“THE DISTANCE BETWEEN AMERICAN REALITY AND THE AMERICAN DREAM”:

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN’S AMERICAN JEREMIAD, 2002-2012

by

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This dissertation is dedicated with all the love in my heart to my wife and eternal partner, Jennifer James, who is my dream, my miracle, my absolute joy, and the love of my life.

This dissertation is also dedicated in memory of my parents, Bob and Martha McMillan who both instilled in me a true love of learning and the desire to pursue my dreams.

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ABSTRACT

During the years 2002-2012, Bruce Springsteen has created a consistent body of work, which includes the numerous songs written, recorded, and performed on the albums *The Rising* (2002), *Devils & Dust* (2005), *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions* (2006), *Magic* (2007), and *Wrecking Ball* (2012) and the tours associated with these albums, as well as various spoken and published prose statements that he made in connection with the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential campaigns in support of John Kerry and Barack Obama, we can see that he has worked to create a sustained public narrative, which does work to fully explore "the distance between American reality and the American Dream" ("International Press Conference" 407-08). Springsteen's narrative can be viewed as an American jeremiad through his lament of the apparent abandonment of basic American ideals that has led to the realities of a myriad of recent problems, such as the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and the economic crisis. Springsteen offsets his lament on the factors leading to these problems with a call to "the generosity that is at the heart of the American spirit" to build a "house that is truer and big enough to contain the hopes and dreams of all of our fellow citizens" ("American Reclamation Project"). Through both his laments on the loss of American ideals and his call for a national return to these ideals, we can see that Bruce Springsteen has created a compelling 21st-century American jeremiad during the years 2002-2012.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Throughout his career as a performer, Bruce Springsteen has occasionally adopted the persona of a preacher in order to forcefully spread his gospel of the "ministry of rock n' roll" to his congregation of the faithful in his audiences. One of his more notable "sermons" appeared during Springsteen's "Reunion tour" with the E Street Band during 1999-2000 during performances of the song "Light of Day." One particular "sermon" during the performance of this song is captured on Springsteen's *Live in New York City* DVD filmed during the "Reunion tour" in 2000 and features him telling the audience, "I'm here tonight [which he repeats several times] to re-educate you, to resuscitate you, to regenerate you, to re-indoctrinate you . . . with the power and the glory, with the promise, with the majesty, with the mystery, with the ministry of rock n' roll!" Springsteen explains further when he shouts, "Unlike my competitors, I cannot, I shall not, I will not promise you life everlasting, but I can promise you life right now!" For Springsteen, this sermon emphasizes that the concert experience with him can somehow change us through the shared experience of rock music. Although Springsteen's minister of rock n' roll persona is certainly entertaining, there is also the presence of something more significant to both his preacher persona and sermons than just an entertainment aspect, especially for an artist whose work explores the varied contours of American life from its idealized promise to its darker corners of despair. As Jeffrey Symynkywicz argues, the larger religious connotation for Springsteen and his "ministry of rock n' roll" beyond its entertainment aspect in the concert hall is that "His

music helps us to make sense of the sometimes tangled, often disparate threads of our lives. This is, at its foundation, a religious undertaking, a ministry of healing" (xii).

For Springsteen, however, the "ministry of rock n' roll" not only functions at a personal level but also at a national level through songs dealing with all of the various components of American life, as he attempts to raise a larger national awareness of both our ideals and our failures by morphing from a rock n' roll minister into a rock n' roll Jeremiah. During the years 2002-2012, Springsteen has created a consistent body of work, which includes the numerous songs written, recorded, and performed on the albums *The Rising* (2002), *Devils & Dust* (2005), *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions* (2006), *Magic* (2007), and *Wrecking Ball* (2012) and the tours associated with these albums, as well as various spoken and published prose statements that he made in connection with the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential campaigns in support of John Kerry and Barack Obama. During this period, we can see that he has worked to create a sustained public narrative that does work to fully explore "the distance between American reality and the American Dream" ("International Press Conference" 407-08). Springsteen's narrative can be viewed as an American jeremiad when he laments the apparent abandonment of basic American ideals that has led to the realities of a myriad of recent problems, such as the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and the economic crisis. Springsteen offsets his lament on the factors leading to these problems with a call to "the generosity that is at the heart of the American spirit" to build a "house that is truer and big enough to contain the hopes and dreams of all of our fellow citizens" ("American Reclamation Project"). Through both his laments on the loss of American

ideals and his call for a national return to these ideals, we can see that Bruce Springsteen has created a compelling twenty-first century American jeremiad during the years 2002-2012.

In his classic work *The American Jeremiad* (1978), Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the jeremiad as a religious rhetorical and literary form, particularly as a sermon, associated with the Puritans in seventeenth-century New England has continued to function throughout American literary and political history as a vehicle through which America "despite its bewildering mixture of race and creed, could believe in something called an American mission, and could invest that patent fiction with all the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual appeal of a religious quest" (11). The jeremiad "played a significant role in the development of what was to become modern middle-class American culture" (Bercovitch 18) as an expression of American nationhood and led to the emergence of later "Jeremiahs," such as Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Martin Luther King, Jr. (11). Bercovitch also notes that,

> The question in these latter-day jeremiads, as in their seventeenth-century precursors, was "Who are we?" but, almost in deliberate evasion of that question, the old prophetic refrain: "When is our errand to be fulfilled? How long, O Lord, how long?" And the answers, again as in the Puritan jeremiads, invariably joined lament and celebration in reaffirming America's mission. (11)

America as a nation is built upon the foundation of a set of ideas, such as those found in the Declaration of Independence of equality and the notion of the American

Dream through the "pursuit of happiness," which will be both promoted and protected through a government based on "consent of the governed" with individual rights guaranteed, if at least theoretically, through the Constitution. We can then certainly see that the American sense of "mission" has been one of the defining characteristics of American public life through both the continual quest to ensure that the realities of American life match these founding ideas and rigorous critiques of the continual dichotomies that remain between these realities and ideas. We can view the American sense of "mission" through the concept of the Puritan "errand," which Bercovitch points out "entailed a fusion of secular and sacred history. The purpose of their jeremiads was to direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfillment of their destiny, to guide them individually toward salvation, and collectively toward the American city of God" (9). In this specific context, the jeremiad obviously functions in a religious context, but we can also apply it if we view the fulfillment of the American "mission" in terms of "civil religion." Robert N. Bellah offers a definition of "civil religion" when he argues that America "from the earliest years of the republic is a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity" (Bellah). In an introductory note to a 1991 reprinting of Bellah's article in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World* included with the essay on his website, Bellah develops this idea when he distinguishes "civil religion" from "American exceptionalism": "I conceive of the central tradition of the American civil religion not as a form of self-worship but as the subordination of the nation to ethical principles that transcend it in terms of which it should be judged" (Bellah). Ultimately, just as the

Puritans viewed their "errand" in terms of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness in search of the promised land, America itself, within the construct of civil religion, is, as Bellah notes, "the promised land. God has led his people to establish a new sort of social order that shall be a light unto all the nations" (8).

As Bercovitch makes clear, "The American Puritan jeremiad was the ritual of a culture on an errand—which is to say, a culture based on a faith in process . . . . Its function was to create a climate of anxiety that helped release the restless 'progressivist' energies required for the success of the venture" (23). If we view the American "mission" through the cultural lens of "civil religion" and see American history as a process of attempting to reconcile the tension created by the dichotomies of American realities and ideals, we can then view the jeremiad as a continuing rhetorical and literary form that is not captive to pre-twentieth-century American literature and culture but continues to be spoken by "Jeremiahs" exhorting various American congregations to return to a fuller understanding and implementation of our shared American ideals.

Yet the key word in Bercovitch's analysis above is "anxiety," in that there is real uncertainty and tension in achieving the preferred spiritual or national goals. In terms of "civil religion" then, a continually rigorous examination of the dichotomies between American ideals and realities remains paramount. In Bercovitch's construct, such a focus makes

> anxiety its end as well as its means. Crisis was the social norm it sought to inculcate. The very concept of errand, after all, implied a state of

> *un*fulfillment. The future, though divinely assured, was never quite there, and New England's Jeremiahs set out to provide the sense of insecurity that would ensure the outcome. Denouncing or affirming, their vision fed on the distance between promise and fact. (23)

Andrew Murphy offers a framework for the continuing use of the jeremiad in American public life from its Puritan origins through our current time in his 2009 work *Prodigal Nation: Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 9/11*. Murphy argues that contemporary jeremiads fall into broad categories: traditionalist, especially those associated with the modern evangelical Christian Right movement, and progressive, associated with twentieth-century political figures like Franklin D. Roosevelt and Martin Luther King, Jr. Murphy defines the progressive jeremiad as one that

> looks to the past as well, but it looks in a quite different way, seeking to restate founding principles in language appropriate to changing times. Thus the progressive jeremiad is not concerned so much with making claims about the way "things really were" in the past, and even less in casting the future into that mold. But the progressive jeremiad's past, containing such a powerful founding promise, is equally constructed, and equally mythic. In its telling, liberty and equality become the birthright of every American, despite the limitations of previous ages in the realization of those ideals. (138)

Springsteen's sustained jeremiad during 2002-2012 certainly comprises a progressive jeremiad, especially through its direct denunciations of activities associated with both

contemporary political and economic conservatism, whether through the waging of unnecessary war or the unbridled greed at the root of the economic crisis, either of which we can view as contributing to Bercovitch's "anxiety" component within his construct of the jeremiad.

For Murphy, one of the key components in the construction of the contemporary jeremiad, either traditionalist or progressive, is the creation of a "usable past," a term that was originally used by Van Wyck Brooks in a 1918 essay in *The Dial* (128). Springsteen's "usable past" revolves more around his use of the phrase "American Dream" and/or "American promise" than in more explicit references to American history, not only in his songs but also in his public speeches and interviews, such as the one quoted below. Although the roots of the "American Dream" stretch back to the very founding of America in the seventeenth century, and, as we have seen, are articulated in the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed by the Constitution, the phrases "American Dream" and "American promise" were popularized by American historians writing in the first half of the twentieth century. Herbert David Croly in his 1909 work *The Promise of American Life* foreshadows Bellah's conception of "civil religion" when he writes, "The higher American patriotism . . . combines loyalty to historical tradition and precedent with the imaginative projection of an ideal national Promise" (13). Croly then uses the term "promise" in a more personal way when he notes that

> in spite of a more friendly acquaintance with all sorts of obstacles and pitfalls, our country is still figured in the imagination of its citizens as the

> Land of Promise. They still believe that somehow and sometime something better will happen to good Americans than has happened to men in any other country; and this belief, vague, innocent, and uninformed it might be, is the expression of an essential constituent in our national ideal. (13)

In his 1931 work *The Epic of America*, James Truslow Adams essentially echoes Croly's conception but uses the term *"American dream*" to refer to "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability and achievement" (404). Both of these conceptions are the foundation of the "usable past" that Springsteen uses in his progressive jeremiad. We can view Springsteen's jeremiad from 2002-2012 as part of the larger narrative framework for his creation of his "usable past," which Stephen Johnston argues, is a framework in which Springsteen

> subjects America to perpetual narrative theorization—set to music. America inspires and haunts him; America as ideal, America as a way of life, America as a land of dreams, America as a site of freedom and opportunity. Springsteen's America thus generates its own questions. Does America's self-conception correspond to the actualities of American life? If not, what accounts for the discrepancy? If not, what can be done to bring about agreement? If not, how do we live with the tensions, the contradictions? If not, how best to express both the love and the fury that home elicits? (209-10).

In a March 2012 interview with the European press prior to the release of his *Wrecking Ball* album, Springsteen directly addressed the main dichotomy about American life that Johnston outlines:

> My work has always been about judging the distance between the American reality and the American dream—how far is that at a given moment. If you go back to the work I did certainly beginning in late '70s, I'm always measuring that distance: how close are we, how far are we, how close are we? Everything from *Darkness on the Edge of Town, The River,* to *Nebraska, Born in the U.S.A., The Ghost of Tom Joad,* those are all the records that were always taking the measure of that distance. ("International Press Conference" 407-08)

Springsteen's focus on the "distance between American reality and the American dream" connects both artistically and personally to Bercovitch's analysis of how the jeremiad works as a meditation on "the distance between promise and fact" (23).

An important component of Springsteen's jeremiad from 2002-2012 was his emergence as a musical artist unafraid to make public political statements and willing to enter the partisan political arena through his endorsements and campaign activities and appearances with John Kerry in 2004 and Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012. Springsteen can be viewed as having always been a political artist since his songs have always dealt directly with various aspects of American life, especially permutations of the "American Dream" on his albums *Darkness of the Edge of Town* (1978), *The River* (1980), *Nebraska* (1982), *Born in the U.S.A.* (1984), and *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995). Ryan White argues

that "Politics had always been alive in his music, but it wasn't partisan politics. It was politics as illustrated by consequences, by lives being lived and shaped by forces beyond one's control (qtd. in Gleason 4). In spite of the more personal political component in his songs, Springsteen has not always taken publicly partisan political positions in his songs and public statements, so it is necessary to briefly trace his evolution as a contemporary "Jeremiah," who is very willing to enter the national pulpit of American public life.

