Springsteen’s

³ “The Ghost of Tom Joad”.

⁴ Considering that Steinbeck, as a writer and a journalist, chronicled about everyday people and that Springsteen has been doing the same as a song-writer and a performer, we have focussed this dissertation on the written or performed “word”, studying the text and context of both writer’s works, and have left aside any analysis of Springsteen the musician, playing solo or with The E Street Band. Springsteen’s stories sometimes turn to be lyrical compositions with full poetic power and political messages where the music is not actually needed to fulfil his aim, and this is especially so with some of his “folk” or even “gospel-like” lyrics. Of course, music can permeate culture through recordings, performances, or

lyrics in this album deal with the exploitation of workers, the credibility of authorities and the lack of recognition given to hard work and effort. In some songs we hear about the loss of hope for the Promised Land and of dreams sometimes almost found but always lost, such as those experienced by immigrants from the south. In others, we see the exploitation of rural and urban America in which marginalized groups are often in conflict with authority and power. US immigration policy, the understanding and acceptance (or not) of the ethnic “other”, an exploration of joint destinies, human vulnerability and other emotional struggles all form part of this album.

Springsteen’s issues are strikingly similar to Steinbeck’s concerns (the role of authorities, the condition of migrants and workers, and the emptiness of the Promised Land). Just as Steinbeck used a specific setting and characters to denounce the injustices of the 1930s through *The Grapes of Wrath*, a parallelism can also be established between this and Springsteen’s vision of contemporary USA. The consequences of an advanced capitalist society, political struggles, free markets and unemployment appear in Bruce Springsteen’s album with the aim of warning American society of the dangers of a dehumanized world. Both artists try to make visible what is invisible; thus, the ghost of Tom Joad is a constant presence in Springsteen connecting us to Steinbeck; he is a witness who is still haunting all of us, warning us that the same mistakes from the 1930s are being repeated. In doing so, Springsteen resurrects Steinbeck’s moral vision. Assessing how this is attained is the purpose of this dissertation.

The approach that will be taken in this dissertation involves a close reading of Springsteen’s lyrics in relation to the thematic concerns of the *Tom Joad* album, enquiring into the sometimes multiple levels of significance that these lyrics can be seen to express, in order to show the manner in which Springsteen mirrors the

gatherings at concerts that influence a whole community. How the musicians perform, how they move... everything counts. Every well-rehearsed comment between songs helps to introduce a topic or may even try to establish direct complicity with the audience. This ambit is precisely what the analysis of a musician’s “texts” cannot attempt to convey; it is an ambit of enormous—possibly even far greater—importance than the purely textual. But a dissertation such as this one does not have the scope to consider this question, and, in any case, my primary concern here is literary.

broader thematic concerns of Steinbeck's novel but also adapts and reinterprets these themes for his own time. In this sense, I will be trying to underline the ways in which, for Springsteen's vision of his country in the 1990s, the presence of troublesome issues from decades before is one that can, in certain ways, still be seen, felt and experienced. It is in this manner that the ghost of Tom Joad is summoned.

The content will be divided in three parts. In part one, the life and work of both artists is going to be studied in relation to the context of *The Grapes of Wrath's* novel and *The Ghost of Tom Joad's* album and what both works meant to their authors. Then, we will trace parallelisms between Steinbeck as a writer and Springsteen as a song-writer and their vision of the American spirit through their careers and experience working for and about their country. In part two, we will analyze the lyrics of Springsteen's album and its many layers of meaning taking into account Springsteen's purpose and also comparing and tracing continuously back to Steinbeck's *Grapes*. Finally, we will outline the conclusions to this study.

PART ONE

1.1. STEINBECK: HIS TIME AND HIS WORK

John Ernst Steinbeck was born in February 27, 1902, in the agricultural center of Salinas Valley in Northern California, a place well-known for its farming of lettuce and broccoli which will become the setting for many of his stories especially during the writing of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Steinbeck’s life followed the pattern of other typical Americans of his era. Born in a peaceful and rural community, he left the countryside to go to college and he tried luck in the big city. Despite being enrolled at Stanford University, he left without a degree. However, he had already made the choice of becoming a writer, finally achieving a success beyond imagined with a total of 27 books including novels, non-fiction narratives, collection of stories and scripts for films.

He migrated constantly, just like his ancestors who coming from Irish and German ascendancy settled in a number of places. Finally, Steinbeck’s grandfather established as a miller in Salinas. The background of the family itself has been a source for Steinbeck’s inspirational vision of the Holy Land and in fact he makes use of Christian allusions in many of his works. Besides, during his trips Steinbeck acquired a great experience to chronicle how the American Dream was turning into nightmare.

He was an avid reader of the Bible, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Dickens, getting inspiration from all of their works. His beginnings as a writer count with experiences such as his contribution to the Salinas High School Newspaper among others. A lack of distinction as a reporter brought him to be rejected many times so that he tried to make a living with other jobs.

Steinbeck was an extremely private person until the end of his life. He rarely appeared in public and rarely granted interviews. He wrote about places, people he had known and he based his stories on “his observation” trying to reserve his role of moralist until *The Grapes of Wrath* was written. At that moment, as the critic Warren French exposes in his *Criticism and Interpretation of John Steinbeck 1902-1968* “the

very private vision that enabled Steinbeck to transcend his earlier work in *The Grapes of Wrath* won him powerful friends as well as powerful enemies and allowed the political man within him to emerge to instruct the world directly through journalism” (19).

Since *The Grapes of Wrath*’s publication on March 4, 1939, the novel was listed as a top seller. Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize for the best novel of the year along with other awards such as the National Book Award. Furthermore, Steinbeck was received in the prestigious National Institute of Arts and Letters along with Faulkner (one of his favorite writers together with Hemingway). Since then, many editions and translations have been produced even though it was not until 1940 when the novel was adapted to the screen by John Ford that Steinbeck’s income made him affluent.

In fact, “the seeds” for his masterpiece were sown when Steinbeck visited the migrants working camps of California in order to prepare a series of articles for the San Francisco News which he was going to use to write his “Californian novels” and “Dust Bowl fiction” including *In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath* where he depicted the lives of migrant laborers working in California soil. Steinbeck has always been essentially American, writing for and about people. It is worth to mention other novels such as *Red Pony* (which tells about his own childhood), as well as *To a God Unknown* and his first success *Tortilla Flat* (1935) where he begins to tell about “homesteaders and their worship for the land” as well as classless and homeless young men respectively.

Trips, expeditions, interest in documentary films always related to the experience of people during the Depression were his fields of interest. His nonfiction body of work which stands for democratic values where he describes himself as skeptical of power and privileges was not as well-known as his fictional one. His negative portrayal of capitalism and his sympathy for the plight of migrant workers became a highlight in his writings during the 30s. It was precisely in 1936 when his career as a journalist began and from that time up to 1966, Steinbeck wrote mainly nonfiction pieces published in a variety of magazines and newspapers in America and abroad. Forgotten at times, he has proved to be relevant and modern even nowadays.

It took about 10 years for Steinbeck to write *The Grapes of Wrath*, and from 1930 when he married his first wife Carol Hanning up to 1942, he developed as a writer

from an obscure author to one of the most acclaimed writers in the world. During this period, he also met Ed Ricketts who was to be his closest friend. Both, Carol and Ed were Steinbeck’s most fervent advisors and supporters while writing *The Grapes*. At first the novel was entitled “L’Affaire Lettuceberg” but not feeling confident enough about it, the final version was named “The Grapes of Wrath” following his wife’s advice. The connection to the phrase from “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” that alludes to the Book of Revelation in the Bible, containing prophecies of the coming Apocalypse: “And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and casted it into the great winepress of the wrath of God” which Peter Lisca mentions in *Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretations* (47) makes clear reference to one of the interchapters of *The Grapes* (476): “In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, heavy for the vintage” which made allusion to how the okies felt through their experiences with “the new corporations” in front of a purposeful destruction of food in order to keep the prices high. These corporations were the ones that at that time substituted the former visible rich Americans for powerful entities (unknown to many), which were ready to exploit the workers, trying to keep labor costs at a minimum while taking maximum profits. Through Steinbeck’s characters, the reader can guess about the purpose of these corporations, through the hints that the writer uses to awaken the consciousness about the increasing labor uneasiness which was starting to organize at the time, which in fact does not materialize in the novel.

The Grapes had a bitter, ironic and pessimistic tone with the aim of making people understand what was taking place in their country. The novel which began like a “Naturalistic” work with a description of a land devastated by dust storms, became a drama of social consciousness as Warren French would say about the narrative. In fact, it describes “the awakening of a man’s consciousness”:

This you may say of man-when theories change and crash, when schools, philosophies, when narrow dark alleys of thought, national, religious, economic, grow and disintegrate, man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully, mistakenly sometimes. Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back. (French: 92).

The focus of the story is the Joad’s family taking “the step forward” mentioned above. It is not a statistic novel but a dynamic one in which people learn that survival depends on adapting and learning to change, even if at the end of the story no solution is given to their problems.

Although the film and the novel enjoyed of a huge audience, Steinbeck was accused of being “a communist advocating revolution” by a congressman of Oklahoma as the critic Peter Lisca reminds the reader in his novel *John Steinbeck’s Nature and Myth* (18). Others alienated him from the rural California he had grown up responding to his work as if he had committed some kind of treason with the story he had narrated. One decade after his enormous success, he was dismissed and his writings went out of fashion with the end of the Depression. Through his realistic and sometimes imaginative writings, his stories were populated with struggling characters and it has to be said that from 1990 to 2004 he was one of the most banned authors although nowadays many of his works are required reading lists in American high schools.

Steinbeck died on December 20, 1968, after the defeat of the political party he had supported since 1952 (at that moment under the administration of Lyndon Baines Johnson)⁵ and just before the withdrawal from Vietnam War⁶ began. He died at the end of a political era which was marked by the end of many promises launched by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁷ In fact, as the literary critic Warren French had summarized in his *Criticism and Interpretation of John Steinbeck 1902-1968*:

Steinbeck’s life had spanned two-thirds of the century that saw Americans change from horse-drawn provincials to a jet-propelled megapolitans; that saw the United States change from a great mecca for immigrants seeking freedom and personal dignity to an exclusionist country – a closed corporation with limited preference for the kindred of earliest shareholders; and that also saw this country change from a sanctuary rigidly isolated from international power politics to a self-appointed world policeman hopelessly bogged down in a thankless struggle in a remote area of the world. (18)

The many changes that occurred during that period were to transform The United States forever with consequences involving struggles and injustices that were to be reflected in Bruce Springsteen’s body of work some years later as we will see through his lyrics.

⁵ Lyndon Baines Johnson, US President from 1963-1969.

⁶ The Vietnam War (1958-1975)

⁷ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, US President from 1933-1945.

1.2. SPRINGSTEEN: HIS TIME AND HIS WORK

Bruce Frederick Joseph Springsteen was born on September 29, 1949. The Springsteen family lived in a working-class section of Freehold, New Jersey, called Texas because of the high amount of Southern Americans who migrated there. According to David Masciotra in his *Working on a Dream*, “Freehold never found prosperity and was destined to be permanently blue collar. During the 1950s and the 1960s, the most stable source of work came from the rug mill on the edge of town where Springsteen’s father worked for several years”. (1) The mill was the economic and “spiritual centre” of the town which marked the people living there. During Springsteen’s youth, differences between blacks and whites made relations difficult. If at the beginning, Springsteen attended Catholic school, later he continued in the public where “he was despised and looked-down by the community” (2). He felt more often than not “mocked” after his long hair, leather jacket, and detached attitude becoming invisible at the community’s eyes. Neither his counsellors, nor his father helped him to follow his dream of rock’n’roll.

His “goddamn guitar” as his father referred to it, is what Springsteen wanted the most in the world and everything he felt at that moment can be found in the lyrics of “The Wish” where he expresses what this guitar meant to him as well as his deepest feelings about the confrontations between an oppressive father, a supporting mother and his inner soul when trying to accept certain attitudes towards the family, the world and himself : “Well if Pa’eyes were windows, into a world so deadly and true, / You couldn’t stop me from lookin, but you kept me from crawlin’ through”. This fight between light and dark at home, the one existing outside home when referring to America’s history as well as the spiritual battle that everyone has to bear at some moments of our lives are going to be reflected in many of his lyrics as in “Independence Day”:

Cause the darkness of this house has got the best of us
There’s a darkness in this town that’s got us too...
So say goodbye it’s Independence Day
All men must make their way come Independence Day”

His big inspiration came when he was nine, when he saw Elvis Presley performing. He felt that “rock’n’roll gave him hope, meaning, strength...reason to live...as well as a community of people”, as Springsteen himself has said in many occasions (Masciotra: 2). The guitar became an obsession and it meant wealth, work and self-respect and it was precisely in Asbury Park, where Springsteen began to feel peace and comfort among a group of musicians and an audience where the spirit of rock’n’roll was achieved. There, Springsteen began to appreciate a sense of community and authenticity which has allowed him to communicate with audience. This is something that makes him real as he expresses: “I can’t live without music”...” I am up in front of thousands because of the way ...it gives me meaning, it gives me purpose”⁸. In fact, he represents an authentic American popular tradition which means to know about injustices, hopes.

His art as a rock performer creates a sense of community which finds its roots in his beloved New Jersey where he grew up and where he learnt to write about “darkness of lost dreams” and hopes through his childhood experiences. The transformation that his hometown underwent from a “bright and cultural” world turned into a “centre of crime and drugs where hope and dreams” had no place, inform much of Springsteen’s best work. As he told in one his early lyrics “ It’s hard to be a saint in the city”:

The devil appeared like Jesus through the steam in the street
Showin’ me a hand I knew even the cops couldn’t beat
It’s so hard to be a saint when you’re just a boy out in the street

Instead of being defeated, depressed about the loss of dreams for America, for Asbury and for himself, this suffering incentivised him for going ahead “with his personal dream of rock’n’roll creative expression that could save his life and, in the process, connect him with a community of brothers and sisters he knew existed somewhere out there” as David Masciotra so well describes in *Working on a Dream* (7).

His lyrics are full of vivid images, metaphors, he is plain-speaking and he is concerned in giving emotions a narrative setting to get this authenticity. His plain appearance dressing as a worker, with worn jeans, singlet, head bands, working clothes play an important role as entertainer and defendant of blue collars. Springsteen is a

⁸ CBS News “Springsteen: Silence is Unpatriotic”. CBS, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/10/04/60minutes/main3330463.shtml>.

storyteller; his lyrics are like Zola’s fiction, Dostoyevsky and other writers such as Dickens which tell about “hard times” as when the editor of Dickens’s *Hard Times* (1854), David Craig, so accurately expressed in the introductory part of the novel:

“Hard Times” stands out in that it was the phrase which came most naturally, when weariness or hardship had to be voiced, to the people with whom the novel is concerned: the men, women and children whose lives were being transformed by the Industrial revolution. It is very much a vernacular phrase, common in folksongs especially between 1820 and 1865 but not in pamphlets, speeches, or the papers however popular or radical. (Hard Times: 11).