Springsteen's first appearance at any type of political function was at a George McGovern benefit on July 5, 1972, in Red Bank, New Jersey. This performance by the Bruce Springsteen Band took place at Grant's Cinema III Theater, a movie theater, and the "money raised from this event was used to keep the McGovern office in Shrewsbury running and to send delegates to the Democratic convention" ("1972-07-05-Grant's Cinema III"). A poster for this benefit concert was included in Springsteen's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum exhibit *From Asbury Park to the Promised Land: The Life and Music of Bruce Springsteen,* which ran from April 2009 through February 2011 (Soeder 25). Although there is no official record of Springsteen saying anything political in public in these early years, he has noted that

> we were products of the '60s, and even as a young person, that brought with it a good deal of social consciousness even in Freehold, New Jersey, . . . And so we searched for ways to be involved. I know we did a benefit to bus protesters to Washington to protest against the Vietnam War. We

> did the thing for McGovern. Here and there we just sort of found ways . . . it was very much a natural part of the rock 'n' roll scene. ("Magician's Tools" 32).

Springsteen's next appearance at a political benefit was on September 22 and 23, 1979, at the MUSE (Musicians United for Safe Energy) Concerts for a Non-Nuclear Future held at Madison Square Garden in New York City. These concerts are more commonly called the "No Nukes" concerts, which included performances not only by Springsteen but also Jackson Browne, The Doobie Brothers, Tom Petty, Bonnie Raitt, James Taylor, and other notable artists, and were designed to "spread awareness about the dangers of radioactive-fueled energy and raise funds for an anti-nuclear/pro-solar campaign" (Graff 267). Although Springsteen and the E Street Band performed ninety-minute sets at their two performances, which included the debut of the song "The River," Springsteen was

> not entirely comfortable with his political footing, . . . He insisted that no politicians be given microphone time or money from the shows' proceeds, which were estimated at $600,000. He was also the only artist among the twenty acts who declined to contribute statements for an accompanying program book . . . . Manager Jon Landau said that Springsteen believed his presence and music said enough. (Graff 267)

The concerts were both filmed and recorded. The *No Nukes* film, which has not been released on DVD or for streaming, contains Springsteen's performances of "The River," "Thunder Road," and "Quarter to Three," while the three-LP/two-CD collection, which

was reissued in 1997 and also titled *No Nukes* contains Springsteen's performances of the "Detroit Medley" (a medley of covers of 1960s songs associated with Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels) and "Stay" with Jackson Browne (Graff 267). The performances of "The River" and "Thunder Road" from the *No Nukes* film are included on the two-DVD set *Bruce Springsteen: The Video Anthology 1978-2000*, which is discussed in the Career Overview section in the Appendix, and are also available on *youtube.com.*

Although he refrained from saying anything political at the "No Nukes" benefit concerts in 1979, Springsteen's first public political comment was made the next year on November 5, 1980, the night after the 1980 presidential election. Responding to Ronald Reagan's landslide victory over Jimmy Carter, Springsteen told his concert audience in Tempe, Arizona, before a performance of his song "Badlands," "I don't know what you guys think about what happened last night, but I think it's pretty frightening" (qtd. in Graff 296). The following year on August 20, 1981, Springsteen dedicated one of his concerts on *The River* tour at the Los Angeles Sport Arena as a benefit concert. Springsteen helped organize "A Night for the Vietnam Veteran" along with Bobby Muller, the founder of the Vietnam Veterans of American Foundation, and Ron Kovic, author of *Born on the Fourth of July* (Graff 258). At this concert, Springsteen spoke from the stage about the war, and that "it happened once and it can happen again" (qtd. in Graff 259). We can view this comment as being rather prophetic of the Iraq war, which Springsteen virulently opposed, as well as his focus on the plights of both soldiers and veterans of the Vietnam War prefigured his later concerns for soldiers and veterans of

the Iraq war as well, which eventuated in the song "Devils & Dust" (2005) and the *Magic* (2007) album.

During Ronald Reagan's 1984 re-election campaign, Springsteen once again found himself wrestling with Reagan over a comment he made about Springsteen during a campaign appearance in Hammonton, New Jersey, on September 19, 1984. During this appearance, Reagan said, "America's future rests in a thousand dreams inside your hearts; it rests in the message of hope in songs so many young Americans admire: New Jersey's own Bruce Springsteen. And helping you make those dreams come true is what this job of mine is about" (qtd. in Marsh, *Glory Days* 260). Reagan's reference to Springsteen had its roots in a George Will column that was published on September 13, 1984. The conservative political columnist attended one of Springsteen's Washington, D.C. concerts in late August 1984 at the invitation of E Street Band drummer Max Weinberg, and his enthusiasm for Springsteen was communicated to the Reagan campaign (Marsh, *Glory Days* 254-56). Dave Marsh points out that through Springsteen Will "saw, at least, a golden opportunity for Ronald Reagan to pick up more of the youth vote in the November election" and "relayed the idea of Springsteen's endorsing Reagan to the White House, . . . (*Glory Days* 255). In his column, Will extolled Springsteen's and the E Street Band's work ethic as a model for all American industry to follow:

> If all Americans—in labor and management, who make steel or cars or shoes or textiles—made their products with as much energy and confidence as Springsteen and his merry band make music, there would be no need for Congress to be thinking about protectionism. No

> "domestic content" legislation is needed in the music industry. The British and other invasions have been met and matched. (109)

Springsteen did not immediately respond to either Will's column or Reagan's comments. As Marsh observes, Springsteen's "initial reaction was to treat the whole idea of a relationship between himself and the President—*any* president—as a preposterous joke" (*Glory Days* 260), adding that Springsteen had "grown up in the era of outlaw of rock and roll, when the notion of any public official endorsing a rock star in the midst of an election campaign would have been a ludicrous proposition" (*Glory Days* 260). On September 21, 1984, at a concert in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Springsteen did respond to Reagan's comment before a performance of the song "Johnny 99" by saying, "The President was mentioning my name the other day, and I kinda got to wondering what his favorite album musta been. I don't think it was the *Nebraska* album. I don't think he's been listening to this one" (qtd. in Marsh, *Glory Days* 263). Springsteen's reference was to "Johnny 99" from the *Nebraska* album, which is about an unemployed auto industry worker who in his financial desperation kills a "night clerk" and is then sentenced to ninety-years in prison for his crime ("Johnny 99"). For the second Pittsburgh concert on September 22, Springsteen made another comment from the stage. Although this comment did not reference Reagan, Marsh notes that it "amounted to a bill of particulars against the devastating winter that Ronald Reagan's administration had helped create in the real America" (*Glory Days* 263):

> There's something really dangerous happening to us out there. We're slowly getting split up into two different Americas. Things are gettin'

> taken away from people that need them and given to people that don't need them, and there's a promise getting broken. In the beginning the idea was that we all live here a bit like a family, where the strong can help the weak ones, the rich can help the poor ones. I don't think the American dream was that everybody was going to make a billion dollars, but it was that everybody was going to have an opportunity and the chance to live a life with some decency and some dignity and a chance for some self-respect. (qtd. in Marsh, *Glory Days* 263-64)

In this comment, we can see Springsteen beginning to articulate the key points of his own political ideology built upon the larger ideas of community and individual opportunity that continued to evolve after 1984 and find a fuller voice in both his songs and public statements in 2002-2012. However, for Springsteen it was not enough to respond to Reagan with political comments from the stage; he also responded through actions that matched his rhetoric. As Marc Dolan points out, beginning in his concerts in October 1984, Springsteen was

> mak[ing] space for local, liberal charities, now dedicating "My Hometown" to them and to their active attempts to improve local problems . . . . He also showed considerable interest in strike-relief funds, particularly those run by United Steelworkers Local 1397 in Pittsburgh and the Steelworkers Oldtimers Foundation in Los Angeles. Three years after the president had forcibly ended the air traffic controller strike, and three years before the dispossessed of U.S. cities became so impossible

> to ignore that the term "homelessness" was first applied to them, raising money for food banks run by unions was one of the least Reaganesque things a public figure could do. ("How Ronald Reagan Changed")

As Dolan also notes, since October 1984 "there have been tables for local charities at every [Springsteen] venue, usually food banks and other poverty-focused causes, and the singer has reminded his audiences to help those organizations with the work of improving their hometowns" ("How Ronald Reagan Changed"). This kind of "bottom up" approach to politics through a consistent focus on the work of local organizations is, as John Street suggests, a form of the "biographical approach" to politics, which allows the "politically active musician [to] tell the story of their engagement in terms of personal values and commitments" (50). Marsh takes Street's "biographical approach" idea a step further when he notes that the "result was an exceptionally powerful combination, especially since it meant he was able to champion radical causes and working class dreams without ever losing his grip on a huge audience or the respect of the creative community" (*Glory Days* 271).

Four years after his initial foray into American presidential politics, Springsteen entered the international political arena by performing a concert in East Berlin, East Germany, on July 19, 1988, for an audience of approximately 300,000 people as part of the *Tunnel of Love* European tour. During this concert, Springsteen read a prepared comment in German to the audience, which in translation said, "It's great to be in East Berlin. I'm not for or against any government. I came here to play rock 'n' roll for you, in the hope that one day all barriers will be torn down" (qtd. in Kirschbaum 99). Erik

Kirschbaum argues perhaps with a bit too much hyperbole "considering that [Springsteen's comment] was delivered inside East Germany, it probably did more to shake the Cold War barrier than all the anti-Wall speeches in West Berlin combined, by Kennedy in 1963, Reagan in 1987, and everyone else in between" (99). However, his analysis is confirmed by an East German who attended the concert and has said,

> We all got the message, and it was electrifying, . . . Everyone knew exactly what he was talking about—tearing down the Wall. It was a nail in the coffin for East Germany. We had never heard anything like that from anyone inside East Germany. That was the moment some of us had been waiting a lifetime to hear. (qtd. in Kirschbaum 99-100)

After this politically important performance in East Germany, Springsteen then headlined the six-week long Amnesty International "Human Rights Now! Tour" in September-October 1988, which also featured artists such as Sting, Peter Gabriel, and Tracy Chapman on the six-week international tour (Graff 7). During the tour, Springsteen significantly said that his participation in the tour "was about trying to assert myself as a world citizen . . . This tour marks my graduation of sorts. And I hope that I will be able to go back home and, in my music, write about a different sensibility that I felt on this tour" (qtd. in Graff 8). Prior to the start of the "Human Rights Now! Tour," Springsteen released in August 1988 a four-song album titled *Chimes of Freedom* "to promote the tour and raise money for Amnesty International" (Graff 79). *Chimes of Freedom* is comprised of live tracks recorded during the *Tunnel of Love* tour and

includes Springsteen's stirring version of Bob Dylan's song "Chimes of Freedom" and an acoustic version of "Born to Run."

This "different sensibility" Springsteen had anticipated did not really appear in his work until the release of *The Ghost of Tom Joad* album in 1995, which is essentially a solo album of songs that explore the immigrant experience in California and individual struggles with the idea of the American Dream. This album's obvious literary connections through its title song to both John Steinbeck and Woody Guthrie is discussed more fully in the Career Overview section of Chapter Two. During Springsteen's solo tour in connection with this album, he appeared at an anti-Proposition 209 rally in Los Angeles, California, held at the Federal Building on October 27, 1996. Proposition 209 was a ballot initiative that "sought the sharp reduction of affirmative-action programs across the state" (Dawidoff 246). Introduced by Jesse Jackson at this rally, Springsteen made a brief comment in which he said, "I believe that the Promised Land is still attainable, but we're not there yet. Let's stand together in defense of that Promised Land" (qtd. in Dawidoff 247). He then performed the songs "The Promised Land" and "No Surrender" (Dawidoff 247-48). However, his strongest comments against Proposition 209 were not made at the rally but rather at his San Diego concert a few days before the rally on October 22, 1996. Here Springsteen's are more politically partisan than in his previous political comments, yet he also maintains his core themes of fairness and opportunity he first expressed in Pittsburgh in 1984:

> Republicans Bob Dole and Governor Wilson are cynically using this issue to play to our fears and to divide Californians along lines of race and

> gender. They need to be sent a message that we will not stand for it. There have been too many people who have sacrificed too much to go back now. If you believe in an America that provides justice and opportunity for all of its citizens, it is important for all Californians to stand together and vote no on Prop 209. (qtd. in Onkey 261)

Even with Springsteen's efforts urging California voter to vote against it, Proposition 209 passed with 54 percent of the vote (Onkey 261).

We can see that Springsteen's involvement in various benefits and causes, through his public statements from 1972 through 1996, and his continuing support for local organizations, especially food banks, which directly provide needed help for struggling citizens, generally spoke to politically progressive causes and ideas and also provide the ideological foundations of his jeremiad in words and actions in 2002-2012. Although we can view Springsteen as being a conventional modern liberal through his words and actions, there is also a deeper thematic current that runs his both his artistic and political work that also informs his jeremiad that goes beyond any traditional political ideology. As David Masciotra suggests,

> in Springsteen's finest moments, he achieves that to which few artists even aspire. He becomes affirmational. That is, he makes the idea of life more attractive . . . Springsteen's celebration of life is terrestrial and in the present. In American pop culture, Bruce Springsteen is the ultimate and most effective humanist.

> Art, especially in the hands of Springsteen, opens up a world of possibility—a "land of hope and dreams"—bigger and better than any legislation could create. ("Springsteen's Subversive Joy")

As will be seen in this dissertation, Bruce Springsteen's American jeremiad from 2002-2012, which is comprised of songs, albums, concerts, public statements and speeches, and endorsements of presidential candidates John Kerry and Barack Obama in 2004, 2008, and 2012, is not just a sustained rant promoting a modern liberal ideology. Springsteen's jeremiad seeks to move the idea of the American promise beyond politics to a larger awareness of shared American ideals and how the betrayal of these ideals, whether in foreign wars fought for questionable reasons or through an economic crisis brought on mainly by corporate and individual greed, can eventually be reconciled by recognizing the effects of these betrayals not only on the American spirit but also on our basic shared humanity.