This definition is what is reflected in Springsteen’s lyrics when telling about working-class hard times and darkness in the sense that his lyrics are like pieces of narratives which can be labelled as historical literature.

Now, in 2011, nearly about 40 years into a hugely successful career, he stands for the core values of rock’n’roll. He always tries to give everyday characters a way to express their fears and hopes as it happens in his lyrics “Land of Hope and Dreams”:

This Train
Carries lost souls
This Train
Dreams will not be thwarted
This Train
Faith will be rewarded.

American Rock critics such as John Landau and Dave Marsh have placed him in a “particular reading of rock history as being the voice of people” as the rock critic Simon Frith states in his *Music for Pleasure* (98). According to Frith, Springsteen, as a star “has refused to submit to market forces” and has shown support to the losers, unemployed, women and children. His populism can be politically ambiguous for some due to his anti-capitalist message although it is capitalism which has made him wealthy. Ironically, Springsteen increased “success has coincided with a rise of a narrow marketplace vision that overwhelmed politics transforming the USA from a nation to a marketplace” ignoring the needs of everyday people in favour of the wealthiest ones, as Masciotra would remind the reader. (7).

At first, Springsteen did not participate in any kind of activism that changed the country from the 60s to the 70s, he was a spectator. It was in his 30s (in the 1980s, during Reagan’s first mandate)⁹, that he began to express his discontentment with national politics. He was aware of the American change in values observed from the 1960s to the 1980s so that the social consciousness had become old-fashioned, people priorities were based in having quick money, a good life and easy jobs mainly. From that moment on, Springsteen has been participating in activities organized by the two major political parties, endorsing some candidates, taking part in Amnesty concerts trying to work more directly with people and the communities of audiences.

It is in 1978 with his album *Darkness in the Edge of Town* and with songs such as “Badlands”:

Badlands, you gotta live it everyday
Let the broken hearts stand
As the price you’ve gotta pay
We’ll keep pushin’ till it’s understood
And these badlands start treating us good

And later, with his *Nebraska*’s album (1982) and “Born in the USA” (1984), all that began to change. “Badlands” spoke of the battle to survive while he was invoking virtues such as faith, love and hope to go on. In *Nebraska*’s album, evil forces appeared when characters were alienated from a job, friends, even a community. And “Born in the USA” lyric meant a lot to him due to the betrayal that Vietnam War represented for him and his own friends. At that time Springsteen had become like an “icon” and the media and even president Reagan tried to make good use of his “persona” after his huge popularity. Criticisms, misinterpretations followed Springsteen’s message until he, himself said: “the misinterpretation and reading of rock lyrics is a time honoured tradition” (Symynkywicz: 163) as defending his position. Finally, it was in the 90s, with “Streets of Philadelphia”(1994) and with the whole album of *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995) that his activism became more opened. As he explained in an interview: “Independence is nice. That’s why I started this. For independence. I’m telling this story out there. I’m not telling anybody else’s. I’m saying what I want to say. That is the only thing I am sellin”. (Alterman: 160)

⁹ Ronald Wilson Reagan, US President from 1981-1989.

From that time, some of his famous lyrics were misread by some sectors who wanted to take advantage of Springsteen’s image and message, and during concerts, many flags were waving for one reason or another while his lyrics were telling about hard times.

From the late 80s to the early 90s, Springsteen went through a period of personal crisis and although he had fulfilled his dream of getting a band, writing songs, going out to people’s town like old times “troubadours”, he found himself struggling to rediscover himself emotionally and spiritually in the world. As Eric Alterman would write in *The Promise of Bruce Springsteen* referring to what Springsteen said: “Two of the best days of my life were the day I picked up my guitar and the day I learned how to put it down” after taking the decision of trying new experiences concerning his creativity and career, his experience concerning fatherhood and his reconnection with his audience and the people who had been loyal to him during his life. This is the time when he reunited the E Street Band and he kept faith and loyalty to his old friends as “Blood Brothers” lyric tries to reflect:

Now there’s so much that time, tie and memory fade away
We got our own roads to ride and chances we gotta take
We stood side by side each one fightin’ for the other
We said until we died we’d always be blood brothers.

From that time, lyrics such as “Living Proof”, “Souls of the Departed” or even “If I should fall behind”, dating all of them from 1992 could be mentioned at this point as an example of his spiritual growth.

According to *The Ghost of Tom Joad’s* album, some writers as Gavin Cologne-Brookes “agrees that “Steinbeck’s legacy is readily apparent in Springsteen’s album” (Bloom’s Interpretations: 159). The reader should read Springsteen as if he was re-reading some of Steinbeck’s works, especially *The Grapes of Wrath* when interpreting his vision. *The Ghost of Tom Joad* does not bother with melodies since Springsteen wants to focus attention on the hard world inhabited by the characters that are living on the physical and psychic margins of society. The album requires full attention and it is also difficult to be heard. In it, Springsteen political consciousness fully develops.

The text of Springsteen’s lyrics can not be interpreted separately from his own personal experiences which have been essential in his growing up through the years. He

has established access to millions of audiences and what he tries to do is to tell them about his concerns about America. Once more, Springsteen, while being interviewed by Pelley in the CBS and being asked about the reason that keeps him writing, he would answer:

“I guess I would say that what I do is try to chart the distance between America ideals and America reality. That’s how my music is laid out. It’s like we’ve reached a point where it seems that we’re so intent on protecting ourselves that we’re willing to destroy the best parts of ourselves to do so”.

In fact, through the whole album of *The Ghost of Tom Joad* people can discover that “the ghost” has been sitting and listening to us during a long time and still is.

1.3. THE VISION OF AMERICAN LIFE THROUGH THE WORK OF STEINBECK AND SPRINGSTEEN.

Steinbeck’s career developed from the 30s until the late 60s becoming a relevant writer fully engaged in social issues, politics, history with a brilliant career as journalist, while Springsteen’s career has developed through the 70s onwards into the twenty-first century emerging as respected musician, a progressive political spokesman and a protector of American music heritage.

Both artists developed a similar vision of their beloved country through their experiences and their work which allows readers to have a wide view on American culture, politics and social life.

Concerning the structure and technique used in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Ghost of Tom Joad*’s album there are some points which deserve to be highlighted, especially when trying to establish some parallelisms between Steinbeck and Springsteen’s work.

Steinbeck tried to create a convincingly realistic fiction the same as Springsteen does with his stories. More often than not it is the reader who has to find the meaning of a given situation or ending of a story. The technique consists in leaving the solution of

real problems to the readers making use of allegories as Dickens did. In the case of Steinbeck, when the prejudices and sense of self-importance inhibits "cooperation" as is the case of the Joads in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the critic Warren French would say: "The message is that cooperation can be achieved only when individuals of their own volition put aside special interests and work together to achieve a common purpose" (99). This is the message behind Steinbeck and *The Grapes* which Casy, the preacher, will translate into some disconnected words and Tom Joad will translate into action by the end of the story. With *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, Bruce Springsteen tries to pass this message to his own generation where "the sense of community and brotherhood" would help to understand each other. In this sense, sometimes writers act like prophets of their own time, and this could be Steinbeck and Springsteen's case.

Steinbeck is concerned with the frustrating physical condition suffered by his contemporaries and also by their spiritual growth, as it is seen in many instances of *The Grapes*. *The Grapes of Wrath* is like an epic novel where the members of the family suffer from physical privation but at the same time, they are saved from the unfairness of the time. They are spiritually saved, which does not always mean that they have to keep faith to a given God or an established religion to be saved from their sins, but to their own integrity, to their growing as adults and to "an over soul"¹⁰ which is also shared by Springsteen and his characters.

The technique of pairing the chapters carrying forward the Joad's history with others that showed the events that are taking place along the country (interchapters) helps the reader to understand and learn more about the whole non-fictional story behind. Steinbeck was presenting the problem he was concerned through the history of the family, helping the reader to visualize these problems which affected not only the Joads but a general population. His depiction of clear images in a journalistic style and the use of one of the finest sensitivities to describe nature on the part of Steinbeck, allows the reader in this visualization as if he was dealing with cinematic techniques. As Gavin Cologne- Brookes affirms in *The Bloom's critical interpretation of The Grapes of Wrath*, "Steinbeck's vision crosses boundaries and transcends the mere text" (159) as it can be seen when John Ford adapted the novel to the screen, and when

¹⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), American essayist, lecturer and poet who led the Transcendentalist movement, author among others of *The Over-Soul* who developed the philosophical idea between the soul and the surrounding world.

Bruce Springsteen adapted it to an orientated folk songs album of failed dreams in the promised land. *The Grapes* also has been adapted to Frank Galati’s stage version in 1990 and to an opera in 2007. In fact, the adaptability of the work of both artists has brought to the screen many of their works.

Forgotten at times, Steinbeck has proved to be very relevant and modern even nowadays. Issues such environment, poverty, homelessness, America’s moral decline, major wars, racism, and ethnicity are among the most important. He has always praised journalism as “having the greatest virtue and greatest evil” as he would say in his last novel *America and Americans* (1996). He always has felt the urge to see, to experiment for himself.

Steinbeck’s style is engaged, simple and in his essays, he tells about his life, travels and ideas. He has the ability to inform and entertain. Sometimes his work is on the border of fiction and nonfiction and his topics engage readers to think. He liked to focus on the small, simple things, in people leading ordinary lives trying “to find the essence of things...interpreting America” (*America A*: xviii). Maybe, he might be described as a moralist, a preacher, an idealist; however what he truly was is “an observer” like Casy in *The Grapes*. The same characteristics can be applied to Springsteen’s work. He is also “an observer” of common places and common people. Springsteen’s lyrics have no addressees, they are tales about someone, sometimes they involve an “I” like an epic tale or story but what lies behind Springsteen’s message is what seems to be the truth against urban deceit and the complete loss of pioneer values.

Steinbeck stood witness to some of the most significant upheavals of the twentieth century – the Depression of the 1930s, the WWII, McCarthy’s hearings, the Cold War, Vietnam and “his passionate resistance to tyranny...his equally heart left empathy for the marginalized and lonely were wellsprings of his fiction as well as his nonfiction” (*America A*: 66). For him, the 30s were like “a strange parade” where radio news, telephone, Model T-Ford Era, friendship with Roosevelt, war in Europe and Vietnam left a print on him as he recalls in his *A Life in Letters* (1960). He also remembers his youth years and the ones of his friends as “a time of warmth and mutual caring...everyone shared bad fortune” in spite of being broke (*America A*: 23) which had nothing to do with the behavior of American citizens in the 50s and 60s.

By that time, Steinbeck was really concerned about the overabundance and disappearing sense of community in the American society. He used his fiction and nonfiction to make Americans aware of this malaise trying to warn them that they had to react; they had to change their lifestyles. He blamed about “leisure” and the use of it: “I strongly suspect that our moral and spiritual disintegration grows out of our lack of experience with plenty...Now, that people have food, shelter, transport, they lack a purpose in life”(America A:396). In the following years, Steinbeck’s views would give him the reason. As he predicted, capitalism, consumerism brought a consequent lack of ethics, moral and rules needed to survive in society that Springsteen would be singing years later.

After Steinbeck’s death in 1968, and during the 60s and early 70s, Bob Dylan ¹¹ emerged as a powerful influence, a singer, a poet, a writer and a thinker. He arouses as a voice for the time until Springsteen’s career and experience turned him into the voice of America. In fact, Springsteen’s vision derives from that 50s-60s “American Dream” which for a young man at that time was to have a car, a girl, quick and easy money to spend and time to enjoy. It was like searching for a kind of happiness to avoid some kind of suffering. Maybe the overprotection of some parents towards their children in trying to avoid them the suffering they had to overcome in their youth in order to fulfill basic needs for survival would be among the most important mistakes committed by these second, third generations of immigrants who long time ago came to America. Although hard times were already there, as many other young people, Springsteen also strived for a better life in the city trying to find his way to happiness in a country where crime, drugs, urban decay were replacing former values as a consequence of this general boredom caused by the power of money, the increase of free time and a lack of morals and rules to survive. However, Springsteen soon discovered that the American Dream delivered a false promise, it was not just a lie but something worse as he would say: “there was more to life than what my old man was doing and the life he was living...And they held out a promise, and it was a promise that gets broken everyday” (Symynkywicz:165).

If the 70s had progressed from the withdrawal of Vietnam combatants, Watergate affairs and a severe depressed economy (Nixon-Jimmy Carter’s

¹¹ Bob Dylan (born Robert Allen Zimmerman, in 1941)

administrations)¹² where big hopes and great plans were overwhelmed by inflation, increase of energy costs and a devilish atmosphere which was lurking in the streets of towns where the power of money was stronger than personal integrity, the 80s and 90s state of economy (under Bush and Bill Clinton administrations)¹³ did not improve either. On the contrary, neither the welfare reform nor hard crime laws made a big change to poor people and immigrants who received more cuts concerning education, housing, medical assistance while military power and policing of all U.S. Mexican border were increasing.

With Springsteen’s first “innocent” album in 1973, *The Wild, The Innocent and The E Street Shuffle* followed by his “Born to Run’s” success in 1974, the listeners discovered that his songs were not so naïve as they were supposed to be. The lyric of “Born to Run” told about the escape of the boredom in the cities, jobs, the family, and the desire of breaking free. Of course, beyond this boredom, there was the search of American Dream: “we gotta get out while we’re young / cause traps like us, baby, we were born to run” as the character said. Then, during the late 70s and 80s, he started to demonstrate his uneasiness concerning politics and about the emptiness of this American Dream. Springsteen’s direct involvement in concerts to help vets, to fight for human rights, nuclear causes and even his concerns about racism, gender issues, turned him into “the most prominent spokesman for the dignity of the worker and of the culture of egalitarianism” (Alterman:167). He wanted to help people in need with his work on stage and at the same time encourage audiences to help. This vision of “a civic responsibility in the hands of everyone was like his credo” (Alterman: 169) especially as he was worried about “people’s lives waste”. Like Steinbeck’s worries about “leisure” in the 60s and the consequences of it, Springsteen wanted to communicate a set of values through his personal work as Steinbeck had done during his life.

If Steinbeck’s *Grapes* gave voice to thousands of men and women who migrated from the Dust Bowl of The great Plains after being dispossessed of their land in search of a better life in the West (writing about police surveillance problems, homelessness, insecurity, daily reality of citizens looking for jobs and searching for justice), Springsteen’s *The Ghost of Tom Joad* sings about the ones who have to accept jobs with drug dealers, the ones who try to live on the right side of law after enduring hard

¹² Richard Nixon, US President from 1969-1974; Jimmy Carter, US President from 1977-1981.

¹³ George Bush, US President from 1989-1993; Bill Clinton, US President from 1993-2001.

prison experiences, the ones that have to take decisions against racial, social prejudices...like the thousands belonging to Tom Joad’s generation who have long gone but whose “ghost” still remains. Springsteen’s characters’ contemporary world is as hard as it has been for Steinbeck’s Okies in the 30s. In fact, the characters of both artists are suffering the consequence of a devastated economic and spiritual landscape left by unscrupulous citizens and powerful corporations. Quite often, fiction and nonfiction are on the fringe when we read Steinbeck or try to interpret Springsteen, both of them have been misunderstood, criticized and have even gained some enemies.

With his solo *The Ghost of Tom Joad* ‘s Guthriesque Album, Springsteen offers a sadder and darker vision of America, as Steinbeck foresaw in the 60s. Springsteen, like Guthrie ¹⁴ who had inspired himself with Steinbeck’s *The Grapes* when singing about Tom Joad’s story, has been writing many times following the tradition of a “balladeer”. Guthrie was also singing and writing about the injustices and inequalities of his time. He, himself, was an Okie travelling with migrant workers from Oklahoma to California, learning and writing about their experiences (See his novel *Bound for Glory*). In these ballads “the myth of the land” is always present reminding Americans what the country has meant to so many immigrants and to themselves as we can see in the well-known lyric “This Land is your Land”. This lyric has been used in many different occasions with some variations in the text depending on the political moment:

As I was walkin’
I saw a sign there
And that sign said-no tress passin’
But on the other side ...it didn’t say nothing!
Now that side was made for you and me!

Springsteen’s version would use a new verse omitting this “That sign said-no tress passin” concerning the ownership of the land. In fact, he keeps singing it in many occasions whenever he needs to sing out and loudly that “America idea is a beautiful idea that needs to be preserved, served and protected” as he, himself confesses in a CBS Interview in October 2007. Woody Guthrie and Steinbeck’s tradition lies behind Springsteen as he sees himself following a long American tradition reaching back through Vietnam War and on to the Great Depression (1929-1939) as Springsteen said in the same interview:

¹⁴ Woody Guthrie, American song-writer and balladeer (1912-1967).

"...I went back to Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and the people who said, say take Pete Seeger, who wants to know, don't want to know how this song sounds, he... they want to know what's it for... There's a part of the singer going back in America history that is of course the canary in the coal mine. When it gets dark, you're supposed to be singing. It's dark right now."

Woody Guthrie was greatly admired by Steinbeck; in fact they were friends. He identified Guthrie with the "American Spirit" that folk music wanted to express and as Steinbeck defined: "Folk music as well as folk literature is based on something that has happened...which was created out of dreams of the people". He, himself was representing this spirit through his writings as Gore Vidal said about Steinbeck praising him as "a spirit of a country and of an age, and of his time, he was an honorable recorder ... He looked at people nobody had ever looked at before and not many people have looked at since" (Bloom: 167). In fact, Steinbeck and Guthrie had been writing and singing about the dreams of people, the same as Springsteen has been trying to do during his 30 years of work. From all of them, we can learn a lot about America and American people. As Steinbeck would say about songs in his *America and Americans*: "Songs are statements of people. You can learn more about listening to their songs than in any other way, for into the songs go all the hopes and hurts, the anger, fears, the wants and aspirations" (226). Steinbeck was also very fond of reading about history, and of course, writing was his great passion, but as he did not rely much on the accuracy of history, he turned to fiction and journalism which gave him the information he was missing. With folk songs, he could also learn more about characters' details, feelings, decisions, choices they had taken at crucial moments in their lives.

Springsteen's fiction can also be a reliable one, even more than other pieces of history. From his first work to the latest, his fictional characters seem to be truthful to them and once more, he traces back to Steinbeck's *Grapes* reminding people that the American Dream can disappear all of a sudden, as he sings in "The Promised Land" (1978):

There's a dark cloud rising from the desert floor
I packed my bags and I'm heading straight into the storm
Gonna be twister to blow everything down
That ain't got the faith to stand its ground
Blow away the dreams that tear you apart
Blow away the dreams that break your heart
Blow away the lies that leave you nothing but lost and / Brokenhearted

Or in “My Oklahoma Home”¹⁵ where suddenly a dark cloud can come into everybody’s life and can blow away everything they have:

It blew away, it blew away
All the crops I planted blew away
You can’t grow any grain if there isn’t any rain
All except the mortgage blew away

What his characters are telling is how they feel which the options they have taken in life or after the misfortunes they have run into, having “hope and faith” as the only way to survive and change their fates.

At the age of 65, Steinbeck was writing: “the rules allowed us to survive, to live together and to increase. But if our will to survive is weakened, if our love of life and our memories of gallant past and faith in a shining future are removed. What need is there for morals or for rules?” (America A: 400). With these lines, he was trying to make emphasis in “past experiences” and in the “faith” of people in the future. He strongly believed that something in the restless America spirit would wake up American people and make them change. The well-known expression “to take a new step” (in spite of having committed mistakes) that is often used by Steinbeck as well as Springsteen gives strength to their vision of faith, hope in the individual soul like “the steps” taken by The Joads in *The Grapes* and other characters in Springsteen’s *The Ghost of Tom Joad*. Steinbeck was quite afraid of “the man” in the sense that through his knowledge, he had a great and dangerous power in his hands and at the same time he was the only one capable of changing the world with his will, love, hope and faith as he wrote for his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech in 1963: “The danger and the glory and the choice rest finally in man. The test of perfectibility is at hand...” (Steinbeck, *Life in Letters*: 174).

Once more, Springsteen’s vision goes in this direction “There is a power within souls of men and women...people have the power to choose to be true to themselves” (Symynkywicz: 180). The discovery, acceptance of oneself as well as the redemption

¹⁵ A ballad written in 1965 by Agnes and Bill Cunningham. It was recorded in 1967 by Pete Seeger and a newest composition has been released by Springsteen in his *We Shall Overcome. The Seeger Sessions* (2006).

of one's faults is at the base of Springsteen's message and he makes good use of both concepts in his work. Steinbeck and Springsteen profess more of a kind of Emersonian faith than a Christian one although their works are full of Biblical references. Their characters do not use prayers to save themselves, do not attend mass and other religious events, but they profess a deep faith in common things "as loyalty, friendship and remembering the past" (Alterman:244). As Alterman said about Springsteen's fandom: "Bruce has provided them with a means to face perhaps the most important spiritual void in postmodern American life: a lack of an authentic language of the heart and of a genuine community with whom it can be shared" (240). Steinbeck also provided his readers with an incredible source of knowledge and values about his country and its people.

PART TWO

2. READING SPRINGSTEEN'S LYRICS: SEARCHING FOR THE GHOST OF TOM JOAD

All the lyrics on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* are included in this section, in which they will be analysed by taking into account the epic narrative told through the narrator or other characters. Parallelisms between Springsteen's album and Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* will be established in reference to content. Springsteen's opinion and other meanings underlying the text will also be commented on.

Springsteen's album begins with the lyric of "The Ghost of Tom Joad" giving name to the album which stands for an adapted version of Steinbeck's *Grapes* into a folk song. The lyrics of the album allow the reader to tour through unseen America border towns and stop in places where different characters migrate in search of a job, a home, or where fate brings them.

"The Ghost of Tom Joad" acts as an opening scene and also as a closing one which offers an accurate cinematic adaptation of Steinbeck's novel. The verses of the chorus will be used to divide this part of the dissertation in three sections, each of them introducing different lyrics while connecting them to *The Grapes* through their subjects. Under the three main headlines we will be searching, waiting and finally finding "The Ghost of Tom Joad".

2.1. "SEARCHING FOR THE GHOST"

Men walkin' 'long the railroad tracks
Goin' someplace there's no goin' back
Highway patrol choppers comin' up over the ridge
Hot soup on a campfire under the bridge

Springsteen's version of "The Ghost of Tom Joad" begins with a harsh portrayal where thousands of men are walking along a railroad, heading for a place they do not know if they are going to come back. They represent these thousands of displaced

people in the world today who are living in shelters, eating in campfires, experiencing the humiliation of having been forced to get away from their countries for any political, religious or economical reason. The lyrics tell about the details, routines and daily activities of these homeless, placeless among a total misery and in this case, Springsteen is telling about Mexican migrants trying to cross the American border. Just some authorities like highway patrols appear, but we do not know if they are going to help them.

As it happens in the story of "The Line", Carl, an ex-military man from Fort Irwin, whose wife died, takes a job as a Californian Border Patrol (San Diego) to prevent Mexican from crossing a passage to Southern California cities. He becomes friend with Bobby Ramirez, a Mexican immigrant who always says:

They risk death in the deserts and mountains
pay all they got to the smugglers rings
We send'em home and they come night back again,
Carl, hunger is a powerful thing".

Bobby Ramirez is conscious that the desperate jumpers risk their lives many times in search of food or a job, paying all the money they have to smugglers while relying on them to survive. The only purpose is not dying of hunger. Later in the story, Carl, the narrator, reaffirms he is doing what he is told to do as a patrolman, which consists in waiting at night, hidden in the canyon, trying to chase drugs runners, farmers with families, women and children with the objective of keeping them from crossing the line.

We do not know what Carl really thinks of his job and about the migrants until the day he meets an attractive Mexican woman to whom he feels a mixture of attraction, empathy, and understanding toward her and her situation. At a given moment, Carl neglects his duties trying to help her and she escapes through the arroyo. But on the highway, Bobby's jeep comes out and then it is when Carl says:

I felt myself movin'
Felt my gun restin' 'neath my hand
We stood there starin' at each other
As off through the arroyo she ran".

Bobby Ramirez never said anything although he could have prevented the woman from escaping, in fact, it was his job and responsibility as authority, but Carl also himself stopped from doing anything wrong to Ramirez as both understood the situation. Bobby because of his condition of being a Mexican immigrant himself, and Carl as his conscience was fighting between doing what he had been told to do and what he was feeling for the woman. At the end of the story, Carl, decides to leave the job and track down the woman in Tijuana’s area (Mexican state of Baja California).

A single connection with the woman changed Carl’s sense of existence and his vision of a future life. His job did not fulfil him; he could not be in peace with himself just giving orders to those people who were tempting to cross the border into a land that long time ago belonged to Mexico¹⁶ as Springsteen himself states in his *The Ghost of Tom Joad* ‘s tour.

Carl’s character grows spiritually responding with physical assistance to the others when he realises what is happening. “The Line” divides physically Mexico from the States and also divides people with the same needs but with different skin or social background.

According to *The Grapes*, Steinbeck would also remember: “Once California belonged to Mexico, and its land to Mexicans; and a horde of tattered feverish Americans poured in. And such was their hunger for land that they took the land... and they guarded with guns the land they had stolen” (231).

And then: “the dispossessed were drawn west -from Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico; from Nevada and Arkansas, tribes, dusted out, tractored out. Carloads, caravans, homeless and hungry...” (233), all of them following the well-known “highway 66” as the main migrant road trying to escape from the degrading homeless, jobless conditions. Obviously, patrols, deputies and other people representing some kind of authority were completely inaccessible most of the times acting as if they were the owners of the land insulting and degrading the migrants. One example is the case of the deputy near Tulare (California): “We ain’t gonna have no goddamn Okies in this town” (279); or the service-station boy that the Joads met on the road with in his white uniform commenting to a friend: “...They ain’t human. A human being wouldn’t live

¹⁶Between 1846-48 the Mexican government had to give half of its territory to the USA (Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo)

like they do. A human being couldn’t stand it to be so dirty and miserable. They ain’t a hell of a lot better than gorillas”(221).

Other deputy sheriffs used “shotguns patrolling the lines so a man might not pick an orange for a thin child, oranges to be dumped if the price was low” (234) or even shouted to them: “This ain’t your land. You’re trespassing ...You goddamned squatters. Pretty soon you’d think you owned it” (235), as if the land belonged to them.

As David Masciotra would say in *The Progressive Political Vision of Bruce Springsteen*: “As long as homeless and desperately poor are invisible to the eye, they are also invisible to the pen used to sign local, state, federal budget” (78). This is in fact what happened to these Okies that in spite of a New Deal Programme settled by the president at the time in order to assist them, the most of the laws were not applied caused of the bad use of authority in the hands of the ones mentioned before. The only exception being the treatment given at Weedpatch camp, in *The Grapes*.

2.1.1. “STILL SEARCHING FOR THE GHOST”

Shelter line stretchin’ round the corner
Welcome to the new world order
Families sleepin’ in their cars in the southwest
No home no job no peace no rest

Springsteen seems to reflect in his “Youngstown” a story which repeats again in spite of the years and in spite of different political problem and different administrations since President Roosevelt. Despite his efforts, the Depression hung until 1941-42 when American involvement in the Second War World resulted in the drafting of young men into military service and the creation of million of jobs in the industry of defence and war.

Springsteen, himself, who was born in 1949, lived a childhood and youth haunted by a kind of darkness surrounding his town and household. The aftermath of the years of the Depression brought a grim picture of decay and darkness to many cities, states as is the case of the story of a steelworker in Youngtown. The narrator situates the reader on the setting of the story which goes back to 1803, when James and Danny Heaton found a mine of gold and built the furnaces which later were to make “the

cannon balls / that helped the Union win the War" (and which later in WWII built also the tanks and bombs). Although the story begins happily, the chorus is repeating constantly that the narrator is getting more and more depressed, defeated by some reason: "I'm sinkin' down / Here darlin' in Youngstown". Later, the reader is transported to the 1960s, when the steelworker's son describes his returning from Vietnam with the purpose of having a secure job at the mill thinking that he will be able to feed a family:

Well my daddy worked the furnaces
Kept 'em hotter than hell
I come home from 'Nam worked my way to scarfer
A job that'd suit the devil as well
Taconite, coke and limestone
Fed my children and made my pay
Then smokestacks reachin' like the arms of god
Into a beautiful sky of soot and clay.

The comparison of smokestacks to the arms of god provides a sense of importance to the steel industry in Youngstown. These arms seem to be so powerful, so strong that they provide jobs, opportunities to people. This industry helps them to live decent lives. Later, the narrator still remembers his father coming to Ohio after coming back from WWII saying that the evilest men in the world had not destroyed the city but the wealthy and powerful American corporations did: "Them big boys did what Hitler couldn't do." And once again, the chorus is repeating "I'm sinkin' down" beating strongly telling why he is feeling so depressed as another victim of economic exploitation.

Curiously, the story is repeating again in many American homes and cities, from Monongaleh Valley to the Mesabi iron range to the coal mines of Appalachia. With the words: "Once I made you rich enough / rich enough to forget my name", the narrator feels finally hopeless in front the situation, and in spite of his effort, his dedication to his work during long years, he can not expect any recognition from the owners. He feels betrayed, turned into a useless object where neither moral nor economical compensation is going to be offered to him.

The only thing he can do is to preach to find a small place where to stay after death, he is so deceived in front so much hostility that maybe he would not find peace in Heaven but in Hell, near the furnaces where he has spent his life earning his living and

doing his work so proudly. This is not just a tale about workers, bad labour conditions but it gives a clear image of the power of material things in front of human feelings where economical profit is more important than desperate human souls. The narrator does not find spiritual peace in any religious faith or prayer, but instead he invokes the devil.

With this dark portrayal of Youngstown, Springsteen is invoking Steinbeck's Okies spirits experiencing a similar situation in Oklahoma about 50 years before. Actually, the Great Depression began with the Crash of the Stock Market (1929) and at the height of the Depression (1933), incomes fell down, farm prices too, men went hungry and families were obliged to migrate to California. They were offered jobs as Tom Joad said to Timothy at Weedpatch camp: "You know, 'fore we lef' home, we heard they was plenty work out here. Seen han'bills askin' folks to come out" (Grapes: 293) which was not true so that the owners had been spreading more handbills than workers needed.