This dissertation primarily focuses on the evolution and content of Springsteen's American jeremiad from 2002-2012 through an examination and analysis of his songs, albums, performances, public statements, and speeches during these years. Chapter Two reviews the relevant scholarship on Springsteen in general, as well as the scholarship cited and consulted in this dissertation. Chapter Three examines Springsteen's album *The Rising* (2002), which within the American jeremiad framework of which he creates the "ideal" for the community, while Chapter Four details how this "ideal" begins to fade away with the Iraq war and how Springsteen begins to publicly speak out against the war and then participates in the Vote for Change tour and

endorses John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election. Chapter Five looks at the song "Devils & Dust" from the album *Devils & Dust* (2005) as an anti-war song about the Iraq War and the song "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" from *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions: American Land Edition* (2006) as a direct criticism of the George W. Bush administration's handling of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana. Chapter Six explores the *Magic* (2007) album as a searing indictment of the Bush administration's conduct of the Iraq war as the "anxiety" phase of Springsteen's jeremiad, as well as detailing his subsequent endorsement of and campaign appearances and speeches for Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election. Chapter Seven continues an examination of the "anxiety" phase of Springsteen's jeremiad through an analysis of his *Wrecking Ball* (2012) album as both an angry response to the 2008 financial crisis and a glimpse of hope through shared memory and community expressed not only in the closing songs of the album but also through his endorsement and appearances with President Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential campaign. The Appendix provides a Career Overview of Bruce Springsteen's life and work through 2016.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a growing body of both popular and scholarly literature on Bruce Springsteen, which includes books and a variety of articles published in scholarly journals, music magazines, mainstream magazines and newspapers, and online sources. However, Springsteen's career during 2002-2012 has yet to receive a significant amount of the specific scholarly attention it deserves, and this dissertation is an attempt to fill this current scholarly void. This literature review primarily focuses on Springsteen's writings, which are separate from his albums and songs discussed in the Career Overview section, and the major anthologies, biographies, and critical works of Springsteen and his work from throughout his career. Also, important Springsteen-related websites, which are referenced throughout this dissertation, are also reviewed. Other key sources for this dissertation on the jeremiad, civil religion, and historical events are also reviewed.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN'S WRITINGS

Bruce Springsteen's autobiography *Born to Run* was published in 2016. It is a rather revealing autobiography as Springsteen writes openly about his problems with his father, his relationship with his wife Patti Scialfa, and his ongoing battle with depression. From a musical perspective, he provides interesting backgrounds and thematic contexts for his albums, although he does often repeat information that was previously published in *Songs* for his earlier albums, but he does not go into the desired detail about his more

recent work. Also, interestingly, Springsteen does not write anything at all about his political activities for Barack Obama and John Kerry, a rather surprising omission given his very public support for both candidates, especially Obama. Overall, *Born to Run* is an interesting and enjoyable glimpse into Springsteen's life, but from a scholar's perspective, that are parts of his life and work for which we need more than just a glimpse. It will be interesting to see how *Born to Run* is eventually viewed within the burgeoning genre of rock artist autobiographies.

Prior to *Born to Run,* Springsteen published two editions of *Songs*, which include the lyrics of each of his albums and comments in which he explains the processes, contexts, and ideas of each album, which are especially valuable. The first edition was published in 1998 to coincide with the release of the *Tracks* compilation and includes the lyrics and comments to his albums through *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995), although strangely there are no lyrics or comments about any of the songs released on *Tracks*. The 2003 edition includes lyrics and comments about the songs "American Skin (41 Shots)" and "Land of Hope and Dreams" on *Live in New York City* (2001) and *The Rising* (2002) album. Marc Dolan observes that in *Songs*, Springsteen "took his audience far inside the creative process . . . with an openness about the joys and frustrations of songwriting that he hadn't communicated to his audience in any detail since his earlier published interviews" (*Promise* 344). Jimmy Guterman is less enthusiastic about *Songs,* because *"Songs* forced you to submit to Springsteen's interpretations of his own material" (209). Although Guterman's argument is valid, the careful scholar can find much to value in *Songs*, since, as Dolan argues, Springsteen does give us an important

glimpse into his creative processes for his albums through *The Rising*. Given Springsteen's rather prolific output since *The Rising*, *Songs* is definitely in need of an updated edition.

Springsteen's official website is *brucespringsteen.net.* This site contains current news, tour information, photos, videos, and the lyrics for all of his albums. As a source for lyrics, this site has now supplanted the two editions of *Songs*, although Springsteen's valuable comments about his albums and songs through *The Rising* in *Songs* are unfortunately not included on the site. The site also contains information on the current and past members of the E Street Band, as well as a "store" where one can purchase Springsteen merchandise. More importantly, the "store" link is also where, as discussed above, CDs and downloads of current and archival concerts can be purchased through *nugs.net.* Springsteen's official website was redesigned and relaunched in December 2011. Unfortunately, with this redesign the archives portion of the previous website was eliminated, so the many statements and speeches that he wrote from 2003-2010 are now unavailable on the website but do remain generally available in *Backstreets*, on *backstreets.com,* and in *Springsteen on Springsteen: Interviews, Speeches, and Encounters*. I have physical copies of these important documents from their original publication on the official website. Another useful Springsteen website is *brucebase.wikispaces.com*, which is commonly known in the Springsteen fan community as "Bruce Base" and contains comprehensive information about Springsteen's performances and recording sessions throughout his career.

Backstreets was originally a "fanzine" created by Charles R. Cross, which began as a four-page tabloid in 1980 and evolved into an illustrated magazine format featuring articles, interviews, and reviews of essentially every aspect of Springsteen's career, as well as the New Jersey shore music scene. This evolution allowed it to mature beyond its original "fanzine" status and has led to the publication of ninety-one issues. *Backstreets*, which is now edited by Christopher Phillips, is normally published two-to-four times per year, although, unfortunately, an issue has not been published since the Fall/Winter 2013 issue. During the years 2002-2012, which are the focus of this dissertation, *Backstreets* featured insightful interviews with Springsteen and articles by notable Springsteen scholars, such as Bryan Garman, Jimmy Guterman, James Henke, and Dave Marsh, as well as Phillips. The print edition appears to now be secondary to website *Backstreets.com*, which posts current news about Springsteen, concert set lists, and also contains the fan message board "BTX." Unlike Springsteen's official website, the *Backstreets.com* news archive goes back to May 2003, while the setlists archive goes back to 1999, which makes this website a truly important source for information on Springsteen. Through both *backstreets.com* and *brucebase.wikispaces.com,* Springsteen scholars and fans have access to detailed performing and recording sessions information which covers the entirety of Springsteen's career.

During the years 2002-2012, Springsteen has given numerous interviews, generally in conjunction with the release of new albums and tours to the music press, especially to *Rolling Stone*, *Uncut,* and *Backstreets* magazines and to the popular press, such as *The New York Times,* as well as a major interview with the European press in

conjunction with the release of *Wrecking Ball.* He has also given major television interviews on ABC's *Nightline* in conjunction with the release of *The Rising* and the Vote for Change tour and CBS's *60 Minutes* with the release of *Magic*, as well as other notable interview venues such as *The Today Show, The Late Show with David Letterman, Good Morning America, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Late Night with Conan O'Brien,* and *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon.* These interviews and appearances are major primary sources for this dissertation.

During 2002-2012, Springsteen also issued a number of public statements, including his defense of the Dixie Chicks in 2003 and his endorsements of Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012, which were originally published on his official website *brucespringsteen.net.* In 2004, Springsteen's piece "Chords for Change" was published as an op-ed in *The New York Times* in conjunction with the Vote for Change tour announcement and remains the key statement in which he articulates his political philosophy about "the country we carry in our hearts" ("Chords for Change"). As part of the Vote for Change tour and in conjunction with his campaign appearances with John Kerry in 2004 and with and for Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012, Springsteen made several speeches that reference ideas in "Chords for Change," as well as other ideas about our public life, especially citizenship, in addition to comments supporting the candidates. Several of these speeches were originally published on *brucespringsteen.net* and *backstreets.com*. Many of these interviews, statements, and speeches are collected in the two anthologies *Springsteen on Springsteen: Interviews,*

Speeches, and Encounters and *Talk about a Dream: The Essential Interviews of Bruce Springsteen* discussed below.

One of Springsteen's more notable speeches was his keynote address to the 2012 SXSW Conference and Festivals in Austin, Texas on March 15, 2012 prior to the release of the *Wrecking Ball* album. Springsteen's address functions as a commentary on the current diverse state of popular music and on his key influences, such as Woody Guthrie, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, The Animals, soul music, and country music. As for pop music, Springsteen observes, "Pop's become a new language, cultural force, social movement. Actually, a series of new languages, cultural forces, and social movements that have inspired and enlivened the second half of the twentieth century, and the dawning years of this one" ("Keynote Speech" 386). In discussing his influences, Springsteen emphasizes both Guthrie and the Animals. He refers to Guthrie and his influence not just on his work but music in general as "a ghost in a machine—big, big ghost in the machine. And I believe it's because Woody's songs, his body of work, tried to answer Hank Williams's question: why your bucket has a hole in it. And that's a question that's eaten at me for a long time" ("Keynote Speech" 396). As for The Animals, Springsteen notes, they "were a revelation. The first records with full-blown class consciousness that I ever heard" ("Keynote Speech" 391). William I. Wolff offers an analysis of the speech in his article "Springsteen, Tradition, and the Purpose of the Artist," in which he argues that Springsteen's address belongs to the aesthetic tradition of prose works that deal with the creative process and specifically connects the address to essays by William Wordsworth and T.S. Eliot. This article was published in the

inaugural 2014 issue of *Boss: The Biannual Online-Journal of Springsteen Studies*, which is discussed below. Springsteen's keynote address is included the anthology *Springsteen on Springsteen: Interviews, Speeches, and Encounters*. Video of Springsteen's speech is available on YouTube at *youtube.com*, and an audio version is available through National Public Radio at *npr.org.*

Springsteen has also contributed various introductory essays to several different books, which all have connections to his own work. In 2016, the fortieth anniversary edition of Ron Kovic's important Vietnam War memoir *Born on the Fourth of July* was published with a new Foreward by Springsteen. Springsteen even recorded an audio version of his Foreward for the audio book. Springsteen first read the book in 1981, which he has described as a "Real, real powerful book" ("Rock and Read" 247), and it inspired his interest in and work with Vietnam veterans (Carlin 286-88). Springsteen's opposition to the Iraq war is a focus of this dissertation, and his Preface for Greg Mitchell's work *So Wrong for So Long: How the Press, the Pundits, and the President—Failed on Iraq* echoes one of the main themes of his *Magic* album, which is discussed in Chapter 6, when he writes in his Preface, "We live in a time when it's never been more difficult to tell the truth from lies and lies from the truth" (xvii). Writer Dale Maharidge and photographer Michael S. Williamson have published two works which focus on the American underclass. *Someplace Like America: Tales from the New Great Depression* was published in 2011 with a Foreward by Springsteen in which he comments about the "deconstruction of the American dream" (x), and its effects on both American workers and American identity: "Here is the cost in blood, treasure, and spirit that the post-

industrialization of the United States has levied on its most loyal and forgotten citizens, . . . " (x). This work was an influence on the *Wrecking Ball* album, which is discussed in Chapter 7. Maharidge's and Williamson's earlier work *Journey to Nowhere: The Saga of the New Underclass* was first published in 1985 and directly influenced Springsteen's *The Ghost of Tom Joad* album, especially the songs "Youngstown" and "The New Timer." For the 1996 edition, Springsteen contributed an Introduction in which he discusses this influence and also notes, "this is an America many of us fail to see, but it is part of the country we live in, an increasing part. I believe a place and a people are judged not just by their accomplishments, but also by their compassion and sense of justice" (v). The 1996 edition also contains the lyrics of the songs "The Ghost of Tom Joad," "Youngstown," and "The New Timer" from *The Ghost of Tom Joad* album. For long-time E Street Band saxophonist Clarence Clemons's 2009 memoir *Big Man: Real Life & Tall Tales*, which is co-authored with Don Reo and leans a bit more on the "tall tales" of his life, Springsteen contributed a Foreward in which he describes his relationship with Clemons as "A friendship and a narrative steeped in the complicated history of America and there is music already in the air" (Foreward). Springsteen also contributed an Introduction to photographer Frank Stefanko's *Days of Hopes and Dreams*: *An Intimate Portrait of Bruce Springsteen*, which is discussed below.

ANTHOLOGIES, BIOGRAPHIES, CRITICAL WORKS

In recent years, three anthologies of Springsteen's print and television interviews, his public statements and speeches, and important articles from throughout

his career have been published. *Springsteen on Springsteen: Interviews, Speeches, and Encounters*, which was edited by Jeff Burger and published in 2013, contains several important interviews and speeches through 2012, such as his 2004 *Nightline* interview with Ted Koppel in conjunction with the Vote for Change tour, his 2004 Cleveland speech for John Kerry, and his 2008 Cleveland speech for Barack Obama. Also, in 2013, *Talk About a Dream: The Essential Interviews of Bruce Springsteen* edited by Christopher Phillips and Louis P. Masur was published. As the title indicates, this collection pulls together notable print and television Springsteen interviews from 1973 through 2013, which include his 2004 *Backstreets* interview with Christopher Phillips about the Vote for Change tour, his 2006 *Backstreets* interview with Dave Marsh about *The Seeger Sessions* album, his 2007 *60 Minutes* interview with Scott Pelley, and his 2012 Paris interview with the European press about *Wrecking Ball*. Although both of these collections are important sources, they do lack important *Rolling Stone* and *Uncut* interviews, especially from 2002-2012, which would make both collections more definitive. June Skinner Sawyers's *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader* was published in 2004 and remains the best collection of articles about Springsteen through 2002 that have appeared in various publications throughout his career. *Racing in the Street* also contains two essays by Christopher Phillips and Robert Santelli that were written specifically for this collection. Remarkably, there is very little overlap in the content of these three important anthologies. An earlier anthology *Backstreets—Bruce Springsteen: The Man and His Music* edited Charles R. Cross was published in 1989 and is a compilation of selected articles and interviews from the earlier years of

Backstreets magazine through 1988. This book is also notable for its detailed and valuable information about Springsteen's recording sessions and performances from 1965-1989. Cross has also written notable biographies of Jimi Hendrix and Kurt Cobain of Nirvana.