Gangs of youth rode the rails in box cars like so many hobos hoping to find a job, travelling from one place to another for free via freight trains trying luck somewhere being mostly "farmhands". At the same time as Okies, hobos left the Great Plains heading for California in search of farms, fields where to work, the sector industry was also badly shaken, factories closed, and mills and mines were abandoned in other parts of the country. After president Hoover, Roosevelt was elected in 1932 and with him a New Deal Programme was established. New laws created with the aim of improving the welfare of many citizens were not applied as is the case of the Hooverville's, where meanwhile government was trying to feed and give medical assistance to the needed, banks and huge growers were sabotaging them. Weedpatch camp was one of those exceptional camps designed to help and relieve migrants where they could have sanitary units, where families never missed a meal and where everybody could work and enjoy with some balls and new clothes. There were no cops and the people living there could run themselves the camp and even organize some committees in order to share responsibilities and other community tasks, as the watchman, Mr Thomas told Tom: "No cops. We got our own cops. Folks here elect their cops." (Grapes: 286).

Million of migrants had been dispossessed of their "homesteads" after many years of working the land as their ancestors, old pioneers and even Indian tribes. But it

was the bad treatment of the land ecologically and economically speaking that had caused the well-known Dust Bowl Storms which so accurately had been depicted by Steinbeck at the beginning of the *Grapes*:

"The air and the sky darkened and through them the sun shone redly, and there was a raw sting in the air. During the night the wind raced faster over the land, dug cunningly the rootlets of the corn, and the corn fought the wind with its weakened leaves until the rots were freed" (*Grapes*: 2).

The poor farmers lost everything they owned from the shanties they had built to the animals they had including the closest of their relatives who were killed or disappeared in the storms. The entire region that comprises Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas was totally devastated where men could not grow anything, and land could not hold the earth and turned into dust which the wind blew away. As Donald Worster would state in his *Dust Bowl, The Southern Plains in the 1930s* commenting about who was to blame about the disaster in the sense that the storms did not get the blame but the machines of the new era, he says: "It is the hand of culture that selects out innate human qualities and thereby gives variety to history. It was culture in the main that created the Dust Bowl (94)". According to him, the unlimited wealth which came with the capitalism was transforming a rural economy leaving the homestead tenants without a home to live, without land to grow their own food to survive but with anger, humiliation and total uncertainty concerning their fate.

This is the grim and pessimistic vision that Steinbeck tries to give throughout *The Grapes*:

The cars of the migrant people crawled out of the side roads onto the great cross-country highway ...in the daylight they scuttled like bugs to the westward; and as the dark caught them, they clustered like bugs near to shelter and to water... they shared their lives, their food, and the things they hoped for in the new country (193).

When the Joads arrive at Baskerville camp, the shelters described offer a clear image of refugee camps: "And there was a huge tent, ragged, torn in strips and the tears mended with pieces of wire..." (242). Also the image of hunger, especially when Ma Joad tries to cook something for the family and suddenly the smell of the food makes some children come close to her: "I dunno what to do. I can't rob the fambly. I got to

feed the fambly...and outside they could hear the children digging into the pot with their sticks and their spoons and their pieces of rusty tin” (258) causing her a restless feeling between her duties as bread giver of the family and her wish to help the starving children.

Springsteen, being both an artist and observer, is also depicting the life of the refugees in the 90s ironically inviting the reader to welcome “The New World Order” that H.W. Bush administration’s promises which instead of leading to a series of social improvements, they turned into long queues of jobless, Mexican citizens having for only shelter their cars in the well-known Southwest highway as the Joads had. He is concerned with the frustrating migration movement of his contemporaries and also concerned with their inner, spiritual lives. He tries to show that in spite of the gap of years since *The Grapes*, the new government has not succeeded in offering to citizens a better world where to live decently.

2.2. “WAITIN’ ON THE GHOST OF TOM JOAD”

He pulls the prayer book out of his sleeping bag
Preacher lights up a butt and takes a drag
Waitin’ for when the last shall be the first and the first shall be the last
In a cardboard box ‘neath the underpass

If the characters in previous stories had been trapped in hopeless situations in different places of the States, now, the characters are going to go through an awakening process where their past experience, knowledge and faith in any religion is going to be questioned since there is no explanation to the injustices they have to face.

The narrator of TGOTJ mentions somebody who pulls a prayer book from his sleeping bag which reminds the figure of preacher Casy in *The Grapes* while he is thinking and trying to understand what is happening around him. His previous faith, his former speeches are not useful anymore, he does not know what his duties are as a preacher: “I got the spirit sometimes an’ nothin’ to preach about. I got the call to lead

the people, an 'no place to lead them" (Grapes: 21) or when later, he says: "I figgered about the Holy Spirit...maybe it' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit-the human sperit...Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of" (Grapes: 24), words which Tom eventually comes to understand by the end of the story. Without pretending, Casy acts as Tom's spiritual mentor trying to put on words how he feels and what he thinks about the injustices suffered by their own folks. He tries to work out how can a preacher like him can still be useful to them.

Later in the novel, when Tom Joad meets under a bridge "beside a tiny stream...a man sat on a box in front of the tent" (381) which happens to be Casy, Tom begins to understand what Casy is trying to tell him about how strikes begin and how cops then come down on them:

What made 'em bad was they needed stuff. An' I begin to see, then. It's need that makes all the trouble...one fella started yellin', an' nothin' happened...then another ...and we al got the same tone an' I tell ya, it jus' seemed like that tank bulged an'give and swelled up. By God! Then somepin happened! (382)

With the lyrics of "Straight Time", "Highway 29" and "Dry Lightning", Springsteen examines the life of people living on the fringe in these Southwest border towns. He tries to express how the characters feel, when somebody's mind is swinging in that "thin line" ready to make a choice which can be decisively in one's life.

In "Straight Time", Springsteen tells about the story of an ex-con who works at a rendering plant and wants to live a life on the right side of the law. He seems that the first thing he does after getting out of prison is to get married with the idea of saving his life if he tries to domesticate his wild previous life. But as an ex-con, it is difficult to choose among jobs and the one he has in the slaughterhouse does not help him much. Working among death, blood of animals: "It ain't gonna make me rich", is not going to give much sense to his life, not even a good reason to wake up every morning. He considers other options as the trade proposed by his uncle which deals with stolen cars, but once again, he faces again the criminal world which he fears: " I got a cold mind to go tripping across hat thin line / I'm sick of doing straight time" as he does not want to go back to jail.

The ex-con cannot put aside his previous life, the evil temptation of the uncle who is going to pay him better than choosing any other job, is tempting him in spite of his fear of doing “straight time”. However, as he says:

Eight years in, it feels like you’re gonna die
But you get used to anything
Sooner or later it becomes your life

So he does not matter too much. He also faces the possibility of his boring married life which he compares to life in jail and he sees no real light at the end of the tunnel. His future is dark and the only option is to continue his “straight time” inside jail or outside, both ways are going to lead him to the grave. Death is there, whether it is a crime he is going to commit, or if it is his own death. The smell of it is there too. It symbolizes a life which is not worth living, where there is no hope.

We are responsible for our own choices, but if they turned to be irresponsible in the eyes of justice, they might grow into nightmares in a society where greed, selfish behaviour does not help to improve some tragic choices. In *The Grapes*, Tom had spent four years in McAlester prison for homicide in self-defence and when the story begins he has just come out of it after getting parole to keep and not being able to leave the estate. When being asked about the time spent there, he would answer: “Course you get goddamn good an’ sick a-doin’ the same thing day after day ...But when a bunch of men take an’ lock you up four years, it ought to have some meaning...That sort of senselessness kind a worries a man” (55), which means it is difficult to forget an experience like this and also to forgive the ones who are to blame of a given crime, especially when someone is in jail for a innocent crime.

In “ Highway 29”, Springsteen always haunted by the ghost of his earlier *Nebraska* album, presents a character who seems to work as a shoe salesman in a store where he meets a woman which whom he establishes a short conversation and exchanges telephone numbers. He meets her later in a roadhouse and together, they rob a bank and flee down Highway 29 heading for Sierra Madre (West Mexico and Southern American States) where they finally are going to be involved in a car crash:

We headed into Sierra Madre ‘cross the borderline
The winter sun, shot through the black trees
I told myself it was all something in her

But as we drove I knew it was something in me
Something had been comin' for a long long time
And something that was here with me now
On highway 29

While driving, thousand images cross the character's mind. Surrounded by a dark winter, black trees all the way, he begins to blame her companion for his deeds, then he comes to realise that he is the only one to blame for his actions and discovers the evil side inside him.

The premonition of what it is going to happen is in the air and the highway is there to help him escape from his bad choices, from himself and from the law while trying to be free. His inner battle acts as a liberating force stronger than his mind. His soul is so broken that he can only run, escape from his sins and demons although he fears death:

The wind comes silent through the windshield
All I could see was snow and sky and pines
I closed my eyes and I was runnin'
I was runnin' then I was flyin'.

A similar situation occurs when Tom Joad's uncle, John, gets drunk as the only way to escape from a sin which does not allow him to feel decent, burdening often the family. He is wondering about Casy's words: "a fella's sinned if he thinks he's sinned" (267) which brings more problems to his conscience.

"Dry Lightning" is about a recent and strong experience which is still in the mind of the narrator while he is staring at the horizon where flashes of lightning are crossing the desert. Sweet memories of a lover, maybe, come to him in the shape of an appaloosa as a rare and attractive breed riding in Western regions of America. Under a halo effect of dark skin under the white coat next to the spots, the appaloosa appears as strong and powerful figure with flashes of "dry lightning" crossing the sky, and the narrator first memories of a well-built dancer who enchanted him fill his mind. He also recalls some fighting of an unsuccessful relationship with a dancer he met in Alvarado Street (Los Angeles) in which passion had been hard, violent but also devastating as dry storms in the area can be: "Is dry lightning on the horizon line / Just dry lightning and you on my mind". Relationships are difficult and memories can be bitter and also

sweet, but they quickly belong to one’s past although they help us to move forward or even prevent us from doing anything. As is the case of bad memories, hope is the only help and it can only be found in oneself: “ain’t nobody gonna give nobody / What they really need anyway”.

In *The Grapes*, when the Joads had to leave their home and all their belongings, they were asking themselves: “How can we live without our lives? How will we know it’s us without our past? No. Leave it. Burn it...How if you wake up in the night and know- the willow tree’s not there? Can you live without the willow tree? Well, no, you can’t. The willow tree is you.” (Grapes: 89)

The “willow tree” as a symbol of a whole life plenty of good and bad memories together with the bitterness of losing everything was provoking a dreadful pain to the family, which made them load the car quickly and drove away as anybody else would help them.

In “My Best was Never Good Enough”, the character seems to apologize for his lack of ability with his personal relationships. Springsteen uses a number of popular sayings to help the character overcome his difficulties with “the other” while trying to tell him how to behave and how to focus life differently like when in the “The Ghost of Tom Joad” one of the verse sings: “Waitin’ for when the last shall be first and the first shall be last”. Patience, acceptance of one’s fate and appreciation of simple details seem to be really advisable as well as the daily effort and willingness of working hard to get the most out of you and out of the others. There is also a kind of redemption through which one person can feel spiritually rewarded and useful to others. The changeability of life and the fact that everyone has its opportunities to change, to adapt, and to “take the ride” as Springsteen himself would say: “knowing you could lose didn’t mean you didn’t still take the ride. In fact, it made taking the ride all the more important” (Alterman: 265). All these suggestions or advice seem to be behind this story in order to help the character to overcome and to adapt to his situation.

In *The Grapes*, The Joads take also the ride when their consciousness is awakening, : “This you may say of man...having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only a step, never the full step back” (Grapes: 150) through the novel, they are learning to change, to adapt to the new conditions, that is the only way they can survive as when they take “their step forward” and begin to realise they are not the only ones

immerse in this situation but thousands more, so they come to understand that they need to behave differently, they need to cooperate to survive: “The two men squatting in a ditch, the little fire, the side-meat in a single-pot, the silent, stone-eyed women...the baby has a cold. Here, take this blanket. It’s wool...This is the beginning from “I” to “we”. (152)

2.2.1. STILL WAITIN’ ON THE GHOST OF TOM JOAD

Got a one-ticket to the Promised Land
You got a hole in your belly and a gun in your hand
Sleeping on a pillow of solid rock
Bathin’ in the city aqueduct

The words “a hole in your belly and a gun in your hand” from this stanza of “The Ghost of Tom Joad” bring us to another song of the album called “The New Timer”. In it, Springsteen tours us to another part of the country which was well known by Steinbeck. The narrator, a labourer with a boxcar hobo credentials dating back to the Depression, having left the Northeast, travels to America countryside looking for work. The story is again very similar to the one in “The Ghost of Tom Joad” where the narrator meets Frank, who becomes a mentor for him. They travel from East Texas to New Mexico, to Colorado and California, hoeing sugar beets and picking peaches as the lyrics says. The narrator remembers Frank’s advice: “you don’t cross nobody / you’ll be all right here kid”, meaning that it is better to follow the rules, to accept conditions, to be careful with what you say when being in the American side, but the following summer Frank is found dead in Stockton (California). Like Casy in *The Grapes*, he was a victim of a motiveless crime: “That shiny bastard. That’s him... Casy stared blindly at the light. He breathed heavily. “Listen”, he said. “You fellas don’ know what you’re doin’. You’re helpin’ to starve kids” (386).

The narrator also tells about the bad treatment they received concerning their working experience: “They bunked us in a barn just like animals / me and a hundred others just like me”, similar image to that of *The Grapes*: “We tried to camp together, an’ they druv us like pigs. Scattered us. Beat the hell outa fellas” (383). Eventually, the New Timer’s character will lament about his loneliness and the family he has left

behind. He will be alone, without job, in a hostile world where he will try to survive with a “machete” and at the mercy of Jesus. In fact, this was how the “ticket to the promised land” put an end to this story.

In other stories such as “Across the Border”, Springsteen makes us travel to the “mythical promised land” where the character tries to fulfil his dream and be in peace with him, physically or metaphysically speaking. The geographic “border” that the Bravo waters form from south western Colorado State to the Gulf of Mexico has much broader connotations than the mere physical ones. The narrator sings that he has packed his bag; he seems ready to cross a border which will lead him to his love. They will be reunited; they will sleep in the open sky in each other’s arms. As he keeps saying, all the pains and sadness they have met in this world will disappear as soon as they “drink from the Bravo’s muddy waters / where the sky grows grey and white”, but the waters are “muddy” and the sky is not blue, so maybe the new life will not be so idyllic as he wishes. In spite of some darkness, the character has the dream of building a home on a grassy hill where:

Sweet blossoms fill the air
Pastures of gold and green
Roll down into cool clear waters

Waiting for the time when he finally will reach that instant of bliss. The moment is so perfect, that it becomes difficult to think that this paradise will be found in earth but maybe in Heaven. He keeps being strong, having faith:

For what are we
Without hope in our hearts
That someday we’ll drink God’s blessed waters
And eat the fruit from the vine

However, this physical border could be referring to another boundary which all human have to face, the one between life and death:

Tonight we’ll sing the songs
And tomorrow my heart will be strong
And may the saints’ blessing and grace
Carry me safely into your arms

With this story, Springsteen brings us back to the Joads when they were coming closer to California, "the promised land" which was to fulfil their dreams and expectations: "suddenly they saw the great valley below them...The vineyards, the orchards, the great flat valley, green and beautiful, the trees set in rows, and the farm houses. And Pa said, "God Almighty!" The distant cities, the little towns in the orchard land, and the morning sun, golden on the valley" (227).