There have been several biographies of Springsteen published throughout his career. The most recent are Peter Ames Carlin's *Bruce* and Marc Dolan's *Bruce Springsteen and the Promise of Rock 'n' Roll*, which were both published in 2012. *Bruce* is the first biography of Springsteen written with his cooperation since Dave Marsh's *Glory Days*: *Bruce Springsteen in the 1980s* was published in 1987, which is discussed below. Although Springsteen does offer new insights about his life and career in *Bruce*, especially his ongoing battle with depression, the work is a bit uneven as Carlin spends approximately two-thirds of the book on the well-documented pre-"Reunion tour" phase of Springsteen's career, while his prolific recording and touring activities in recent years through the release of *Wrecking Ball* in 2012 are treated much less comprehensively. Although Dolan only covers Springsteen's career through 2009, he is actually much more balanced in not tilting his biography in favor of Springsteen's earlier career as Carlin does, so his chapters dealing with the 2002-2009 generally contain more insight and information into this pivotal era in Springsteen's career than Carlin's.

At this point, although Carlin and Dolan are the only biographers to cover Springsteen's life and work from 2002-2012, there are several other biographies that are useful in gaining a larger understanding of Springsteen's life and career. In David Remnick's lengthy interview and biographical essay " We Are Alive," which was

published in 2012 in *The New Yorker*, Springsteen first reveals his ongoing battle with depression, which he also writes about in *Born to Run.* Although he is more known for writing about Bob Dylan, Clinton Heylin's *E Street Shuffle: The Glory Days of Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band*, also published in 2012, critically analyzes Springsteen's career from his early days through *Born in the U.S.A.* in 1984. Although this part of Springsteen's career is well-documented, Heylin's occasional critical stance about Springsteen is useful in offering an "other side" to the more hagiographic accounts of his career. As part of his biography, Heylin includes an exhaustive yet entertaining section of commentary on essentially every song Springsteen wrote, recorded, and/or performed from 1972 to 1984. In 2006, Robert Santelli published *Greetings from E Street: The Story of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band*, which is a valuable lavishly illustrated history of Springsteen and the band from their Jersey shore beginnings through *The Rising* tour in 2002-2003. Christopher Sandford's 1999 biography *Springsteen: Point Blank* critically examines Springsteen's life from a more personal perspective in often less-than-flattering terms. Two illustrated biographies published in 1985, Robert Hilburn's *Springsteen* and Kate Lynch's *Springsteen: No Surrender* were originally products of Springsteen's massive popular success with his *Born in the U.S.A.* album and tour, but both biographies offer insightful analysis of Springsteen's life and career through *Born in the U.S.A.* and provide useful perspectives that differ from Dave Marsh's *Born to Run* and *Glory Days*, which are discussed below. Also of interest is *The Ties That Bind: Bruce Springsteen A to E to Z*, which was edited by Gary Graff and

published in 2005. This volume is a useful encyclopedia of Springsteen-related information arranged alphabetically by topic.

Dave Marsh has long been one of Springsteen's best known biographers and analysts with unique access to Springsteen, since Marsh's wife, Barbara Carr, is Springsteen's co-manager along with Jon Landau (Graff 67). His earlier biographies are still valuable, since they were written with Springsteen's cooperation and thus provide more insight into his earlier career. *Born to Run*, first published in 1979, explores Springsteen's early career through *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (1978) with later editions including a chapter on *The River* (1980). Marsh then followed *Born to Run* in 1987 with *Glory Days: Bruce Springsteen in the 1980s*, which covers Springsteen's life and career through 1986 and the release of *Live 1975-1985* and revealed Springsteen as a rather haunted man, especially during the recording of the songs that became *Nebraska.* In 2004, Marsh published *Bruce Springsteen—Two Hearts: The Definitive Biography, 1972-2003,* which combines both *Born to Run* and *Glory Days* into one volume with a new chapter covering Springsteen's career from where *Glory* Days ends in 1986 through *The* Rising. Marsh's *Bruce Springsteen on Tour 1968-2005* (2006) is an illustrated biography that focuses on Springsteen as a performer from his early bands through the solo *Devils & Dust* tour in 2005. Marsh also conducted arguably the best interview with Springsteen about *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions*, which was published in the Spring/Summer 2006 issue of *Backstreets* and is included in *Talking about a Dream: The Essential Interviews of Bruce Springsteen,* while also writing detailed "liner notes" providing historical perspectives on *The Seeger Sessions* songs

that were published on *brucespringsteen.net* in 2006. For analysis of the songs on *Wrecking Ball*, Marsh, along with co-author Danny Alexander, published the article "To Set Our Souls Free: A Different View of Bruce Springsteen's *Wrecking Ball*" on his website *Rock and Rap Confidential*. Marsh also currently hosts the weekly "Live from E Street Nation" show on Springsteen's E Street Radio channel on SiriusXM satellite radio.

Three other more specific biographical works deserve mention. Erik Kirschbaum's recent *Rocking the Wall: The Berlin Concert That Changed the World* (2013) is a detailed narrative about Springsteen's concert in East Berlin on July 19, 1988, for an audience of approximately 300,000 people, which is based on interviews with many individuals who were involved in the planning for this concert and who attended it. Kirschbaum argues this concert had a direct influence on sparking the unrest by East Germans in East Berlin in 1989, which ultimately led to the fall of the Berlin Wall that same year. Frank Stefanko's *Days of Hope and Dreams: An Intimate Portrait of Bruce Springsteen* (2003) provides a rather different look at Springsteen from the photographer who shot photographs for the albums *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, *The River,* and *Nebraska*. Two of Stefanko's photographs of Springsteen were used as the cover images for both *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and *The River* albums. Another of Stefanko's photographs from this era was used as the cover image on Springsteen's autobiography *Born to Run*. Springsteen wrote an Introduction to *Days of Hope and Dreams* in which he notes that Stefanko "latched on to the very conflicts and ideas I was struggling to come to terms with. Who am I? Where do I go now? He showed me the people I was writing about in my songs. He showed me the part of me that was still one

of them" (12). Although *Down Thunder Road: The Making of Bruce Springsteen* by Marc Eliot and Mike Appel was originally considered a bit of a "hatchet job" on Springsteen when it was published in 1992, this book is actually an interesting and informative look at his early years and also works as a larger cautionary tale about the bad choices and compromises made by young artists desperate to "make it." Appel was Springsteen's original manager and definitely helped get his career off the ground, but the usual music business financial problems that often occur between manager and artist, which led to their protracted lawsuit (detailed in the book) over contracts that kept Springsteen out of the recording studio for three years following the success of *Born to Run* in 1975.

In addition to biographies, several works of critical analysis about Springsteen's work have been published. Generally, most of these works are aimed at a popular audience rather than an academic audience, but this intent should not detract from the value of these works, since all the critical works are grounded in a true understanding of Springsteen's work and make use of relevant scholarship to support their arguments and ideas. The most recent works of critical analysis published are Ryan White's illustrated volume *Springsteen: Album By Album* and Donald L. Deardorff II's *Bruce Springsteen: American Poet and Prophet*, which were both published in 2014. White provides analysis of each of Springsteen's albums through *High Hopes*, as well as concert tours and other public appearances associated with each album. Although designed as a "coffee table" book, White's analysis of each album is insightful, especially for Springsteen's recent albums and tours. Although Deardorff mainly arranges his book chronologically to cover Springsteen's career, he also provides useful thematic

frameworks that help to connect Springsteen's recent work in 2002-2012 with his earlier albums within larger contexts of American ideas and the creation of a sustained narrative about American life from the 1970s through our current time. David Masciotra's *Working on a Dream: The Progressive Political Vision of Bruce Springsteen* (2010) is the only analytical work so far to focus on Springsteen as a distinctive political voice by exploring how his work fits into larger political contexts such as alienation, urban issues, religious renewal, and community, and how his recent political activism connects to and embodies larger themes that have been present in his work throughout his career through the *Working on a Dream* album. The influence of Masciotra's work upon this dissertation is substantial. A different approach is taken by Unitarian minister Jeffrey B. Symynkywicz in his 2008 work *The Gospel According to Bruce Springsteen: Rock and Redemption from Asbury Park to Magic* as he examines the spiritual/religious themes that appear throughout Springsteen's songs and performances from all phases of his career through *Magic* with his chapter on *The Rising* being especially valuable. Rob Kirkpatrick's *Magic in the Night: The Words and Music of Bruce Springsteen* (2009) is a useful survey and analysis of Springsteen's songs that have appeared on all his albums through *Magic*, while Jimmy Guterman's *Runaway American Dream: Listening to Bruce Springsteen* (2005) entertainingly analyzes Springsteen's work through the Vote for Change tour in 2004 with an emphasis upon concert performances from throughout his career.

Specific attention is warranted for Jim Cullen's *Born in the U.S.A.: Bruce Springsteen and the American Tradition*, which was first published in 1997 with a second

edition published in 2005. Such attention is due to Cullen's choice to shift thinking and writing about Springsteen away from popular culture contexts to considering him more as a major American literary and historical figure through his explorations of Springsteen's work and career within several different American cultural contexts, including the conservatism of the Reagan years, the republican traditions of Emerson and Lincoln, the "American Dream" tradition represented by Elvis Presley and Martin Luther King, Jr., and the presentation of Vietnam in American popular culture through film and music. Cullen's ideas about the connections between Springsteen and Reagan first appeared in his article "Bruce Springsteen's Ambiguous Politics in the Reagan Era," which was published in *Popular Music and Society* in 1992. Cullen has continued to explore this connection in the articles "Alive in the U.S.A. (more or less) and "Born (Again) in the U.S.A.," which were both published in 2009 on *American History Now.blogspot.com.* "Born (Again) in the U.S.A." is the published text for Cullen's plenary address at Glory Days: A Bruce Springsteen Symposium in 2009. Although Cullen has yet to write extensively on Springsteen's work from 2002-2012, his influence upon this dissertation is profound, since he was one of the first scholars to effectively argue for Springsteen's place in the American literary and historical lineage. Two excerpts from *Born in the U.S.A.: Bruce Springsteen and the American Tradition* are included in *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader* discussed above.

Springsteen's relationship with his audience is the focus of three interesting analytical works from different perspectives and a recent documentary film. Linda K. Randall's ethnographic *Finding Grace in the Concert Hall: Community and Meaning*

Among Springsteen Fans (2011) explores how Springsteen's concert performances work to create actual spiritual experiences for his fans, as well as the creation of a true sense of community among them. Noted psychiatrist Robert Coles in *Bruce Springsteen's America: The People Listening; A Poet Singing* (2003) offers a study of several diverse individuals and the meaning that Springsteen's songs bring to their lives, which is similar in approach to the *Springsteen & I* documentary film discussed above in the Career Overview. Coles also published *DoubleTake* magazine from 1994-2003, which featured an earlier important interview with Springsteen by Will Percy, Walker Percy's nephew, in the Spring 1998 issue titled "Rock and Read" in which Springsteen discusses the influence of writers like Walker Percy and Flannery O' Connor, as well as film upon his work. This interview is included in *Springsteen on Springsteen: Interviews, Speeches, and Encounters,* in *Talk About a Dream: The Essential Interviews of Bruce Springsteen*, and in *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader*. Daniel Cavicchi's *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans* (1998) is an earlier sociocultural study of the Springsteen fan community. *Springsteen and I*, a documentary film directed by Baillie Walsh and produced by Ridley Scott, was released in 2013. This documentary utilizes several fan-produced videos, which highlights "fans' deep connection to Springsteen and his music" (Luff and Mangione 125), as well as performance footage from various concerts, including footage from Springsteen's performance at London's 2012 Hard Rock Calling festival where Paul McCartney joined Springsteen on stage. The DVD version of *Springsteen & I*, which was also released in 2013, contains four extra fan-produced videos that were not part of the theatrical version.

There are four notable anthologies of scholarly articles on Springsteen. The most recent is *Bruce Springsteen: Cultural Studies and the Runaway American Dream* (2011), which was edited by Kenneth Womack, Jerry Zolten, and Mark Bernhard and contains essays on aspects of Springsteen's work from religious, political, and gender perspectives, as well as how he writes about the "American Dream." *Reading the Boss: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Works of Bruce Springsteen* (2010) was edited by Roxanne Harde and Irwin Streight and contains essays which explore Springsteen's connections to writers, such as Flannery O' Connor and Walker Percy and to the larger frameworks of place, gender, and philosophy. *Bruce Springsteen and Philosophy: Darkness on the Edge of Truth* (2008), which was edited by Randall Auxier and Doug Anderson is the Springsteen volume in Open Court's Popular Culture and Philosophy series (other music volumes cover The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, The Grateful Dead, Pink Floyd, and U2) and contains essays exploring specific aspects of Springsteen's work from varying philosophical perspectives. In 2005, the Widener University Commonwealth Law School published a special volume of the *Widener Law Journal* titled "The Lawyer as Poet Advocate: Bruce Springsteen and the American Lawyer," which includes interesting articles on various legal perspectives on Springsteen's work by judges and lawyers, including former Pennsylvania Governor and Attorney General Tom Corbett, that were originally presented at a special symposium on Springsteen in February 2005. This volume also includes an interview with Robert Coles about Springsteen.

In 2014, *Boss: The Biannual Online-Journal of Springsteen Studies* published its first issue, which featured four articles, including William Wolff's article on Springsteen's 2012 SXSW Keynote Address discussed above, as well as articles on "Born in the U.S.A." and geographic and autoethnographic features in Springsteen's work. The second issue was published in 2016 and features three articles on Springsteen's larger connections to American music, his portrayal of class in the military, and his connections to Catholic theology. The editors for *Boss* are Jonathan Daniel Cohen, Roxanne Harde, and Irwin Streight, while the editorial advisory board includes Eric Alterman, Jim Cullen, Bryan Garman, and June Skinner Sawyers. *Boss: The Biannual Online-Journal of Springsteen Studies* can be accessed at *boss.mcgill.ca.*

There are other notable books on various aspects of American music and history that include significant critical analysis on Springsteen that add important insights to the literature. Labor historian Jefferson Cowie in his work *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the American Working Class* (2010) sees Springsteen as an important voice expressing working-class issues and concerns of the 1970s and 1980s, specifically on the *Born to Run*, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, and *Born in the U.S.A.* albums. Cowie also co-authored with Lauren Boehm the important article "Dead Man's Town: 'Born in the U.S.A.,' Social History, and Working-Class Identity," which is discussed in the Career Overview in connection with the *Born in the U.S.A.* album.

Bryan K. Garman's work *A Race of Singers: Whitman's Working-Class Hero from Guthrie to Springsteen* (2000) explores the connections between Walt Whitman, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and Springsteen and their emphasis on working-class characters and

ideas. For Springsteen, he focuses on *Nebraska*, "Born in the U.S.A.," and *The Ghost of Tom Joad*. *A Race of Singers* builds upon ideas that Garman first developed in his 1996 article "The Ghost of History: Bruce Springsteen, Woody Guthrie, and the Hurt Song," which focuses on Springsteen's connections to Woody Guthrie through songs on *Nebraska* and *The Ghost of Tom Joad.* This article is included in the anthology *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader.* Garman has also written perceptively about Springsteen's recent work. In his essay "Models of Charity and Spirit: Bruce Springsteen, 9/11, and the War on Terror," which was published in the 2007 anthology *Music in the Post-9/11 World*, edited by Jonathan Ritter and J. Martin Daughtry, Garman places *The Rising* within the framework of the Christian theme of charity as developed by the Puritan leader John Winthrop, which is a key foundational idea for this dissertation. Garman's article "Old Time Rock & Roll and Folk and Gospel and Jazz and Zydeco and Bluegrass and Country and Western Swing . . . *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*" which was published in the Spring/Summer 2006 issue of *Backstreets,* is a review/analysis of the album that perceptively examines the songs within their interesting historical contexts.

Larry David Smith's work *Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and American Song* (2002) is notable for his argument connecting Springsteen's work to Bob Dylan's, as well as for his framework of "The Worker's Elegy." Smith considers Springsteen's work from 1973 through 1995's *The Ghost of Tom Joad* as comprised not only by his albums but also through tours, media appearances, and management in the construction of a public persona for Springsteen. Co-authored with Jon Rutter, "Populist Editorials from the

Front: Bruce Springsteen's *Devils & Dust*," argues that the album *Devils & Dust* is the third of Citizen Springsteen's editorials "that portray his populist arguments in diverse settings" (7) with *The Rising* and *We Shall Overcome—the Seeger Sessions* as the first two editorials. Smith and Rutter's article "There's a Reckoning on the Edge of Town: Springsteen's *Darkness* on *The River*" (2008) is discussed in the Career Overview in connection with the *Darkness on the Edge of Town* album.

Three works that explore very different aspects of American music also contain specific sections on Springsteen's work and career. Robert Santelli's *This Land Is Your Land: Woody Guthrie and the Journey of an American Folksong* (2012) is a history about Guthrie's iconic song, which includes a valuable discussion of Springsteen's connections and performances of the song from *The River* tour in 1980 through President Obama's 2009 inaugural concert at the Lincoln Memorial. Craig Werner's *A Change Is Gonna Come: Music, Race, & The Soul of America*, which was first published in 1998 with a revised edition published in 2006, is survey of American soul, rhythm and blues, and gospel music and includes three chapters which deal specifically with how Springsteen has incorporated these elements in his music and performances throughout his career. For a look at the business side of rock music, Fred Goodman's work *The Mansion on the Hill: Dylan, Young, Geffen, Springsteen, and the Collision of Rock and Commerce* (1998) explores the hegemonic aspects of how rock musicians have been absorbed by the commercial music industry. He is particularly critical of Springsteen's acquiescence to the music industry, as well as of Marsh's biographies for their hagiography. Even with

his critical stance toward Springsteen, Goodman offers an informative and valuable look at his career from a commercial perspective.

Springsteen's connection to Asbury Park, New Jersey, is discussed in the Career Overview and there are two works, in addition to Robert Santelli's *Greetings from E Street: The Story of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band* which was also discussed above, that deserve mention. Daniel Wolff's *4th of July, Asbury Park: A History of the Promised Land* (2005) is notable for his portrait of Asbury Park during the late 1960s and 1970s when Springsteen was a leader of the town's important music scene, as well as for his discussions of the larger political and social issues occurring in Asbury Park at that time, such as racial problems and political corruption, and how Springsteen's early music reflects the many influences the town has had upon his work. Stan Goldstein's and Jean Mikle's *Rock & Roll Tour of the Jersey Shore* (3rd ed., 2008) is a valuable illustrated history of the "Jersey Shore" music scene. The sections on Asbury Park and Freehold (Springsteen's hometown) are especially good with specific information about past and present music clubs and venues in which Springsteen has performed throughout his career, as well as about important landmarks in his hometown.

Springsteen also appears in various books dealing with American politics, as well as music and politics. Eric Alterman and Kevin Mattson include a section on Springsteen in their chapter "What's the Matter with America" in *The Cause: The Fight for American Liberalism from Franklin Roosevelt to Barack Obama* (2012), which deals with the contexts of American liberalism from the 1980s up to the inauguration of President Obama in 2009 and provides a nice overview of Springsteen's activities in the

political/partisan world of American public life during these years. Alterman also published this chapter with a new introduction as a separate article titled "Springsteen's Political Voice" in the April 30, 2012 issue of *The Nation.* As noted above, Springsteen has had a long-standing interest in problems faced by Vietnam veterans, and Christian G. Appy's recent work *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (2015) contains a section on Springsteen and his song "Born in the U.S.A." British scholar John Street has written two perceptive works which explore the intersection of music and politics. In his *Music & Politics* (2012), Street discusses several frameworks in which music and politics merge, such as encouraging political communication and participation, expressing ideologies, and mobilizing voters, and he includes Springsteen's support of Barack Obama in 2008 among his examples. The cover of the book even features a photograph of Springsteen performing at a 2008 Obama campaign rally. Street's earlier work *Rebel Rock: The Politics of Popular Music* (1986) includes a significant early analysis of the political aspects of Springsteen's work and persona through *Born in U.S.A.*, with an especially perceptive look at the song "Factory" from *Darkness on the Edge of Town*.

Both *Rolling Stone* and *Uncut* are music magazines that have championed Springsteen throughout his career, and he has returned the favor by giving important interviews to both publications, especially in connection with his work from 2002-2012. In 2013, *Rolling Stone* published *Bruce Springsteen: His 100 Greatest Songs* as part of its *Collectors Edition* series of special issues. In addition to brief descriptions of his 100 greatest songs as selected by a panel of music critics and musicians, this special issue

contains excerpts from the key interviews with Springsteen from 1975 through 2012. I In 1996, *Rolling Stone* published *Bruce Springsteen: The Rolling Stone Files*, which is a valuable collection of articles and album and concert reviews about Springsteen, along with interviews, which appeared in *Rolling Stone* magazine from 1973-1996. *Uncut* has also published special editions on Springsteen. *Uncut: The Ultimate Collector's Edition: Springsteen* was published in 2015 and is the most recent special issue on Springsteen, which contains important interviews with Springsteen from throughout his career and insightful articles about each of his albums through *High Hopes.* Similar special *Uncut* issues focusing on Springsteen were published in 2010 and 2004 with the 2004 issue being notable for articles about Springsteen and the Vote for Change tour and his campaign appearances with John Kerry.

Springsteen has also been the focus of three academic conferences in 2005, 2009, and 2012, which have all been titled Glory Days: A Bruce Springsteen Symposium and held at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, New Jersey. Noted authors and critics such as Peter Ames Carlin, Jim Cullen, Bryan K. Garman, Dave Marsh, Robert Santelli, and June Skinner Sawyers have all made presentations at these symposia. Selected papers from the 2005 Symposium were published as the Fall 2007 edition of *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, which contains articles on Springsteen within geographical, narrative, crime, and social justice contexts and are available through the JSTOR database. The author presented papers at all three symposia, which contain portions of Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven of this dissertation.

OTHER IMPORTANT SOURCES

This dissertation also makes use of other important sources related to the specific aspects of American history and literature that are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Since the overall theoretical framework for this dissertation revolves around how Springsteen's work from 2002-2012 functions as a sustained American jeremiad, the relevant literature on the jeremiad deserves mention. The classic work on the American jeremiad is Sacvan Bercovitch's *The American Jeremiad*, which was published in 1978. Bercovitch's ideas about the content and structure of the American jeremiad in American literature as developed in this classic work serve as the theoretical foundation of this dissertation. Although not directly cited in this dissertation, Perry Miller's ideas on the jeremiad developed in his work on the Puritans *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (1953) and *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956) helped to shape the author's thinking on how to apply the jeremiad to Springsteen's work. Andrew R. Murphy's recent work *Prodigal Nation: Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 9/11* (2009) provides useful contemporary frameworks for the jeremiad, especially his ideas on the "progressive jeremiad," which certainly applies to Springsteen. Murphy's article "Longing, Nostalgia, and Golden Age Politics: The American Jeremiad and the Power of the Past" (2009) provides a useful overview of key ideas contained in *Prodigal Nation*. James A. Morone's ideas on jeremiads throughout American history in his work *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (2003) are also valuable.

In addition to the framework of the American jeremiad, this dissertation also makes use of the idea of American "civil religion" as a foundation for Springsteen's jeremiad. Robert Bellah argues in his article "Civil Religion in America" that America has had a "civil religion" since the Founding era of nationally shared ideas and institutions that have been inculcated throughout American culture. Two of Bellah's other works on civil religion, *Varieties of Civil Religion*, which Bellah co-authored with Phillip E. Hammond, was first published in 1975 and *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (1992), also helped shaped the author's thinking on this particular aspect of American culture.

For the history of the activities of the George W. Bush administration from 2001-2009, which are a significant focus of this dissertation, *New York* Times's correspondent Peter Baker's work *Days of Fire: Bush and Cheney in the White House* (2013) is the most recent and comprehensive history of the Bush years. Robert Draper's earlier work on the Bush years *Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush*, which was published in 2008 before the end of Bush's second term, is still valuable for information and insights not found in Baker. George W. Bush's memoir about his presidency *Decision Points*, which was published in 2010, focuses on key events during his presidency. While not necessarily a classic presidential memoir, it is useful to have Bush's accounts of the events that are addressed in this dissertation to gain more personal perspectives on these events than Baker and Draper may provide. Seymour Hersh's explosive article "Torture at Abu Ghraib" exposed how American soldiers were engaging in the torture of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison with the tacit approval of the Bush

administration. Legal scholar Harold H. Bruff analyzes the constitutionality of the Bush administration's actions after 9/11, including the sanctioning of torture at Abu Ghraib, in the chapter "No Equivocation: George W. Bush" in *Untrodden Ground: How Presidents Interpret the Constitution* (2015).

CHAPTER THREE:

"INTO THE FIRE": *THE RISING*

Bruce Springsteen's jeremiad began on Friday, September 21, 2001, just ten days after the terrorist attacks on September 11, when he opened *America: A Tribute to Heroes*, which was

> the first post-9/11 American mass-mediated music event, aired on more than thirty-five broadcast cable TV networks and 8,000 radio stations in the United States (and internationally) . . . . While this musical performance was described as a fund-raiser for aid relief, it accomplished much more: through the power of celebrity, music, and gesture, the concert attempted to forge a unified American community . . . . (Pegley and Fast 29)

Springsteen performed his song "My City of Ruins," which he had originally written for Asbury Park and has described as being both "a sort of prayer" ("American Reclamation" 66) and "a gospel song" ("Into the Fire" 52)." He has described his participation in the telethon as "a way to give thanks for community protected and preserved, to the people and their families who take that burden on as a part of their everyday lives" (*Songs* 305). He did not perform the song with the E Street Band but rather in a simpler version with acoustic guitar and a small, seven-member choir, and "There was no spoken introduction, no name written across the bottom of the screen. Bruce strummed a

chord progression, issued a quick dedication—'This is a prayer for our fallen brothers and sisters' . . . ." (Carlin 408).