This was Grandpa's only dream about California: "Jus' let me get out to California where I can pick me an orange when I want it. Or grapes. There's a thing I ain't never had enough of. Gonna get me a whole big bunch a grapes off a bush, or whatever, an' I'm gonna squash'em on my face an' let'em run offen my chin." (83)

In fact, the Joads felt very proud about their status of "homesteaders" as it gave them the sense of property of the land as when Tom, after leaving the prison and coming closer to his house pointed to the boundary fence: " That there's our line. We didn't really need no fence there, but we had the wire, an' Pa kinda liked her there. Said it give him a feelin' that forty was forty" (29). As tenants, this was their land. They were born there, they had worked there, and they even "had to kill the Indians and drive them away..." (33). According to them this made ownership, not a paper with numbers.

But if at that time the monster was represented by the bank which they could not control, being forced to get off the land, it seems that after a time, roles had got upside down in the sense that in earlier generations the "monster" could have been the first colonizers, the pioneers, even Grandpa, all of them driven by the greed of land.

When Pa Joad realises that he cannot work his land since his individual labour is not anymore useful, his dream crushes. "The myth of the frontier" which means going west, starting anew, forgetting about past which is present in many of the tenants like Pa Joad vanishes. However as Louis Owen would say:

This Garden is inhabited by flawed men, men who, like Tom with his scar at the novel's end, are marked. The Eden - and Canaan-like valley that spreads so wonderfully beneath the Joads will prove to be filled with hatred, violence, greed, and corruption- the fruits of man's wisdom and knowledge lying rotting in the fields and orchards. It is a heavily ironic promise into the Promised Land (Bloom: 70)

On one way or another, this is what many of Springsteen’s characters experience about their own American Dream.

Finally with “The Ghost of Tom Joad’s” words “bathin’ in the city aqueduct”, the Joads and the Wilsons from *The Grapes* come to our mind again when they stop at Needles for getting water. Finally, they have a bath in the river: “They lay in the water and looked across at the sharp peaks called Needles, and the white rock mountains of Arizona” (203) where water helped them relieved themselves physically and also spiritually. This is when Noah expresses that he likes to stay there forever and in fact he will leave the family. At the same time, Tom begins to have the premonition that “This here’s a murder country. This here’s the bones of a country. Wonder if we’ll ever get in a place where folks can live ‘thout fightin’ hard scrabble an’ rocks” (204). The water acts as a symbol of renewal and also as a symbol of conversion to a new faith or a change into a new situation as it happens with the character of Bravo waters in “Across the River’s” song.

2.3. “WITH THE GHOST OF OLD TOM JOAD”

Now Tom said “ Mom, wherever there’s a cop beatin’ a guy
Wherever a hungry newborn baby cries
Where there’s a fight ‘gainst the blood and hatred in the air
Look for me Mom I’ll be there
Wherever there’s somebody fightin’ for a place to stand
Or a decent job or a helpin’ hand
Wherever somebody’s strugglin’ to be free
Look in their eyes Mom you’ll see me

At the end of Springsteen’s “The Ghost of Tom Joad”, it seems that the narrator is trying to reproduce Steinbeck’s Tom Joad’s last words with his mother before taking the ride of his own life at the end of the novel. Eventually Tom’s consciousness is awakening and he has been fully aware of Casy’s words since the day they met after Tom left McAlester’s jail while going home. Now, Tom knows how put Casy’s words in action and he promises his mother to be true to himself, to the land and to his breed while fighting and helping the others.

With his words "I'll be there", he means he is going to be present, he will fight to defend anybody who is involved in a fight or in any bloody situation like it is the case with the character in "Balboa Park", where prostitution, corruption is present during the story. He also "will be there" in "Galveston Bay" where the two main characters are surrounded by "hatred in the air" and where a story about racism and revenge takes place. He will be present "wherever there's somebody fighting for a place to stand" or where he would be needed to help to find a decent job as is the case of the character in "Sinaloa Cowboys".

"Sinaloa Cowboys" lyric chronicles the lives of two Mexican brothers, Miguel and Louis, who crossed the border into California and began working in the orchards of San Joaquin Valley. They left their families and homes; they headed north working all day long doing jobs that others would not do. One day, they heard from some Sinaloa men (Mexico) that some workers were needed in Fresno County (California) in "a deserted chicken ranch" cooking methamphetamine. In spite of the physical danger involved in the job:

If you slipped the hydriodic acid
Could burn right through your skin
They've leave you spittin' up blood in the desert
If you breathed those fumes in

The brothers chose this illegal job as they could make quicker money than working in the orchards. By the end of the story, Louis has an accident when the kitchen explodes. Miguel carries his young brother "To the creekside and there in the tall grass, Louis Rosales died ", then, Miguel drives him to a grove where they had buried the money they had saved. Miguel digs up the ten thousand dollars and buries his brother in the grave, act which symbolizes the exchange of money for life. At that moment, he recalls his father's words mentioned at the beginning of the song: "My sons one thing you will learn / for everything the north gives, it exacts a price in return". Louis is another casualty of drugs, another story that can be found in many inner-cities which are characterized by urban-decay. Drug-dealers could be the ones to blame for the death of Louis but maybe the truth is that "others" could be the responsible of his death.

This is the cost of living in the promised land of the New West as the father had well experienced along the years working in industrialized areas which do not give

anything for free and where working conditions are not easy, not even decent. More often than not, the use of these working conditions are degrading as is the case in *The Grapes* when the son of Joe Davis’s boy prefers to take a job in which he is going to earn enough to feed his family in spite of being morally corrupted against his people as the tenant said to him: “But for you three dollars a day fifteen or twenty families can’t eat at all. Nearly a hundred people have to go out and wander on the roads” (37). His greed and individualistic behaviour did not allow him help the others, choosing to follow the orders from the East and “crushing the house like a bug”. This is what the power of money can do in some situations where human beings turn into cold machines.

There is also another scene in which the family is trying to bury Grandpa but as they cannot pay for a funeral they are discussing the best way of burying him just not to have problems with the law: “The gov’men’t’s got more interest in a dead man than in a live one. They ‘ll go hell-scrapin’ tryin’ to fin’ out who he was and how he died”(140) to what Casy responded with a comforting prayer, telling them that the poor man has lived his life and the rest of the family had to go ahead even if he had to be buried like a pauper. Again, the power of money dividing social classes even when dying.

“Balboa Park’s” lyrics tells about the story of a teenager boy and other friends who deal with drugs and get involved in a bad game between drug dealers “in their Mercedes” and the patrol borders. Sure the boys have met doing the same dehumanizing job somewhere. The boy in the lyrics, Spider, hears the border patrol near the bridge and begins running down the highway. During the raid, he gets hit by the car and nobody stops to help him. He is too invisible to the eyes of authorities and other citizens who maybe use this road to commute to his peaceful suburban areas from their work. The character takes shelter in an underpass where he lies among the filth, waiting for his death. This is the side of America cities nobody mentions. The main topic of the lyric deals with the cost of living in the Promised Land among drug dealers. Little Spider and the other hustlers X-man and Cochise smuggle cocaine from Mexico: “they come north to California / end up with the poison in their blood” as the narrator says. Maybe they have made the choice of earning fast money; maybe they have been forced to accept this job as they have to send money to their families apart from the earnings to subsist including their own intake of inhalants like the “toncho” mentioned in the song. Never mind if the work is a degrading one which means risking their lives everyday: “He did what he had to do for the money / sometimes he sent home what he

could spare”. More often than not poverty and powerlessness go together and as a consequence these people are excluded from society. In addition, their skin colour, their roots and their language help them to be easily trapped under these fatal circumstances.

Some other times, Springsteen’s stories tell about right choices although they involve prejudices, internal fights when the character is hesitating about his deep values as is the case in “Galveston Bay”. In it, Le Bin Son, a Vietnamese immigrant decides to come to America after having “fought side by side with the Americans”. He left Saigon and brought his family to the Promised Land and settle down in the Gulf of Mexico, a place which “reminded him of home”. He worked hard as a machinist, saved money to buy a “shrimp boat with his cousin / And together they harvested Galveston Bay”. The other important character is Billy Sutter, an American who fought in Vietnam too. After being wounded, he shipped home in ’68 and he married, had a family and made his living fishing in the gulf. As more refugees came, Billy, the veteran together with other native-born Americans began to be resentful as they “settle on the same streets and worked the coast they grew up on”. Soon in many locals it was heard “America for the Americans / Someone said, “You want ‘em out, you got to burn ‘em out” and the Ku Klux Klan invaded the place with racist feelings. After a trial, he could leave the court, but Billy said “My friend, you’re a dead man” wanting to revenge the death of one of his friends. One night, Billy had the opportunity to commit the crime, but he finally forgave him, or at least he tried to turn away from his devils:

Le lit a cigarette, the bay was as still as glass
As he walked by Billy stuck his knife into his pocket
Took a breath and let him pass

Billy seemed to have understood and accepted what Le Bing had done. Both had been fighting for the same cause in Vietnam, later, life had brought them to America with the aim of living a decent and peaceful life with their families : “And casts his net into the water” is a verse which is used three times along the song giving sense to this wish. In fact with “every wish it comes a curse” as Springsteen would say in some lyrics. Maybe here both character’s wish was thrown there, into the waters, trying to find what they need to feed their families and their own souls. However there was something in this multicultural world that filled Billy with prejudices of race, an

anger towards the situation but in fact, in Vietnam, Billy could have been the vulnerable one, not the stronger among Le’s people.

The highway is alive tonight
But nobody’s kiddin’ nobody about where it goes
I’m sittin’ downhere in the campfire light
With the ghost of old Tom Joad

For the vast majority of Springsteen’s characters, the American dream has turned into an empty one like the okies. Ironically, California which stood for the Promised Land with beautiful springs, green fields plenty of trees in blossom ready to fulfil the dreams of migrants who desperately needed to pick up some fruit to survive, were forced to see and suffer more humiliations: “Carloads of oranges dumped on the ground. The people came for miles to take the fruit, but this could not be...they had to be destroyed to keep up prices” (348) while they were dying of hunger. The image of degrading labor conditions at that time began to be voiced by some of the characters, and Casy was the one acting like a leader.

After leaving Weedpatch Camp, the Joads found themselves in an overcrowded “highway” heading north in search of a new field where to work. Crossing such a rich country, they were overwhelmed by a feeling of happiness dreaming once more about picking up plenty of peaches, grapes and having a small house, but all of a sudden, these dreams fade away at Hooper Ranch: “in the eyes of people there is the failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage” (349). Lies, speculation, prices slowing down and starvation among other injustices filled the souls of people with wrath. This is what Casy tried to tell Tom when they met under the bridge near the highway: “It’s need that makes all the trouble...one fella yellin’, an’nothin’ happened...then another ...Then somethin’happened!They come a- runnin’, and they give us some other stuff to eat” (382). After Casy’s experience in jail talking, listening and observing other fellows, he came to realise that they had to tell the others what was happening. Casy’s former religious speeches had turned into workers prayers to help them realise that they had to be together and yell for their rights. After Casy’s death, Tom cannot stop thinking about Casy’s words: “a wilderness ain’t no good, ‘cause his little piece of a soul wasn’t no good ‘less it was with the rest” after

what Tom decides that although human beings are normally alone, their soul can be shared in order to reach the same objectives.

In chapter 28, while the family is working as cotton pickers and is living in boxcars sharing what they have with the neighbours, Tom has to hide after having taken revenge on Casy’s death. He is badly injured and although it is going to be difficult for him to escape from the estate, he has to take a decision and leave the family. He tries to sooth the farewell with his mother, giving her hope since maybe they are not going to be able to see each other anymore physically, but reassuring her that his spirit will always be near her:

I’ll be ever’where-whenever you look. Wherever they’s fight so hungry people can eat, I’ll be there. Wherever they’s a cop beatin’ up a guy, I’ll be there. If Casy knowed, why, 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 raised an’ live in the houses they build-why, I’ll be there. See? God, I’m talkin’ like Casy. Comes of thinkin’ about him so much. Seems like I can see him sometimes. (419).

With these words, Tom Joad is taking the ride like Casy did before him, and others have done during their lives. Since old times troubadours, song-writers and writers have told their folks about the experiences of many fictional and non-fictional characters and through their short or long narratives, real or allegorical stories have been there informing “the others”. If their works had not been transmitted, present generations would not have known about their past and perhaps and human evolution would have been different.

Steinbeck’s Tom Joad was immortalised in the story of *The Grapes of Wrath* and as he has grown old, Springsteen has invoked “his ghost” to give voice to the thousands of invisible people that nowadays are suffering the same injustices as Tom Joad and others who have long time ago disappeared. Along these last lyrics, “the ghost of old Tom Joad” has been already there witnessing different deaths through the stories of Balboa Park, Sinaloa Cowboys and Galveston Bay where the characters have been involved in the decay, darkness and emptiness of a modern America. They have been exploited in their jobs, and they have faced emotional struggles when trying to accept the ethnic “other”.

CONCLUSION

As this dissertation has tried to argue, Springsteen’s *The Ghost of Tom Joad* can be understood as a close adaptation of Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, now cast in the genre of folk music. Whether the main purpose of Springsteen was actually to adapt the novel or to use it as a source of inspiration to tell about the suffering of American people basically invisible to the eyes of society is not relevant here. However, we can claim that the use of a fictional character such as Tom Joad is an effective use of the literary original in order to speak about what was going on in America in the 1990s.

My point here is not analyze the specific circumstances that brought Springsteen to read from Steinbeck or other authors to fulfil his projects while creating and writing his lyrics; but what it is certain is that Tom Joad helped Springsteen to give voice to his message. With the release of this album in 1995, Springsteen helped to resurrect Steinbeck’s character as one who was witness to all the injustices and suffering of a sector of his contemporary American society and to a certain extent, to society in general.

As mentioned in the introduction, “the land” and mainly “the greed for the land” brought many immigrants to America with the desire of getting a decent job and a home where they could fulfil their dreams. If, during a certain period of time, America stood for the Promised Land, where opportunities for getting land were many, through the years this dream has become a nightmare.

Springsteen’s vision of justice and fairness has also transformed over the years, and at some points in his life he has tried to express his concerns and tell people about struggles and injustices by helping the voiceless. He has wanted to make his audiences “reflect” on human behaviour, and the loss of values of this society. Even though he had tried to do this in previous albums, it was *The Ghost of Tom Joad* that turned out to be his most intimate and convincing album in this particular ambit. With his harsh voice and simple accompaniment, he was giving a direct, uncomplicated and accessible voice to the anxieties of many people (as well as to his own worries), just as Steinbeck did in the 30s with his novel.

Audiences are free to interpret his lyrics in many ways, but whenever Springsteen composes, he appears to have a particular project in mind. His lyrics give

response to a variety of events which, as well as reflecting his personal “journey”, may also affect the experience of a whole community or even his own experience. Through his career, lyrics to songs such as “The River”, “My City in Ruins”, “The Last Carnival” or “This Land is your Land” have been used to speak about life, to give support to a given cause, to pay tribute to a friend (to mention only a few examples). But what is certain is that Springsteen always offers the message of “faith and hope” to overcome any spiritual or physical loss. In recent albums he has gone back to old folk songs, he travels back to earlier times, invoking the pioneering “American spirit” present in song-writers such as Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, as well as in writers such as Steinbeck.

With *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, Springsteen paid tribute to Steinbeck’s *Grapes* by allowing people to know more about this work and the novelist’s vision of America in earlier decades. Springsteen’s concerns are the same as Steinbeck’s and both men have, in effect, played the role of Tom Joad throughout their careers. My aim here has been to analyse how Springsteen’s characters evolve into a socially conscious characters during the course of their stories and how their suffering develops into a focus for exposing injustice, exactly in the same way as Steinbeck’s characters did. In that sense, the whole album seems to be a legacy of Steinbeck’s vision, warning his society about the consequences of the disappearance of human values in the face of a cold and materialistic society. Steinbeck’s fears were that the uprooting and alienation of society was destroying the soul of America; my reading of Springsteen’s lyrics would seem to confirm this fear, as expressed through the characters that reveal the injustices of their world or, in contrast, struggle to keep up their small moments of dignity. Perhaps we now no longer need to search any further for the ghost of Tom Joad: in the narrative folk songs of Bruce Springsteen’s music, he is already with us.

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APPENDIX:

SECTION 1: *THE GHOST OF TOM JOAD*. Album released November 21, 1995.

THE GHOST OF TOM JOAD

Men walkin' 'long the railroad tracks
Goin' someplace there's no goin' back
Highway patrol choppers comin' up over the ridge
Hot soup on a campfire under the bridge
Shelter line stretchin' round the corner
Welcome to the new world order
Families sleepin' in their cars in the southwest
No home no job no peace no rest

The highway is alive tonight
But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light
Searchin' for the ghost of Tom Joad

He pulls prayer book out of his sleeping bag
Preacher lights up a butt and takes a drag
Waitin' for when the last shall be first and the first shall be last
In a cardboard box 'neath the underpass
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
Bathin' in the city aqueduct

The highway is alive tonight
But where it's headed everybody knows
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light
Waitin' on the ghost of Tom Joad

Now Tom said "Mom, wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy
Wherever a hungry newborn baby cries
Where there's a fight 'gainst the blood and hatred in the air
Look for me Mom I'll be there
Wherever there's somebody fightin' for a place to stand
Or decent job or a helpin' hand
Wherever somebody's strugglin' to be free
Look in their eyes Mom you'll see me."

The highway is alive tonight
But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light
With the ghost of old Tom Joad

STRAIGHT TIME

Got out of prison back in '86 and I found me a wife
Walked the clean and narrow
just tryin' to stay out and stay alive
Got a job at the rendering factory, it ain't gonna make me rich
In the darkness before dinner comes
Sometimes I can feel the it
I got a cold mind to go tripping across that thin line
I'm sick of doin straight time

My uncles at the evenin' table makes his living runnin' hot cars
Slips me a hundred dollar bill, says
"Charlie, you best remember who your friend are."
I got a cold mind to go tripping across that thin line
I ain't makin' straight time

Eight years in, it feels like you're gonna die
But you get used to anything
Sooner or later it becomes your life

Kitchen floor in the evening, tossin' my little babies high
Mary's smilin', but she watches me out of the corner of her eye
Seems you can't get any more than half free
I step out onto the front porch, and suck the cold air deep inside of me
Got a cold mind to go tripping cross that thin line
I'm sick of doin' straight time

In the basement, huntin' gun and a hacksaw
Sip a beer, and thirteen inches of barrel drop to the floor

Come home in the evening, can't get the smell from my hands
Lay my head down on the pillow
And, go driftin' off into foreign lands

HIGHWAY 29

I slipped on her shoe, she was a perfect size seven
I said "there's no smokin' in the store ma'am"
She crossed her legs and then
We made some small talk, that's where it should have stopped
She slipped me a number, I put it in my pocket
My hand slipped up her skirt, everything slipped my mind
In that little roadhouse On highway 29

It was a small town bank, it was a mess
Well I had a gun, you know the rest
Money on the floorboards, shirt was covered in blood
And she was cryin', her and me we headed south
On highway 29

In a little desert motel, the air it was hot and clean
I slept the sleep of the dead, I didn't dream
I woke in the morning washed my face in the sink
We headed into the Sierra Madres 'cross the borderline
The winter sun, shot through the black trees
I told myself it was all something in her
But as we drove I knew it was something in me
Something had been comin' for a long long time
And something that was here with me now
On highway 29

The road was filled with broken glass and gasoline
She wasn't sayin' nothin', it was just a dream
The wind come silent through the windshield
All I could see was snow and sky and pines
I closed my eyes and I was runnin',
I was runnin' then I was flyin'

YOUNGSTOWN

Here in north east Ohio
Back in eighteen-o-three
James and Danny Heaton
Found the ore that was linin' yellow creek
They built a blast furnace
Here along the shore
And they made the cannon balls
That helped the union win the war

Here in Youngstown
Here in Youngstown
My sweet Jenny, I'm sinkin' down
Here darlin' in Youngstown

Well my daddy worked the furnaces
Kept 'em hotter than hell
I come home from 'Nam worked my way to scarfer
A job that'd suit the devil as well
Taconite, coke and limestone
Fed my children and made my pay
Then smokestacks reachin' like the arms of god
Into a beautiful sky of soot and clay

Here in Youngstown
Here in Youngstown
My sweet Jenny, I'm sinkin' down
Here darlin' in Youngstown

Well my daddy come on the Ohio works
When he come home from world war two
Now the yards just scrap and rubble
He said, "Them big boys did what Hitler couldn't do"
These mills they built the tanks and bombs
That won this country's wars
We sent our sons to Korea and Vietnam
Now we're wondering what they were dyin' for

Here in Youngstown
Here in Youngstown
My sweet Jenny, I'm sinkin' down
Here darlin' in Youngstown

From the Monongaleh valley
To the Mesabi iron range
To the coal mines of Appalacchia
The story's always the same
Seven-hundred tons of metal a day
Now sir you tell me the world's changed
Once I made you rich enough
Rich enough to forget my name

In Youngstown
In Youngstown
My sweet Jenny, I'm sinkin' down
Here darlin' in Youngstown

When I die I don't want no part of heaven
I would not do heavens work well
I pray the devil comes and takes me
To stand in the fiery furnaces of hell

SINALOA COWBOYS

Miguel came from a small town in northern Mexico.
He came north with his brother Louis to California three years ago
They crossed at the river levee, when Louis was just sixteen
And found work together in the fields of the San Joaquin

They left their homes and family
Their father said, "My sons one thing you will learn,
for everything the north gives, it exacts a price in return."
They worked side by side in the orchards
From morning till the day was through
Doing the work the hueros wouldn't do.

Word was out some men in from Sinaloa were looking for some hands
Well, deep in Fresno county there was a deserted chicken ranch
And there in a small tin shack on the edge of a ravine
Miguel and Louis stood cooking methamphetamine

You could spend a year in the orchards
Or make half as much in one ten hour shift
Working for the men from Sinaloa
But if you slipped the hydriodic acid
Could burn right through your skin
They'd leave you spittin' up blood in the desert
If you breathed those fumes in

It was early one winter evening as Miguel stood watch outside
When the shack exploded, lighting up the valley night
Miguel carried Louis' body over his shoulder down a swale

To the creekside and there in the tall grass, Louis Rosales died
Miguel lifted Louis' body into his truck and then he drove
To where the morning sunlight fell on a eucalyptus grove
There in the dirt he dug up ten-thousand dollars, all that they'd saved
Kissed his brothers lips and placed him in his grave

THE LINE

I got my discharge from Fort Irwin
took a place on the San Diego county line
felt funny bein' a civilian again
it'd been some time
my wife had died a year ago
I was still tryin' to find my way back whole
went to work for the INS on the line
With the California Border Patrol

Bobby Ramirez was a ten-year veteran
We became friends
his family was from Guanajuato
so the job it was different for him
He said' "They risk death in the deserts and mountains"
pay all they got to the smugglers rings,
we send 'em home and they come right back again
Carl, hunger is a powerful thing."

Well I was good at doin' what I was told
kept my uniform pressed and clean
at night I chased their shadows
through the arroyos and ravines

drug runners, farmers with their families,
young women with little children by their sides
come night we'd wait out in the canyons
and try to keep 'em from crossin' the line

Well the first time that I saw her
she was in the holdin' pen
Our eyes met and she looked away
then she looked back again
her hair was black as coal
her eyes reminded me of what I'd lost
she had a young child cryin' in her arms
and I asked, "Senora, is there anything I can do"

There's a bar in Tijuana
where me and Bobby drink alongside
the same people we'd sent back the day before
we met there she said her name was Louisa
she was from Sonora and had just come north
we danced and I held her in my arms
and I knew what I would do
she said she had some family in Madera county
if she, her child and her younger brother could just get through

At night they come across the levy
in the searchlights dusty glow
we'd rush 'em in our Broncos
and force 'em back down into the river below
she climbed into my truck
she leaned towards me and we kissed
as we drove her brothers shirt slipped open
and I saw the tape across his chest

We were just about on the highway
when Bobby's jeep come up in the dust on my right
I pulled over and let my engine run
and stepped out into his lights
I felt myself movin'
felt my gun restin' 'neath my hand
we stood there starin' at each other
as off through the arroyo she ran

Bobby Ramirez he never said nothin'
6 months later I left the line
I drifted to the central valley
and took what work I could find
at night I searched the local bars
and the migrant towns
Lookin' for my Louisa
with the black hair fallin' down

BALBOA PARK

He lay his blanket underneath the freeway
As the evening sky grew dark
Took a sniff of toncho from his coke can
And headed through Balboa Park
Where the men in their Mercedes
Come nightly to employ
In the cool San Diego evening
The services of the border boys

He grew up near the Zona Norte
With the hustlers and smugglers he hung out with
He swallowed their balloons of cocaine
Brought 'em across the Twelfth Street strip
Sleeping in a shelter
If the night got too cold
Runnin' from the migra
Of the border patrol

Past the salvage yard 'cross the train tracks
and in through the storm drain
they stretched their blankets out 'neath the freeway
and each one took a name
there was X-man and Cochise
Little Spider his sneakers covered in river mud
they come north to California
end up with the poison in their blood

He did what he had to do for the money
sometimes he sent home what he could spare
the rest went to high-top sneakers and toncho
and jeans like the gavachos wear

One night the border patrol swept Twelfth Street
a big car come fast down the boulevard
spider stood caught in its headlights
got hit and went down hard
As the car sped away Spider held his stomach
limped to his blanket 'neath the underpass
lie there tasting his own blood on his tongue
closed his eyes and listened to the cars
rushin' by so fast

DRY LIGHTNING

I threw my robe on in the morning
Watched the ring on the stove turn to red
Stared hypnotized into a cup of coffee
Pulled on my boots and made the bed
Screen door hangin' off its hinges
Kept bangin' me awake all night
As I look out the window
The only thing in sight

Is dry lightning on the horizon line
Just dry lightning and you on my mind

I chased the heat of her blood
Like it was the holy grail
Descend beautiful spirit
Into the evening pale
Her appaloosa's
Kickin' in the corral smelling rain
There's a low thunder rolling
'Cross the mesquite plain
But there's just dry lightning on the horizon line
It's just dry lightning and you on my mind

I'd drive down to Alvarado street
Where she danced to make ends meet
I'd spend the night over my gin
As she'd talk to her men

Well the piss yellow sun
Comes bringin' up the day
She said "ain't nobody gonna give nobody
What they really need anyway"

Well you get so sick of the fightin'
You lose your fear of the end
But you can't lose your memory
And the sweet smell of your skin
And it's just dry lightning on the horizon line
Just dry lightning and you on my mind

THE NEW TIMER

He rode the rails since the great depression
Fifty years out on the skids
He said you don't cross nobody
You'll be all right out here kid

Left my family in Pennsylvania
Searchin' for work I hit the road
I met Frank in east Texas
In a freight yard blown through with snow

From New Mexico to Colorado
California to the sea
Frank he showed me the ropes, sir
Just till I could get back on my feet

I hoed sugar beets outside of Firebaugh
I picked the peaches from the Marysville tree
They bunked us in a barn just like animals
Me and a hundred others just like me

We split up come the springtime
I never seen Frank again
'Cept one rainy night he blew by me on grainer
Shouted my name and disappeared in the rain and the wind

They found him shot dead outside Stockton
His body lyin' on a muddy hill
Nothin' taken, nothin' stolen
Somebody killed him just to kill

Late that summer I was rollin' through the plains of Texas
A vision passed before my eyes A small house sittin' trackside
With the glow of the saviours beautiful light

A woman stood cookin' in the kitchen
Kid sat at the table with his old man
Now I wonder does my son miss me
Does he wonder where I am

Tonight I pick my campsite carefully
Outside the Sacramento Yard
Gather some wood and light a fire
In the early winter dark

Wind whistling cold I pull my coat around me
Make some coffee and stare out into the black night
I lie awake, I lie awake sir
With my machete by my side

My Jesus your gracious love and mercy
Tonight I'm sorry could not fill my heart
Like one good rifle And the name of who I ought to kill

ACROSS THE BORDER

Tonight my bag is packed
Tomorrow I'll walk these tracks
That will lead me across the border

Tomorrow my love and I
Will sleep 'neath auburn skies
Somewhere across the border

We'll leave behind my dear
The pain and sadness we found here
And we'll drink from the Bravo's muddy waters

Where the sky grows grey and white
We'll meet on the other side
There across the border

For you I'll build a house
High up on a grassy hill
Somewhere across the border

Where pain and memory
Pain and memory have been stilled
There across the border

And sweet blossoms fills the air
Pastures of gold and green
Roll down into cool clear waters

And in your arms 'neath the open skies
I'll kiss the sorrow from your eyes
There across the border

Tonight we'll sing the songs
I'll dream of you my corazon
And tomorrow my heart will be strong

And may the saints' blessing and grace
Carry me safely into your arms
There across the border

For what are we
Without hope in our hearts
That 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

GALVESTON BAY

Fifteen years Le Bing Son
Fought side by side with the Americans
In the mountains and deltas of Vietnam

In '75 Saigon fell
and he left his command
And brought his family to the promised land

Seabrook Texas and the small towns
in the Gulf of Mexico
It was delta country and reminded him of home

He worked as a machinist, put his money away
And bought a shrimp boat with his cousin
And together they harvested Galveston Bay