As a prayer, "My City of Ruins" addresses both the collective and individual aspects of loss. For a community experiencing some type of destruction, the narrator of the song observes that "The church door's thrown open/I can hear the organ's song/But the congregation's gone" (lines 4-6), while the narrator also brings us inside a home where

> Now 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? (22-27)

From these collective and individual perspectives on loss, the song then morphs into a gospel prayer as the narrator exhorts the audience:

> 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. (37-44)

From this prayer, the narrator then moves into a rousing exhortation to "Come on, rise up" (47), which is repeated several times before the song comes to a close.

Bryan Garman observes that

> this hymn of urban decay took on new meaning in his [Springsteen's] televised performance. The first major popular artist to address the nation after the attacks, Springsteen ascended the pulpit and assumed the role of eulogist and minister: his lyrics, the grain of his voice, the lighting and staging converged to create an image designed to assuage grief and provide hope by imagining and enacting through song and performance a model of charity and community. ("Models of Charity" 78)

Yet for all the power of Springsteen's individual performance of "My City of Ruins" and his willingness to ascend into the national pulpit in such an important moment, the song ultimately is about unity in a communal prayer, especially in its use of "we" in the actual prayer section and the collective exhortation to "come on, rise up." As Peter Ames Carlin notes about the performance, "The singers swayed to the music, their raised hands locked together, their voices expressing the grief in the air and the most American of ideals: that no tragedy can undo a person, or a community, determined to climb back to their feet, roll up their sleeves, and rebuild" (409). This perfect confluence of Springsteen ascending into the national pulpit and his choir giving voice to the fundamental idea of American community moved beyond this telethon performance

and became the essence of a new album called *The Rising*. Eric Alterman and Kevin Mattson point out that the release of *The Rising* "was treated by the media as the equivalent of a presidential address. The album did many things, but most of all it united much of America in an entirely different spirit than the one George W. Bush and Dick Cheney tried to exploit" (413).

The Rising not only had its origins in Springsteen's telethon performance but also in more personal and direct experiences. His home county in New Jersey, Monmouth County, lost 158 people who worked in the Twin Towers ("Bruce Rising" 55). In a *Rolling Stone* interview with Josh Tyrangiel that was published in the August 22, 2002, issue to promote *The Rising*, Springsteen related the story about how

> he realized that he needed to make this album. It was a few days after September 11th, and he was leaving the beach. A man drove by, his window down and yelled, "We need ya!" Then he rolled his window up and kept going. "And I thought, 'Well, I've probably been a part of this guy's life for a while . . . . And people wanna see other people they know, they wanna be around things they're familiar with. So he may need to see me right about now. That made sense, like, "Oh, I have a job to do." ("American Gospel" 94)

In addition to this encounter, Springsteen reached out to those who had lost loved ones in the September 11th attacks, such as Stacey Farrelly and Suzanne Berger, and "the experience of hearing Berger talk about how her husband hustled dozens of people out of the south tower before it collapsed around him or of listening to Farrelly recall some

of her husband's copious daily love notes was obviously critical to the creation of *The Rising*" ("Bruce Rising" 56-57). Yet, as Dave Marsh points out, the events of September 11th for families such as these were "another kind of tragedy, a tragedy of absence, the psychic devastation of lives that once had seemed altogether orderly, secure, and prosperous" (*Two Hearts* 671).

The first song that Springsteen wrote for *The Rising* was "Into the Fire," which like "My City of Ruins," also functions as a prayer through its focus on an emergency worker apparently working in the Twin Towers on September 11th and is narrated from the perspective of the worker's partner. Directly inspired by his conversation with Stacey Farrelly, whose husband Joe was a firefighter with Manhattan Engine Co. 4 (Kirkpatrick 184), Springsteen originally wrote the song for the telethon but had not finished it in time for that performance. In the section of *Songs* about *The Rising*, he notes that

> Of the many tragic images of that day, the picture I couldn't let go of was of the emergency workers going up the stairs as others rushed down to safety. The sense of duty, the courage. Ascending into . . . what? The religious image of ascension. The crossing of the line between this world, the world of blood, work,family, your children, earth, the breath in your lungs the ground beneath your feet. All that is this life and . . . the next. If you love life or any part of it, the depth of their sacrifice was unthinkable and incomprehensible. Yet what they left behind was shortly to become very tangible. Death, along with all its anger, its pain and loss,

> opens a window of possibility for the living. It removes the veil that the "ordinary" gently drapes over our eyes. Renewed sight is the hero's last loving gift to those left behind. (304-05)

The image of an emergency worker going "up" is dominant in "Into the Fire" as the worker's partner says, "Up the stairs, into the fire / I need your kiss, but love and duty called you someplace higher / Somewhere up the stairs into the fire" (3-6). These lines are repeated in the main verses of the song, and in the final verse the worker's partner adds that the worker has sacrificed himself through trying to help others, and in that moment of sacrifice has reached out to touch the partner one last time: "It was dark, too dark to see, you held me in the light you gave/You lay your hand on me/Then walked into the darkness of your smoky grave" (33-35). The other verses in the song function as the prayer as the narrator repeats the same four-line verse throughout the song that functions both as a chorus for the song and as a secular liturgy through its repetition:

> May your strength give us strength
> May your faith give us faith
> May your hope give us hope
> May your love give us love. (7-10)

David Carithers argues that

> This chorus expresses the real message of the song, that those individual acts of bravery represent actions based on the best beliefs of the community: strength, faith, hope, and love. Their sacrifice should

> remind us of the validity of these beliefs, Springsteen seems to say, and they should reinforce our actions that put these beliefs to the test. (108)

In *Songs*, Springsteen writes that "Into the Fire" unlocked the rest of the record: "Occasionally, you'll write something that will guide you through the story you are about to tell. Everything else you write falls in relation to this key element, this key song. This was how *The Rising* developed" (305).

The next song Springsteen wrote was "You're Missing," which continued the theme of loss of "Into the Fire" but in a more direct manner without the liturgical overtones. The focus of "You're Missing" is on the ordinary details of life that have now changed due to the loss of a loved one:

> Coffee cups on the counter, jackets on the chair
> Papers on the doorstep, you're not there
> Everything is everything
> Everything is everything
> But you're missing. (6-10)

On his album *High Hopes*, which was released in January 2014, Springsteen included "Down in the Hole," a song he originally wrote and recorded for *The Rising* but was left off the album (Greene). This song can be viewed as a companion song to "You're Missing," but it is much darker about the nature of loss and a bit more explicit about the events of September 11th. Like "Into the Fire" and "You're Missing," "Down in the Hole" is told from the perspective of an individual who has lost a partner. However, the loss in this song does not lead to a prayer or the simple image of a coffee cup on the counter

but rather the loss cuts much deeper to the point that the song's narrator is willing to dig up the lost partner's grave in order to be with them again:

> I got nothin' but blue sky and sunshine
>
> The things you left behind
>
> I wake to find my city's gone to black
>
> The days just keep on fallin'
>
> Your voice it keeps on callin'
>
> I'm gonna dig right here until I get you back
>
> The fires keep on burning, I'm here with you in the cold
>
> Down in the hole. (19-26)

Unlike "Into the Fire," both "You're Missing" and "Down in the Hole" are simply about unrelenting grief with the narrator symbolically digging through the rubble of what's left of their life, without the "window of possibility for the living."

From these initial meditations on the nature of personal loss and its effects on those left behind, the true heart of *The Rising* is found in the title song, which as Springsteen writes in *Songs* "was written late in the record as a bookend as "Into the Fire" (306). "The Rising" is a much stronger song than "Into the Fire," as the theme and images of an emergency worker's ascent and ultimate sacrifice in one of the Twin Towers in order to save others on September 11th takes on several much larger meanings that work together to build a foundation for both Springsteen's work and persona to the present day and forms the first part of his jeremiad.

"The Rising" opens in essentially the same place as does "Into the Fire" as we are with an emergency worker ascending stairs in one of the Twin Towers on September 11th, although "The Rising" is told from the perspective of the emergency worker, rather than his partner. However, in "The Rising" Springsteen is more detailed in the setting of the song about both the emergency worker and their situation, which certainly creates a more perilous and smoke-drenched atmosphere as we see and hear in the opening lines:

> Can't see nothing in front of me
>
> Can't see nothing coming up behind
>
> I make my way through this darkness
>
> I can't feel nothing but this chain that binds me
>
> Lost track of how far I've gone
>
> How far I've gone, how high I've climbed
>
> On my back's a sixty pound stone
>
> On my shoulder a half mile of line. (1-8)

The key line in this rather dramatic verse is "I can't feel nothing but this chain that binds me." This chain is the commitment that emergency workers embody in working to help others in great times of need. As David Masciotra observes, "As they rush the stairs, fully prepared to lose their lives, they find strength, love, and pride in themselves, their mission and their calling . . . . " (223). Yet also within this line is a larger meaning beyond just an emergency worker's commitment to their job of helping others in that the "chain" also symbolizes our connections and commitments to each other as Americans,

echoing the Puritan John Winthrop's 1630 sermon "A Model of Christian Charity," in which he exhorts the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to "delight in each other, make other's conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, our community as members of the same body" (176). For Winthrop, a community truly dedicated to these precepts will then "be as a city upon a hill" (177), which references Jesus's words from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5: 14 that "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set upon a hill cannot be hid" (*Authorized King James Version*). As Francis J. Bremer notes, Winthrop's larger point in this sermon was to "assert that a person's true meaning was to be found as a member of a community and that people should be concerned with the common good rather than their own selfish desires" (25).

This communal aspect is brought out in the next verse, which functions as the chorus of the song. Unlike the chorus of "Into the Fire," which functions as a secular prayer, the chorus of "The Rising" is an exhortation to

> Come on up for the rising
>
> Come on up, lay your hands in mine
>
> Come on up for the rising
>
> Come on up for the rising tonight. (9-12)

As simple as these lines may seem when heard or read, they actually contain multiple meanings. Certainly within the context of the setting of the first verse is simply the emergency worker offering their hands to someone in need in the dreadful carnage of the Twin Towers on September 11th in the sense of truly lifting some up out of danger.

Yet the key phrase in these lines is "the rising," so what exactly is Springsteen singing about in this phrase? He has never been explicit in any interview about what he means in it. Within the context of the song, "the rising" certainly refers to the religious imagery of ascension of the emergency worker moving up the stairs, and, then with the worker's death, then their ascension moving up into heaven. However, since the chorus is more of an exhortation than prayer, there is the sense that "the rising" is aimed more at the community to which it's addressed in a true joining of hands in a demonstration of communal unity. There is also the sense that this chorus can also refer to Springsteen as both a songwriter and performer as a call to his audience to "lay your hands in mine" in communal lyrical and concert experiences.

After this first rousing chorus, "The Rising" returns to the experience of the emergency worker in the Twin Towers as they realizes that their own death is imminent but that such self-sacrifice has not been in vain: "Faces gone, black eyes burnin' bright/May their precious blood forever bind me/Lord as I stand before your fiery light" (23-25). Bryan Garman argues that in this verse, "Springsteen's narrator expresses hope, however, that their blood will do more than create communion between past and present; it also has the power to serve as a new covenant for the future" ("Models of Charity" 82). To build on Garman's argument, the feeling in this verse is that the narrator's death is not just a traditional kind of sacrifice that is potentially part of any emergency worker's job, but that such a sacrifice within the context of a national event like 9/11 can symbolize a deeper community in truly bringing a contemporary

application of John Winthrop's message in "A Model of Christian Charity" to the 21st century.

Interspersed throughout the song are a series of "Li, li, li, li, li, li, li" passages, which Jeffrey B. Symynkywicz argues "are the alleluias of a funeral mass, our prayers for the souls of our dearly departed brothers and sisters that usher them from this life to the next" (150). These "alleluias" join with the repetition of the chorus to emphasize that communal unity comes through an awareness of both the losses and sacrifices of our fellow citizens that binds us together as Americans.

In the next part of the song, the emergency worker then describes the transition between life and death as they seemingly ascend into "a sky filled with light" (30). In the moment of this ascension, the emergency worker is able to reflect on what has been most important in their life:

> I see you Mary in the garden
>
> In the garden of a thousand sighs
>
> There's holy pictures of our children
>
> Dancin' in a sky filled with light
>
> May I feel your arms around me
>
> May I feel your blood mix with mine
>
> A dream of life comes to me
>
> Like a catfish dancin' on the end of my line. (27-34)

Religious symbolism and allusions certainly abound in this particular verse. "Mary" has made two key previous appearances the songs "Thunder Road" from the *Born to Run*

album and "The River" from *The River* album. In those two songs, there is the sense that "Mary" is the same character, who in "Thunder Road" "dances across the porch/As the radio plays" (3-4), and we assume gets in the narrator's car with the optimism expressed by The Animals in their song "We Gotta Get Out This Place," since "It's a town full of losers/And I'm pulling out of here to win" (63-64), but then who in "The River" gets pregnant and married at seventeen and now "acts like she don't care" (29). If we take this progression to a logical conclusion, then the "Mary" in "The Rising" can be seen as the same Mary from the two earlier songs, who is now certainly older and with her partner has survived the domestic problems of their youth to have a long-lasting marriage. Obviously, in this context, the emergency's workers initial thought is of his wife Mary "in the garden of a thousand sighs" (28) and the life and love that they have shared together. In this context, we can assume that the emergency worker is male, given that a male voice narrates both "Thunder Road" and "The River," so the possessive use of "his" would be appropriate.

However, Mary in "The Rising" can also be viewed in religious terms. Garman sees this Mary as three essentially distinct figures symbolizing differing religious concepts, all of which relate to Christian traditions:

> Here is Mary in the Garden of Eden, examining the pictures of the future, contemplating the lost innocence of the most mythical, Edenic of nations, one that erected its bulwark on the agrarian tradition. Here is Christ's mother standing in Gethsemane, reckoning with her son's suffering, struggling with his death and contemplating his resurrection. And here is

> Mary in heaven, . . . standing in the light-filled sky, looking over those who have died and those orphans who have been left behind. ("Models of Charity" 82-83)

It is in the spirit of these Marys that the narrator's ascension culminates in what they describe in the next verse as:

> Sky of blackness and sorrow (a dream of life)
>
> Sky of love, sky of tears (a dream of life)
>
> Sky of glory and sadness (a dream of life)
>
> Sky of mercy, sky of fear (a dream of life)
>
> Sky of memory and shadow (a dream of life)
>
> Your burnin' wind fills my arms tonight
>
> Sky of longing and emptiness (a dream of life)
>
> Sky of fullness, sky of blessed life. (35-42)

The sky imagery in this verse certainly brings to mind images of a kind of heaven. Yet this heaven is not idyllic at this point but rather comprised of juxtapositions that emphasize the actual reality of life in recognizing both the good and bad parts of existence. Yet this duality ultimately culminates in the more hopeful "Sky of fullness, sky of blessed life" (42). If we also apply Garman's religious interpretation of Mary here, we can see her as the Mary of that Edenic America, especially the potential "city upon a hill" founded on that larger sense of community envisioned by John Winthrop in his sermon "A Model of Christian Charity." For all of the darkness and loss associated with the events of 9/11 engendered in America, there was still the larger sense of a national

unity and "sky of blessed life" that helped to bring light into that day of darkness. As Garman points out, "In 'The Rising,' Springsteen's music acts as a balm, but it can also be heard to invoke the past in an attempt to redeem history, to unearth the fabled city. Out of chaos and struggle, he seems to be saying, the nation can be born again" ("Models of Charity" 83).

Although "The Rising" is certainly the key song on the album, it is not the opening song of the album but is seemingly buried as the fourteenth song in the running order of the album's sixteen songs. It appears between "You're Missing" and "Paradise," an interesting but low-key song, which is narrated from the perspective of a young suicide bomber. The song that opens the album is "Lonesome Day," which creates the overall mood of loss that pervades the entire album as the song's narrator observes in the opening verse:

> Once I thought I knew
> Everything I needed to know about you
> Your sweet whisper, Your tender touch
> But I didn't really know that much
> Joke's on me, It's gonna be okay
> If I can get through this lonesome day. (1-6)

The loss the narrator describes in this verse is profound and has moved beyond just missing their partner's voice and touch into a truly deeper sense of loss in just trying to get through each "lonesome day." The seemingly superficial loss of a partner's voice and touch have given way to a much deeper grief that the narrator was not fully

prepared to experience and is reflected in the lines, “But I didn’t really know that much/Joke’s on me . . .” (3-4). Yet even in the throes of such profound grief, the narrator is still hopeful and knows that eventually “It’s gonna be okay” (4), even if healing is going to take some time. Beyond the personal connotation of meaning for this verse, there is also the sense that Springsteen’s narrator is also describing the collective feeling of loss Americans experienced as a result of the events of 9/11 in that the losses on that day were fellow Americans just going about their daily lives but then killed by the randomness and irrationalism inherent in terrorist acts. America has certainly suffered losses before. Soldiers lost in wars in foreign lands, and civilians lost during national upheavals, like the modern Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. But civilian losses at the hand of terrorists on American soil were completely different, and even though our previous losses in wars and upheavals were indeed painful, the losses of 9/11 were different in their immediacy and in the context of a more dangerous and unpredictable world of the twenty-first century.

The narrator addresses this specific context in the first four lines of the second verse of “Lonesome Day” as the song shifts from an internal to an external perspective:

> Hell’s brewin’ dark sun’s on the rise
>
> This storm’ll blow through by and by
>
> House is on fire, Viper’s in the grass
>
> A little revenge and this too shall pass. (7-11)

Carithers observes that these lines “echo a common reaction to 9/11 among both ordinary citizens and some high-ranking officials: the need for revenge” (111), as grief

morphs into anger in the collective need to strike back at those who have ignited this fire in the American house. Yet the narrator is also aware that acts of revenge will only be transitory, and, as Carithers notes, "the U.S. will lash out quickly and then forget the implications of 9/11" (111). Such a transitory reaction is addressed by the narrator in the song's final verse as a warning:

> Better ask questions before you shoot
>
> Deceit and betrayal's bitter fruit
>
> It's hard to swallow, come time to pay
>
> That taste on your tongue don't easily slip away. (15-18)

In these lines, the narrator is saying that although the acts of revenge may be momentarily satisfying to the national psyche as a response to the events of 9/11, such acts also potentially come with much deeper implications. Certainly as we now look back on the actual acts of revenge for 9/11 undertaken through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, justified on now discredited motives, as well as on the erosion of civil liberties domestically through the Patriot Act and domestic surveillance activities of the National Security Administration, we can see that Springsteen was certainly prophetic in the warnings found in this verse.

However, as he does in "The Rising" with the repetitions of "Li, li, li, li, li, li, li, li" interspersed throughout the song as a type of liturgy, Springsteen in "Lonesome Day" includes repetitions of the line "It's alright, it's alright, it's alright" (13) throughout the song with this line first appearing between the second and third verses and then in the last part of both the song's recorded and live performances. Unlike in "The Rising," the

repetition of this line does not function as a prayer but rather as a more of a mantra of affirmation that somehow through all of the personal and national darkness there is still hope that everything in going to be "alright."

Although "The Rising" and "Lonesome Day" are separated by several songs on *The Rising* album, during *The Rising* tour in 2002-2003, Springsteen generally performed them as either the two opening songs, or if different opening songs were played, they were always performed back-to-back early in concerts. Springsteen performing "The Rising" followed by "Lonesome Day," placed these two songs in a better thematic order than that on the album ("2002 Setlists"; "2003 Setlists Part 1"). In fact, we can view these songs in this order as a jeremiad that previews the larger themes of Springsteen's sustained jeremiad in his work from *The Rising* through *Wrecking Ball*.

During *The Rising* tour, which began on August 7, 2002, in Continental Airlines Arena in East Rutherford, New Jersey and concluded on October 4th, 2003, in New York's Shea Stadium, "The Rising" was the opening song for most of the 120 shows on the tour ("2002 Setlists"; "2003 Setlists Part 1"). The performance of the song on the tour symbolized the meaning of the song in that as the emergency worker ascends the stairs, we go with them through our mutual concern for our fellow citizens through our own willingness to sacrifice for the good of all Americans. As a performer, Springsteen along with the E Street Band, is willing to help pull us up those stairs as we ascend with him into a better America, an America that is now defined by a true spirit of national unity and purpose.

In performance, the song begins with Soozie Tyrell's pulsing violin with Springsteen the only visible figure on the stage to emphasize his solitary role, much like the emergency worker in the song, but as the song progresses the E Street Band becomes more visible so that when Springsteen strums the chord leading off the second verse the stage is completely lit with even the house lights illuminating the audience, which works to create a sense of community out of the initial isolation of the performer. During the final part of the song's performance, which is comprised of multiple repeats of the "Li, li, li, li, li, li, li" line, both guitarist Steve Van Zandt and vocalist Patti Scialfia join him at his microphone at the center of the stage to sing with him, which works to symbolize Springsteen and the E Street Band as a community working in unity as a model for the larger American community to do the same.

In the performances on this tour, "The Rising" never ended as the last chord was sustained and led directly into "Lonesome Day." For the performance of this song, the stage is brightly lit, which emphasizes the hopefulness of the song as contrasted with the darkness actually present in the lyrics. The "it's alright" sections function as an audience sing-along with Springsteen punctuating this by raising his arms repeatedly in a gesture that was replicated by the audience, once again emphasizing the importance of community in dealing with the dark events of 9/11.

Yet for all of the hopefulness created through the performances of these two songs, especially the performance of "Lonesome Day," if we view these two songs as comprising a jeremiad, we can see "The Rising" functioning as that call to unity resulting in a twenty-first century American "city upon a hill," but then "Lonesome Day" functions

as the warning that this new "city" can be threatened by darker forces like the strong personal and national impulse for revenge.

An interesting counterpoint to the combined power of "The Rising" and "Lonesome Day" both musically and thematically as the regular opening two songs on *The Rising* tour was how "Into the Fire," the first song Springsteen wrote after 9/11 simply did not work effectively in performance. As Jimmy Guterman notes, the song "quickly emerged as a set-deflating clunker live, thanks to a bombastic vocal introduction and a heavy arrangement that simply stopped cold just as the coda on the record felt about to lift off, particularly deadening to a song that closed the main set most nights" (219).

If "Into the Fire" did not work in performances on *The Rising* tour, "My City of Ruins" certainly did and brought this era in Springsteen's work full circle. From the performance of this song on the *America: A Tribute to Heroes* television special on September 21, 2001, to its placement during every show on *The Rising* tour as the opening song of the second encore, this song through its performance symbolized Springsteen being fully conscious on being in the national pulpit calling for us to "rise up." *The Rising* tour performances of this song began with Springsteen seated alone at Roy Bittan's piano performing the first half of the song through the first chorus of "Come on, rise up!" essentially solo with the E Street Band as a choir. Springsteen then moved to the front of the stage as Bittan took over at the piano and Springsteen truly became a minister for the rest of the song with repetitions of the "With these hands" lines acting like a true call and response in church before the rising crescendo of the

final verse culminated with emotional repetitions of “Come on, rise up!” sung by Springsteen, the E Street Band, and the audience. Like its original performance on September 21, 2001, “My City of Ruins” functioned as a powerful communal prayer of unity. The theme of communal unity in wake of the events of 9/11 comprises the first part of Bruce Springsteen’s jeremiad in presenting the goal and potentially the attainment of an ideal. However, for all of the idealism present in *The Rising* both as an album and in the tour in support of the album, in the years to follow the ideal of unity would be challenged truly leaving the nation with the taste of “Deceit and betrayal’s bitter fruit” (“Lonesome Day” 14).

(Note: The observations about these songs are based on the performances on the *Live in Barcelona* DVD, which was released in 2003, and from my own experiences at shows from the tour in St. Louis on August 30, 2002, and in Charlotte on December 8, 2002.)

CHAPTER FOUR:
"BETRAYAL'S BITTER FRUIT":
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND VOTE FOR CHANGE

Bruce Springsteen's warnings in "Lonesome Day" about "A little revenge" for the terrorist attacks on 9/11 became prophetic when on October 6, 2002, President George W. Bush as Commander-in-Chief gave the order to begin air strikes in Afghanistan against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. In a televised address to the nation on the afternoon of October 7, President Bush announced to the nation that "the United States military has begun strikes against al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime" (qtd. in Baker 167). The military action in Afghanistan came after Bush had demanded in a nationally televised speech to Congress on September 20 that the Taliban should "hand over al-Qaeda leaders and shut down their training camps" (Baker 152). President Bush informed the nation that "These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share their fate" (qtd. in Baker 152). Springsteen, like a vast majority of Americans at the time, supported the military actions in Afghanistan. In an August 2004 interview with Christopher Phillips for *Backstreets* magazine, Springsteen said, "After 9/11, I was like everybody else—I supported going

into Afghanistan, and I felt tremendous unity in the country that I don't think I've felt exactly like that before" (7).

However, Springsteen's early support for the Bush administration's actions in Afghanistan soon changed as the administration began the process of building support for a war against Iraq during the summer months of 2002. Certainly the main component of this process was attempting to connect Saddam Hussein to the terrorist attacks on 9/11, as well as building the case that he had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) on hand that could through his connections to the Taliban and al-Qaeda be used against the United States. However, as Robert Draper notes, "by August the ramp-up to war had begun, quietly but furiously—four months before [George] Tenet assured Bush, with others present, that the case for Saddam being in possession of WMDs was a 'slam dunk'" (184). On October 10, 2002, both the House of Representatives and the Senate voted decisively on resolutions "authorizing the president to use force against Iraq" (Draper 184). Over the next few months, Bush and members of his administration continued to make the case of Saddam Hussein's connections to the terrorists of 9/11, using it as a campaign issue to help Republicans take control of the Senate in the 2002 November elections and get the United Nations Security Council on November 8, 2002 to vote unanimously on Resolution 1441, which held "Iraq in 'material breach' of its obligations under previous resolutions, . . .and allowed a 'final opportunity to comply' with its disarmament obligations, while setting an enhance inspection regime for full and verified completion of the disarmament process established by resolution 687," which the Security Council unanimously passed in 1991 (United Nations).

In his State of the Union address given on January 28, 2003, Bush went into detail about the types and numbers of chemical weapons that Iraq had, such as anthrax and botulinum, and even claimed that Saddam Hussein had tried to acquire uranium from sources in Africa that could be used to construct a nuclear weapon (Baker 242). As Peter Baker argues, Bush's State of the Union address "was a genuine turning point, one leaving little doubt about the looming confrontation with Iraq" (242). Then on March 20, 2003, Bush gave the orders to begin combat operations against Iraq. In a televised address that night from the Oval Office, Bush announced,

> coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. These are the opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign . . . . The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder . . . . We will meet the threat now, with our Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines, so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of firefighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities. (qtd. in Baker 261)

Before Bush's Oval Office announcement about the actual start of military action against Iraq on March 20, Springsteen made his first comment about the impending war from the stage during the first concert of the 2003 leg of *The Rising* tour in Atlanta on February 28. This comment along with other on-stage comments in February and March 2003 certainly reveal Springsteen's emerging anti-war position. Before

performing “Born in the U.S.A.” in Atlanta, he said, “I hope there’s a peaceful solution to the situation in Iraq . . . get our troops home safely . . . I don’t want to have to write this song again” (“February 28 Setlist,”).