In the mornin' 'fore the sun come up
He'd kiss his sleepin' daughter
Steer out through the channel
And casts his nets into the water

Billy Sutter fought with Charlie Company
In the highlands of Quang Tri
He was wounded in the battle of Chu Lai
And shipped home in '68

There he married and worked the gulf fishing grounds
In a boat that'd been his father's
In the morning he'd kiss his sleeping son
And cast his nets into the water

Billy sat in front of his TV as the south fell
And the Communists rolled into Saigon
He and his friends watched as the refugees came
Settle on the same streets and worked the coast they grew up on

Soon in the bars around the harbor was talk
Of America for Americans
Someone said, "You want 'em out, you got to burn 'em out"
And brought in the Texas klan

One humid Texas night there were three shadows on the harbor
Come to burn the Vietnamese boats into the sea
In the fire's light shots rang out
Two Texans lay dead on the ground
Le stood with a pistol in his hand

A jury acquitted him in self defense
As before the judge he did stand
But as he walked down the courthouse steps
Billy said "My friend, you're a dead man"

One late summer night Le stood watch along the waterside
Billy stood in the shadows

His K-bar knife in his hand
And the moon slipped behind the clouds

Le lit a cigarette, the bay was as still as glass
As he walked by Billy stuck his knife into his pocket
Took a breath and let him pass

In the early darkness Billy rose up
Went into the kitchen for a drink of water
Kissed his sleeping wife

MY BEST WAS NEVER GOOD ENOUGH

Every cloud has a silver lining, every dog has his day
She said, "Now don't say nothin'
if you don't have something nice to say."
The tough, now they get going, when the going gets tough
But for you my best was never good enough

"Now don't try for a home run, baby
If you can get the job done with a hit"
Remember, "A quitter never wins and a winner never quits"
"The sun don't shine on a sleepin' dog's ass"
And all the rest of that stuff
But for you my best was never good enough

"If God gives you nothin' but lemons, then you make some lemonade"
"The early bird catches the fuckin' worm,
Rome wasn't built in a day"

"Now life's like a box of chocolates,
You never know what you're going to get"
"Stupid is as stupid does and all the rest of that shit"

Come'on pretty baby, call my bluff
'Cause for you my best was never good enough

SECTION 2:

IT'S HARD TO BE A SAINT IN THE CITY (*Greetings from Asbury Park N.J.*, released Jan 5, 1973)

I had skin like leather and the diamond-hard look of a cobra
I was born blue and weathered but I burst just like a supernova
I could walk like Brando right into the sun
Then dance just like a Casanova
With my blackjack and jacket and hair slicked sweet
Silver star studs on my duds like a Harley in heat
When I strut down the street I could hear its heartbeat
The sisters fell back and said "Don't that man look pretty"
The cripple on the corner cried out "Nickels for your pity"
Them gasoline boys downtown sure talk gritty
It's so hard to be a saint in the city

I was the king of the alley, mama, I could talk some trash
I was the prince of the paupers crowned downtown at the beggar's bash
I was the pimp's main prophet I kept everything cool
Just a backstreet gambler with the luck to lose
And when the heat came down it was left on the ground
The devil appeared like Jesus through the steam in the street
Showin' me a hand I knew even the cops couldn't beat
I felt his hot breath on my neck as I dove into the heat
It's so hard to be a saint when you're just a boy out on the street

And the sages of the subway sit just like the living dead
As the tracks clack out the rhythm their eyes fixed straight ahead
They ride the line of balance and hold on by just a thread
But it's too hot in these tunnels you can get hit up by the heat
You get up to get out at your next stop but they push you back down in your seat
Your heart starts beatin' faster as you struggle to your feet
Then you're outa that hole and back up on the street

And them South Side sisters sure look pretty
The cripple on the corner cries out "Nickels for your pity"
And them downtown boys sure talk gritty
It's so hard to be a saint in the city

BORN TO RUN (*Born To Run*, released Aug 25, 1975)

In the day we sweat it out in the streets of a runaway American dream
At night we ride through mansions of glory in suicide machines
Sprung from cages out on highway 9,
Chrome wheeled, fuel injected
and steppin' out over the line

Baby this town rips the bones from your back
It's a death trap, it's a suicide rap
We gotta get out while we're young
'Cause tramps like us, baby we were born to run

Wendy let me in I wanna be your friend
I want to guard your dreams and visions
Just wrap your legs 'round these velvet rims
and strap your hands across my engines
Together we could break this trap
We'll run till we drop, baby we'll never go back
Will you walk with me out on the wire
'Cause baby I'm just a scared and lonely rider
But I gotta find out how it feels
I want to know if love is wild
girl I want to know if love is real

Beyond the Palace hemi-powered drones scream down the boulevard
The girls comb their hair in rearview mirrors
And the boys try to look so hard
The amusement park rises bold and stark
Kids are huddled on the beach in a mist
I wanna die with you Wendy on the streets tonight
In an everlasting kiss

The highway's jammed with broken heroes on a last chance power drive
Everybody's out on the run tonight
but there's no place left to hide
Together Wendy we'll live with the sadness
I'll love you with all the madness in my soul
Someday girl I don't know when
we're gonna get to that place
Where we really want to go
and we'll walk in the sun
But till then tramps like us
baby we were born to run

BADLANDS (*Darkness on the Edge of Town*, released June 2, 1978)

Lights out tonight
trouble in the heartland
Got a head-on collision
smashin' in my guts, man
I'm caught in a cross fire
that I don't understand
But there's one thing I know for sure girl
I don't give a damn
For the same old played out scenes
I don't give a damn
For just the in betweens
Honey, I want the heart, I want the soul
I want control right now

talk about a dream
Try to make it real
you wake up in the night
With a fear so real
Spend your life waiting
for a moment that just don't come
Well, don't waste your time waiting

CHORUS

Badlands, you gotta live it every day
Let the broken hearts stand
As the price you've gotta pay
We'll keep pushin' till it's understood
and these badlands start treating us good

Workin' in the fields
till you get your back burned
Workin' 'neath the wheel
till you get your facts learned
Baby I got my facts
learned real good right now
You better get it straight darling
Poor man wanna be rich,
rich man wanna be king
And a king ain't satisfied
till he rules everything
I wanna go out tonight,
I wanna find out what I got
Well I believe in the love that you gave me

I believe in the love that you gave me
I believe in the faith that could save me
I believe in the hope
and I pray that some day
It may raise me above these

CHORUS

For the ones who had a notion,
a notion deep inside
That it ain't no sin
to be glad you're alive
I wanna find one face
that ain't looking through me
I wanna find one place,
I wanna spit in the face of these badlands

CHORUS

THE PROMISED LAND (*Darkness on the Edge of Town*, released June 2, 1978)

On a rattlesnake speedway in the Utah desert
I pick up my money and head back into town
Driving cross the Waynesboro county line
I got the radio on and I'm just killing time
Working all day in my daddy's garage
Driving all night chasing some mirage
Pretty soon little girl I'm gonna take charge

CHORUS

The dogs on Main Street howl
'cause they understand
If I could take one moment into my hands
Mister I ain't a boy, no I'm a man
And I believe in a promised land

I've done my best to live the right way
I get up every morning and go to work each day
But your eyes go blind and your blood runs cold
Sometimes I feel so weak I just want to explode
Explode and tear this whole town apart
Take a knife and cut this pain from my heart
Find somebody itching for something to start

CHORUS

There's a dark cloud rising from the desert floor
I packed my bags and I'm heading straight into the storm
Gonna be a twister to blow everything down
That ain't got the faith to stand its ground
Blow away the dreams that tear you apart
Blow away the dreams that break your heart
Blow away the lies that leave you nothing but lost and brokenhearted

CHORUS

I believe in a promised land...

THE RIVER (*The River*, released Oct 10, 1980)

I come from down in the valley
where mister when you're young
They bring you up to do like your daddy done
Me and Mary we met in high school
when she was just seventeen
We'd ride out of that valley down to where the fields were green

We'd go down to the river
And into the river we'd dive
Oh down to the river we'd ride

Then I got Mary pregnant
and man that was all she wrote
And for my nineteenth birthday I got a union card and a wedding coat
We went down to the courthouse
and the judge put it all to rest
No wedding day smiles no walk down the aisle
No flowers no wedding dress

That night we went down to the river
And into the river we'd dive
Oh down to the river we did ride

I got a job working construction for the Johnstown Company
But lately there ain't been much work on account of the economy
Now all them things that seemed so important
Well mister they vanished right into the air
Now I just act like I don't remember
Mary acts like she don't care

But I remember us riding in my brother's car
Her body tan and wet down at the reservoir
At night on them banks I'd lie awake
And pull her close just to feel each breath she'd take
Now those memories come back to haunt me
they haunt me like a curse
Is a dream a lie if it don't come true
Or is it something worse
that sends me down to the river
though I know the river is dry
That sends me down to the river tonight
Down to the river
my baby and I
Oh down to the river we ride

INDEPENDENCE DAY (*The River*, released Oct 10, 1980)

Well Papa go to bed now it's getting late
Nothing we can say is gonna change anything now
I'll be leaving in the morning from St. Mary's Gate
We wouldn't change this thing even if we could somehow
Cause the darkness of this house has got the best of us
There's a darkness in this town that's got us too
But they can't touch me now
And you can't touch me now
They ain't gonna do to me
What I watched them do to you

So say goodbye it's Independence Day
It's Independence Day
All down the line
Just say goodbye it's Independence Day
It's Independence Day this time

Now I don't know what it always was with us
We chose the words, and yeah, we drew the lines

There was just no way this house could hold the two of us
I guess that we were just too much of the same kind

Well say goodbye it's Independence Day
It's Independence Day all boys must run away
So say goodbye it's Independence Day
All men must make their way come Independence Day

Now the rooms are all empty down at Frankie's joint
And the highway she's deserted down to Breaker's Point
There's a lot of people leaving town now
Leaving their friends, their homes
At night they walk that dark and dusty highway all alone

Well Papa go to bed now it's getting late
Nothing we can say can change anything now
Because there's just different people coming down here now
and they see things in different ways
And soon everything we've known will just be swept away

So say goodbye it's Independence Day
Papa now I know the things you wanted that you could not say
But won't you just say goodbye it's Independence Day
I swear I never meant to take those things away

NEBRASKA (*Nebraska*, released Sept 20, 1982)

I saw her standin' on her front lawn just twirlin' her baton
Me and her went for a ride sir and ten innocent people died

From the town of Lincoln Nebraska with a sawed off .410 on my lap
Through to the badlands of Wyoming I killed everything in my path

I can't say that I'm sorry for the things that we done
At least for a little while sir me and her we had us some fun

The jury brought in a guilty verdict and the judge he sentenced me to death
Midnight in a prison storeroom with leather straps across my chest

Sheriff when the man pulls that switch sir and snaps my poor head back
You make sure my pretty baby is sittin' right there on my lap

They declared me unfit to live said into that great void my soul'd be hurled
They wanted to know why I did what I did
Well sir I guess there's just a meanness in this world

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN (Nebraska, released Sept 20, 1982)

My name is Joe Roberts I work for the state
I'm a sergeant out of Perrineville barracks number 8
I always done an honest job as honest as I could
I got a brother named Franky and Franky ain't no good

Now ever since we was young kids it's been the same come down
I get a call over the radio Franky's in trouble downtown
Well if it was any other man, I'd put him straight away
But when it's your brother sometimes you look the other way

Me and Franky laughin' and drinkin' nothin' feels better than blood on blood
Takin' turns dancin' with Maria as the band played "Night of the Johnstown Flood"

I catch him when he's strayin' like any brother would
Man turns his back on his family well he just ain't no good

Well Franky went in the army back in 1965 I got a farm deferment, settled down, took Maria for my wife
But them wheat prices kept on droppin' till it was like we were gettin' robbed
Franky came home in '68, and me, I took this job

Yea we're laughin' and drinkin' nothin' feels better than blood on blood
Takin' turns dancin' with Maria as the band played "Night of the Johnstown Flood"
I catch him when he's strayin', teach him how to walk that line
Man turns his back on his family he ain't no friend of mine

Well the night was like any other, I got a call 'bout quarter to nine
There was trouble in a roadhouse out on the Michigan line
There was a kid lyin' on the floor lookin' bad bleedin' hard from his head there was a girl cryin' at a table
and it was Frank, they said
Well I went out and I jumped in my car and I hit the lights
Well I must of done one hundred and ten through Michigan county that night

It was out at the crossroads, down round Willow bank
Seen a Buick with Ohio plates behind the wheel was Frank
Well I chased him through them county roads till a sign said Canadian border five miles from here
I pulled over the side of the highway and watched his taillights disappear

Me and Franky laughin' and drinkin'
Nothin' feels better than blood on blood
Takin' turns dancin' with Maria as the band played "Night of the Johnstown Flood"
I catch him when he's strayin' like any brother would
Man turns his back on his family well he just ain't no good

BORN IN THE USA (*Born in the USA*, released June 4, 1984)

Born down in a dead man's town
The first kick I took was when I hit the ground
You end up like a dog that's been beat too much
Till you spend half your life just covering up

Born in the U.S.A.
I was born in the U.S.A.
I was born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A.

Got in a little hometown jam
So they put a rifle in my hand
Sent me off to a foreign land
To go and kill the yellow man

Born in the U.S.A.
I was born in the U.S.A.
I was born in the U.S.A.
I was born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A.

Come back home to the refinery
Hiring man says "Son if it was up to me"
Went down to see my V.A. man
He said "Son, don't you understand"

I had a brother at Khe Sahn fighting off the Viet Cong
They're still there, he's all gone

He had a woman he loved in Saigon
I got a picture of him in her arms now

Down in the shadow of the penitentiary
Out by the gas fires of the refinery
I'm ten years burning down the road
Nowhere to run ain't got nowhere to go

Born in the U.S.A.
I was born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A.
I'm a long gone Daddy in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A.
I'm a cool rocking Daddy in the U.S.A.

IF I SHOULD FALL BEHIND (*Lucky Town*, released March 31, 1992)

We said we'd walk together baby come what may
That come the twilight should we lose our way
If as we're walkin a hand should slip free
I'll wait for you
And should I fall behind
Wait for me

We swore we'd travel darlin' side by side
We'd help each other stay in stride
But each lover's steps fall so differently
But I'll wait for you
And if I should fall behind
Wait for me

Now everyone dreams of a love lasting and true
But you and I know what this world can do
So let's make our steps clear that the other may see
And I'll wait for you
If I should fall behind
Wait for me

Now there's a beautiful river in the valley ahead
There 'neath the oak's bough soon we will be wed
Should we lose each other in the shadow of the evening trees
I'll wait for you
And should I fall behind
Wait for me
Darlin' I'll wait for you
Should I fall behind
Wait for me

LIVING PROOF (*Lucky Town*, released March 31, 1992)

Well now on a summer night in a dusky room
Come a little piece of the Lord's undying light
Crying like he swallowed the fiery moon
In his mother's arms it was all the beauty I could take
Like the missing words to some prayer that I could never make
In a world so hard and dirty so fouled and confused
Searching for a little bit of God's mercy
I found living proof

I put my heart and soul I put 'em high upon a shelf
Right next to the faith the faith that I'd lost in myself
I went down into the desert city
Just tryin' so hard to shed my skin
I crawled deep into some kind of darkness
Lookin' to burn out every trace of who I'd been
You do some sad sad things baby
When it's your you 're tryin' to lose
You do some sad and hurtful things
I've seen living proof

You shot through my anger and rage
To show me my prison was just an open cage
There were no keys no guards
Just one frightened man and some old shadows for bars

Well now all that's sure on the boulevard
Is that life is just a house of cards

As fragile as each and every breath
Of this boy sleepin' in our bed
Tonight let's lie beneath the eaves
Just a close band of happy thieves
And when that train comes we'll get on board
And steal what we can from the treasures of the Lord
It's been along long drought baby
Tonight the rain's pourin' down on our roof
Looking for a little bit of God's mercy
I found living proof

SOULS OF THE DEPARTED (*Lucky Town*, released March 31, 1992)

On the road to Basra stood young Lieutenant Jimmy Bly
Detailed to go through the clothes of the soldiers who died
At night in dreams he sees their souls rise
Like dark geese into the Oklahoma skies

Well this is a prayer for the souls of the departed
Those who've gone and left their babies brokenhearted
This is a prayer for the souls of the departed

Now Raphael Rodriguez was just seven years old
Shot down in a schoolyard by some East Compton Cholos
His mamma cried "My beautiful boy is dead"
In the hills the self-made men just sighed and shook their heads

This is a prayer for the souls of the departed
Those who've gone and left their babies brokenhearted
Young lives over before they got started
This is a prayer for the souls of the departed

Tonight as I tuck my own son in bed
All I can think of is what if it would've been him instead
I want to build me a wall so high nothing can burn it down
Right here on my own piece of dirty ground

Now I ply my trade in the land of king dollar
Where you get paid and your silence passes as honor
And all the hatred and dirty little lies
Been written off the books and into decent men's eyes

STREETS OF PHILADELPHIA (*Springsteen's Greatest Hits*, 1995. Released Feb 28, 1995)

I was bruised and battered and I couldn't tell
what I felt
I was unrecognizable to myself
Saw my reflection in a window I didn't know
my own face
Oh brother are you gonna leave me
wasting away

On the streets of Philadelphia

I walked the avenue till my legs felt like stone
I heard the voices of friends vanished and gone
At night I could hear the blood in my veins
Just as black and whispering as the rain
On the streets of Philadelphia

Ain't no angel gonna greet me
It's just you and I my friend
And my clothes don't fit me no more
I walked a thousand miles
just to slip this skin

The night has fallen, I'm lyin' awake
I can feel myself fading away
So receive me brother with your faithless kiss
or will we leave each other alone like this
On the streets of Philadelphia

BLOOD BROTHERS (*Springsteen's Greatest Hits, 1995. Released Feb 28, 1995*)

We played king of the mountain out on the end
The world come chargin' up the hill, and we were women and men
Now there's so much that time, time and memory fade away
We got our own roads to ride and chances we gotta take
We stood side by side each one fightin' for the other
We said until we died we'd always be blood brothers

Now the hardness of this world slowly grinds your dreams away
Makin' a fool's joke out of the promises we make
And what once seemed black and white turns to so many shades of gray
We lose ourselves in work to do and bills to pay
And it's a ride, ride, ride, and there ain't much cover
With no one runnin' by your side my blood brother

On through the houses of the dead past those fallen in their tracks
Always movin' ahead and never lookin' back
Now I don't know how I feel, I don't know how I feel tonight
If I've fallen 'neath the wheel, if I've lost or I've gained sight
I don't even know why, I don't know why I made this call
Or if any of this matters anymore after all

But the stars are burnin' bright like some mystery uncovered
I'll keep movin' through the dark with you in my heart
My blood brother

THIS HARD LAND (*Springsteen's Greatest Hits, 1995. Released Feb 28, 1995*)

Hey there mister can you tell me
What happened to the seeds I've sown
Can you give me a reason, sir, as to why they've never grown
They've just blown around from town to town
Back out on these fields
Where they fall from my hand
Back into the dirt of this hard land

Well me and my sister
From Germantown we did ride
We made our bed, sir
From the rock on the mountainside
We been blowin' around from town to town
Lookin' for a place to stand
Where the sun burst through the clouds and fall like a circle
A circle of fire down on this hard land

Now even the rain it don't come 'round
Don't come 'round here no more
And the only sound at night's the wind
Slammin' the back porch door
Yeah it stirs you up like it wants to blow you down
Twistin' and churnin' up the sand
Leavin' all them scarecrows lyin' face down
In the dirt of this hard land

From a building up on the hill
I can hear a tape deck blastin' "Home on the Range"
I can hear them Bar-M choppers
Sweepin' low across the plains
It's me and you, Frank, we're lookin' for lost cattle
Our hooves twistin' and churnin' up the sand
We're ridin' in the whirlwind searchin' for lost treasure
Way down south of the Rio Grande
We're ridin' 'cross that river in the moonlight
Up onto the banks of this hard land

Hey, Frank, won't you pack your bags
And meet me tonight down at Liberty Hall
Just one kiss from you, my brother
And we'll ride until we fall
We'll sleep in the fields
We'll sleep by the rivers
And in the morning we'll make a plan
Well if you can't make it stay hard, stay hungry, stay alive if you can
And meet me in a dream of this hard land

THE WISH (*Tracks*, released November 10, 1998)

Dirty old street all slushed up in the rain and snow
Little boy and his ma shivering outside a rundown music store window
That night on top of a Christmas tree shines one beautiful star
And lying underneath a brand-new Japanese guitar

I remember in the morning, ma, hearing your alarm clock ring
I'd lie in bed and listen to you gettin' ready for work
The sound of your makeup case on the sink
And the ladies at the office, all lipstick, perfume and rustlin' skirts
And how proud and happy you always looked walking home from work

If pa's eyes were windows into a world so deadly and true
You couldn't stop me from looking but you kept me from crawlin' through
And if it's a funny old world, mama, where a little boy's wishes come true
Well I got a few in my pocket and a special one just for you

It ain't no phone call on Sunday, flowers or a mother's day card
It ain't no house on a hill with a garden and a nice little yard
I got my hot rod down on Bond Street, I'm older but you'll know me in a glance
We'll find us a little rock 'n roll bar and baby we'll go out and dance

Well it was me in my Beatle boots, you in pink curlers and matador pants
Pullin' me up on the couch to do the twist for my uncles and aunts
Well I found a girl of my own now, ma, I popped the question on your birthday
She stood waiting on the front porch while you were telling me to get out there
And say what it was that I had to say

Last night we all sat around laughing at the things that guitar brought us
And I layed awake thinking 'bout the other things it's brought us
Well tonight I'm takin's requests here in the kitchen
This one's for you, ma, let me come right out and say it
It's overdue, but baby, if you're looking for a sad song, well I ain't gonna play it

LAND OF HOPE AND DREAMS (*Live in New York City*, released March 27, 2001)

Grab your ticket and your suitcase
Thunder's rolling down the tracks
You don't know where you're goin'
But you know you won't be back
Darlin' if you're weary
Lay your head upon my chest
We'll take what we can carry
And we'll leave the rest

Big Wheels rolling through fields
Where sunlight streams
Meet me in a land of hope and dreams

I will provide for you
And I'll stand by your side
You'll need a good companion for
This part of the ride
Leave behind your sorrows
Let this day be the last
Tomorrow there'll be sunshine
And all this darkness past

Big wheels roll through fields
Where sunlight streams
Meet me in a land of hope and dreams

This train
Carries saints and sinners
This train
Carries losers and winners
This Train
Carries whores and gamblers
This Train
Carries lost souls
This Train
Dreams will not be thwarted
This Train
Faith will be rewarded
This Train
Hear the steel wheels singin'
This Train
Bells of freedom ringin'
This Train
Carries broken-hearted
This Train
Thieves and sweet souls departed
This Train
Carries fools and kings
This Train
All aboard

This Train
Dreams will not be thwarted
This Train
Faith will be rewarded
This Train
Hear the steel wheels singin'
This Train
Bells of freedom ringin'

MY CITY OF RUINS (*The Rising*, released July 30, 2002)

There is a blood red circle
On the cold dark ground
And the rain is falling down
The church door's thrown open
I can hear the organ's song
But the congregation's gone
My city of ruins
My city of ruins

Now the sweet bells of mercy
Drift through the evening trees
Young men on the corner
Like scattered leaves,
The boarded up windows,
The empty streets
While my brother's down on his knees
My city of ruins
My city of ruins

Come on, rise up! Come on, rise up!
Come on, rise up! Come on, rise up!
Come on, rise up! Come on, rise up!

Now's there's tears on the pillow
Darlin' where we slept
And you took my heart when you left
Without your sweet kiss
My soul is lost, my friend
Tell me how do I begin again?
My city's in ruins
My city's in ruins

Now with these hands,
With these hands,
With these hands,
I pray Lord
With these hands,
With these hands,
I pray for the strength, Lord
With these hands,
With these hands,
I pray for the faith, Lord
We pray for your love, Lord
We pray for the lost, Lord
We pray for this world, Lord
We pray for the strength, Lord

We pray for the strength, Lord

Come on
Come on
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up

AMERICAN LAND

(We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions, released April 25, 2006)

What is this land America so many travel there
I'm going now while I'm still young my darling meet me there
Wish me luck my lovely I'll send for you when I can
And we'll make our home in the American land

Over there all the woman wear silk and satin to their knees
And children dear, the sweets, I hear, are growing on the trees
Gold comes rushing out the rivers straight into your hands
When you make your home in the American Land

There's diamonds in the sidewalk the's gutters lined 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 will make his home in the American Land

I docked at Ellis Island in a city of light and spires
She met me in the valley of red-hot steel and fire
We made the steel that built the cities with our sweat and two hands
And we made our home in the American Land

There's diamonds in the sidewalk the's gutters lined 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 will make his home in the American Land

The McNicholas, the Posalski's, the Smiths, Zerillis, too
The Blacks, the Irish, Italians, the Germans and the Jews
Come across the water a thousand miles from home

With nothin in their bellies but the fire down below

They died building the railroads worked to bones and skin
They died in the fields and factories names scattered in the wind
They died to get here a hundred years ago they're still dyin now
The hands that built the country were always trying to keep down

There's diamonds in the sidewalk the gutters lined 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 will make his home in the American Land
Who will make his home in the American Land
Who will make his home in the American Land

LAST CARNIVAL (*Working on a Dream*, released Jan 27, 2009)

Sundown, sundown
They're taking all the tents down
Where have you gone my handsome Billy?

Sundown, sundown
The carnival trains' leavin' town
Where are you now my darlin' Billy?

We won't be dancing together on the high wire
Facing the lions with you at my side anymore
We won't be breathin' the smoke and the fire
On the midway

Hangin' from the trapeze my wrists waitin' for your wrists
Two daredevils high up on the wall of death
You throwin' the knife that lands inches from my heart
Sundown

Moonrise, moonrise
The light that was in your eyes
Has gone away

Daybreak, daybreak
The thing in you that made me ache
Has gone to stay

We'll be riding the train without you tonight
The train that keeps on movin'
Its black smoke scorching the evening sky
A million stars shining above us like every soul livin' and dead
Has been gathered together by a God to sing a hymn over your bones

Sundown, sundown
Empty are the fairgrounds
Where are you now my handsome Billy?

MY OKLAHOMA HOME (*We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*, released April 25, 2006)

When they opened
Up the strip
I was young and full of zip
I wanted someplace
To call my home
And so I made the race
And I staked me out a place
And I settled down along the
Cimarron
It blew away
It blew away

My Oklahoma home
It blown away
Well it looked so green
And fair
When I built my shanty there
Now my Oklahoma home
Is blown away

Well I planted wheats
And oats,
Got some chickens and
Some shoats
Aimed to have some ham
And eggs to feed my face
Got a mule to pull the plow
Got an old red muley cow
And I also got a fancy
Mortgage on this place

Well it blew away
It blew away
All the crops that I've
Planted blown away
Well you can't
Grow any grain
It you ain't got any rain
Everything except my
Mortgage blown away

Well it looked
So green and fair
When I built my
Shanty there
I figured I was
All set for life
I put on my Sunday
best, with my fancy
scalloped vest
And I went to town
To pick me out a wife
She blew away

She blowed away

My Oklahoma woman
Blowed away
Mister as I bent
To kiss her
She was picked
Up by a twister
My Oklahoma woman
Blown away

Well then I was left
Alone just listenin'
To the moan
Of wind around the
Corners of my shack
So I took off down
The road yeah
When the south wind
Blowed
I traveled with the
Wind upon my back
I blowed away
I blowed away

Chasin' that dust cloud
Up ahead
Once it looked so green and fair
Now it's up in the air
My Oklahoma farm is over head.

Well now I'm always close to home
It don't matter where I roam
For Oklahoma dust is everywhere
Makes no difference where I'm walkin'
I can hear my chickens squawkin'
I can hear my wife a-talkin' in the air
It blowed away
It blowed away

Yeah, my Oklahoma home
It blown away
But my home Sir, is always near
It's up in the atmosphere
My Oklahoma home is blown away

Well I'm roam'n Oklahoman
But I'm always close to home
I'll never get homesick until I die
Cause no matter where I'm found
My home's all around
My Oklahoma home is in the sky
It blowed away
It blowed away

My farm down on Cimarron
Now all around the world
Where ever dust is swirled
There is some from
My Oklahoma home

Oh and it’s blown away
It’s blown away

Oh my Oklahoma home is blown away
Yeah, it’s up there in the sky
In that dust cloud over n’by
My Oklahoma home is in the sky

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND (Springsteen’s version)

Well I rode that ribbon highway
I saw above me the endless skyway
I saw below me the golden valley
Well, This land was made for you and me

I’ve roamed and rambled, I followed my footsteps
Through the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts
And all around me a voice was calling
It said this land was made for you and me

This land is your land
This land is my land
From California
To the New York island
From the Redwood Forest
To the Gulf Stream waters
This land was made for you and me

Well the sun came shining and I was strolling
Through wheat fields waving and dust clouds rolling
And a voice was sounding
As the fog was lifting
Saying this land was made for you and me

This land is your land
This land is my land
From California
To the New York island
From the Redwood Forest
To the Gulf Stream waters

THIS IS YOUR LAND (by Woody Guthrie, written in 1940)

Chorus:
This land is your land, this land is my land
From California, to the New York Island
From the Redwood forest, to the Gulf Stream waters
This land was made for you and me

As I was walking a ribbon of highway

I saw above me an endless skyway
I saw below me a golden valley
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

I've roamed and rambled and I've followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts
And all around me a voice was sounding
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

The sun comes shining as I was strolling
The wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling
The fog was lifting a voice come chanting
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

As I was walkin' - I saw a sign there
And that sign said - no tress passin'
But on the other side... it didn't say nothing!
Now that side was made for you and me!

Chorus

In the squares of the city - In the shadow of the steeple
Near the relief office - I see my people
And some are grumblin' and some are wonderin'
If this land's still made for you and me.