Then in Atlantic City on March 7, Springsteen addressed the meaning of the line “I want an eye for an eye” in the song “Empty Sky” from *The Rising* album after a performance of the song. “Empty Sky” is one of the songs on *The Rising* that deal with personal loss in connection to the events of 9/11, although like all of the other songs on the album, the event is not specifically referenced. The “empty sky” imagery can certainly be connected to the destruction and loss of the twin towers of the World Trade Center from the New York City skyline on 9/11. Like many other of the songs dealing with loss on *The Rising*, this song is also narrated from the perspective of a surviving spouse/partner, who we can imagine lost his/her spouse/partner on that day, and says in the opening verse of the song, “I want a kiss from your lips / I want an eye for an eye / I woke up this morning to the empty sky” (5-7). These three lines are then repeated in the third verse:

> On the plains of Jordan
>
> I cut my bow from the wood
>
> Of this tree of evil
>
> Of this tree of good
>
> I want a kiss from your lips
>
> I want an eye for an eye
>
> I woke up this morning to an empty sky. (16-22)

In this verse, it seems as if the narrator of the song does want some kind of revenge for the loss of his/her spouse/partner. The geographical reference to the "plains of Jordan" in the Middle East and the act of cutting a bow seem to suggest if not an actual act of vengeance certainly the contemplation of such an act, especially with its Old Testament connotation and context , which is found in Exodus 21: 22-25:

> If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. (*Authorized King James Version)*

However, in Springsteen's comments about his meaning in the line "I want an eye for an eye" following the performance in which there was audience cheering for that line, he noted that "I wrote that as an expression of the character's confusion and grief, never as a call for blind revenge or bloodlust…we can't be too careful about these things these days….We're living in a time when there are real lives on the line…had to make sure that line was clearly understood" ("March 7 Setlist"). Given the volatility of the expectations of the United States going to war in Iraq in the days before the actual start of the war, we can see that Springsteen was emphasizing that the desire for revenge in "Empty Sky" was personal for the character in the song due to the loss of his/her spouse/partner, not as part of the larger sense of national revenge against Iraq for the events of 9/11.

Without this explanation, the audience's interpretation of these lines could have potentially put Springsteen in the awkward position of somehow actually showing support for the coming war.

Springsteen's position became more clear at the next performance in Providence, Rhode Island, on March 10 when he opened the concert with a performance of Edwin Starr's anti-war song "War," which literally set the stage for his comments before introducing "Born in the U.S.A." during the second encore. In these comments, he both echoed and expanded on what he said previously in introducing the song:

> I wrote this song about the Vietnam War . . . I hope I won't have to write this song again. So we'll offer this as a prayer for peace, for the safety of our young men and women in uniform, for the lives of innocent Iraqi civilians…and add our voice to those against war in Iraq'" ("March 10 Setlist").

Significantly, ten days before the actual start of the war, Springsteen had publicly announced his opposition to the war, a position that became even more entrenched over the coming year. On March 20, the day the Iraq war began, Springsteen opened his concert in Melbourne, Australia, with an acoustic version of "Born in the U.S.A." and another performance of "War," while once again explaining the intended meaning of his "I want an eye for an eye" line in "Empty Sky," as well as dedicating "Land of Hope and Dreams" to both Australian and American soldiers and Iraqi civilians ("March 20 Setlist").

During this volatile time with the buildup and start of the Iraq war, Springsteen was not the only musical artist to make comments from the performance stage about the war. When the Dixie Chicks performed in London on March 12, 2003, singer Natalie Maines said from the stage of Shepherd's Bush Empire, "Just so you know, we're ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas" (qtd. in Clarke). Maines's comment originally appeared in Betty Clarke's review of the concert, which was published that same day in *The Guardian*. In her review, Clarke notes that Maines's comment "gets the audience cheering—at a time when country stars are rushing to release pro-war anthems, this is practically punk rock" (Clarke). As Martin Cloonan relates, Maines's "remark was picked up by country and western websites and resulted in the band being called such things as 'Saddam Angels,' 'Dixie Sluts,' traitors, etc. Country radio stations stopped playing their new album *Home* and invited listeners to dump their old albums in rubbish bins . . . " (24). Springsteen then entered the fray on April 22, 2003, when he posted on his official website *www.brucespringsteen.net* the following statement in support of The Dixie Chicks:

> The Dixie Chicks have taken a big hit lately for exercising their basic right to express themselves. To me, they're terrific American artists expressing American values by using their American right to free speech. For them to be banished wholesale from radio stations, and even entire radio networks, for speaking out is un-American.
>
> The pressure coming from the government and big business to enforce conformity of thought concerning the war and politics goes against

> everything that this country is about—namely freedom. Right now, we are supposedly fighting to create freedom in Iraq, at the same time that some are trying to intimidate and punish people for using that same freedom at home.
>
> I don't know what happens next, but I do want to add my voice to those who think that the Dixie Chicks are getting a raw deal, and an un-American one to boot. I send them my support. (qtd. in Pont, "Exile" 6)

In his statement, Springsteen began to develop themes, such as support for "American values" and defining freedom as including the very American right of free speech for dissent and questioning our leaders, that he included in his July 15 "Public Service Announcement" before performing "Land of Hope and Dreams" in the second encore of the first Giants Stadium show of a seven-show stand in the venerable stadium. This show was the first American show after performing in Australia and Europe from March through the end of June and began the final leg of *The Rising* tour, which featured several stadium shows, including famous baseball stadiums like Fenway Park in Boston and Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, in addition to the usual football stadiums like Giants Stadium. Springsteen seemed ready to make more of a formal statement about the war and American identity than he had during the spring:

> People come to my shows with many different kinds of political beliefs; I like that, we welcome all. There have been a lot of questions raised recently about the forthrightness of our government. This playing with the truth has been a part of both Republican and Democratic

> administrations in the past and it is always wrong, never more so than when real lives are at stake. The question of whether we were mislead [sic] into the war in Iraq isn't a liberal or conservative or Republican or Democratic question, it's an American one. Protecting the democracy that we ask our sons and daughters to die for is our responsibility and trust. Demanding accountability from our leaders is our job as citizens. It's the American way. So may the truth will out. ("July 15 Setlist")

As he had with his earlier statement supporting the Dixie Chicks, Springsteen officially posted this one on his official website, which essentially allowed not only his fans but also the global citizenry to know about his very public opposition to the Iraq War. During the rest of the tour, Springsteen made a similar "Public Service Announcement" at every show. As Dave Marsh argues, Springsteen's larger purpose in making this kind of statement night after night was not to speak to those in the audiences who were already anti-war or to those who just wanted him to sing, he "was seeking out the bored or at least the uncommitted" (*On Tour* 272), much like any political candidate seeking out an uncommitted voter.

If Springsteen has ascended into the national pulpit in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 to begin his jeremiad with his stirring message of national unity in the wake of staggering human sacrifice and loss, then his re-ascension into the national pulpit after the beginning of the Iraq war was the beginning of the "anxiety" part of his jeremiad. This "anxiety" is an important component in Bercovitch's construct of the jeremiad, which is worth repeating at this point:

> It [American jeremiad] made anxiety its end as well as its means. Crisis was the social norm is sought to inculcate. The very concept of errand, after all, implied a state of *un*fulfillment. The future, though divinely assured, was never quite there, and New England's Jeremiahs set out to provide the sense of insecurity that would ensure the outcome. Denouncing or affirming, their vision fed on the distance between promise and fact. (23)

Like his earlier statement supporting the Dixie Chicks, Springsteen's Giants Stadium statement once again focuses on the nature of American identity, especially in the nature of government itself. There is the expectation that government will actually be truthful in carrying out actions in the name of "we the people." Springsteen is explicit in expressing his belief that the Bush administration was not truthful in its justifications for the Iraq War, but in his view this is not a partisan issue, because governmental actions should be based on truth, which he sees as an American value that is not being fulfilled. Also, as in his statement supporting the Dixie Chicks, he believes that the idea of free speech protected by the First Amendment also includes the right of dissent and questioning of our political leaders. In fact, it can be argued that the concept of a government based on "consent of the governed" as outlined in the Declaration of Independence seems to imply that decisions in the interest of the common good of the nation are reached *after* larger discussion of an issue has taken place and some type of agreement or even compromise is reached after discussion between differing and even opposing ideas.

After *The Rising* tour ended on October 4, 2003, with a New York concert in Shea Stadium, which featured a guest appearance by Bob Dylan for a joint performance of Dylan's song "Highway 61 Revisited ("October 4 Setlist"), Springsteen was rather quiet about the Iraq War and public issues until June 8, 2004, when he posted a link on his official website to former Vice-President Al Gore's May 27 speech to the MoveOn political action committee in which Gore absolutely blistered the Bush administration over its conduct of the Iraq War saying that "President Bush's utter incompetence has made the world a far more dangerous place . . . . " (qtd. in "Gore Calls for Resignations"). As part of his post, Springsteen included a statement which called Gore's speech "one of the most important speeches I've heard in a long time. The issues it raises need to be considered by every American concerned with the direction our country is headed in. It's my pleasure to reprint it here for my fans" (qtd. in "Speech! Speech!"). Interestingly, Springsteen also included links to MoveOn and Americans Coming Together (ACT), a group associated with MoveOn that worked to mobilize voters for the 2004 elections at all levels.

Springsteen then did something on August 5 he had never done before: he publicly endorsed a candidate for public office. This candidate was John Kerry, the nominee of the Democratic Party and challenger to President George W. Bush in the 2004 presidential election. Springsteen's endorsement was announced in an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* called "Chords for Change" in which he also announced a tour called "Vote for Change," which was sponsored by the MoveOn political action committee and would help raise money for America Coming Together (ACT) for voter

mobilization for 2004 elections for federal, state, and local officials. The Vote for Change tour began on October 1 and ended on October 13 with thirty-four concerts in twenty-eight cities in eleven battleground states by artists such as John Fogerty, The Dixie Chicks, R.E.M., Dave Matthews, Pearl Jam, Bonnie Raitt, and John Mellencamp ("Vote for Change"). As Dave Marsh points out, "The idea was to storm each of the so-called swing states (those whose electoral votes for president were in doubt), with concerts in several different cities, all on the same night, in venues ranging from clubs to arenas, maximizing media exposure" (*On Tour* 280). Springsteen performed in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit, St. Paul, Orlando, Washington, D.C., and East Rutherford, New Jersey. His performances were understandably truncated to approximately two hours, rather than his customary three hours plus for this context, since he was sharing the stage with other performers. As Jimmy Guterman observes about Springsteen's performances during the tour, the shorter performance time did not lack for intensity and overall message, especially in the opening songs:

> It's dark onstage except for the spotlight on Springsteen, but it's easy to see another guitar hanging around his neck behind him. It's an electric guitar, and it serves as a hint about the night: The performance will be tight, efficient, moving quickly from number to number. Indeed, the moment Springsteen finishes "The Star Spangled Banner," he signals the band to begin the drums-and-keyboard introduction to "Born in the U.S.A.," kicking off a four-song full-band run with no pauses, each song moving inexorably into the next, carrying the set farther up the hill . . .

> they're the sounds of a man and band trying to tell a coherent story about what the country is like, what is at stake in this election season, and doing so with such ferocity that even those who don't care for Springsteen's politics can't help but be moved. (13)

The Washington, D.C. concert served as the official final concert of the tour and brought together all of the artists who participated in the tour and was broadcast live on television on Sundance. Springsteen even returned to Ted Koppel's *Nightline* on the ABC network for an interview on August 4, the day of the announcement of the Vote for Change tour. Koppel greeted Springsteen with the question, "who the hell is Bruce Springsteen to tell anybody how to vote?" ("TV Interview" 298). Springsteen responded by pointing out to Koppel, as well as to critics who question the right of an artist to comment on public issues, that "This is an interesting question that seems to only be asked of musicians and artists, for some reason. If you're a lobbyist in Washington, or . . . in a big corporation, you influence the government your way, right? Artists write and sing and think. And this is how we get to put our two cents in" ("TV Interview" 298). Once again, in this comment Springsteen is defending the American value of the right to free speech, which does include dissent.

Springsteen's essay "Chords for Change" can be seen as the logical culmination of his on-stage comments and "Public Service Announcements" in the 2003 portion of *The Rising* tour, his written statement in support of The Dixie Chicks, and his growing concerns about how the conduct of Iraq War by the Bush administration was threatening core American values. Although the essay is ostensibly an endorsement of

John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election, it actually functions more as Springsteen's statement about the key ideas that he has written about throughout his career, while also working to justify his emergent public voice as one the leading anti-war voices speaking out against the Iraq War and the Bush administration. In "Chords for Change," Springsteen notes,

> Personally, for the last 25 years I have always stayed one step away from partisan politics. Instead, I have been partisan about a set of ideals: economic justice, civil rights, a humane foreign policy, freedom and a decent life for all of our citizens. This year, however, for many of us the stakes have risen too high to sit this election out. ("Chords")

Although Springsteen had never entered the partisan fray by endorsing a specific candidate for office, with the exception of playing "a small acoustic benefit for George McGovern's campaign at the Red Bank Drive-In in 1972" (Dolan, *Promise* 175), he certainly had been willing to support numerous causes throughout his career. In fact, Springsteen expressed a distinct discomfort with the political process in a 1984 *Rolling Stone* interview with Kurt Loder in which he said,

> I'm not registered as one party or another. I don't generally think along those lines. I find it very difficult to relate to the whole electoral system as it stands. I don't really . . . I suppose if there was somebody who I felt strong enough about at some point, some day, you know . . . .
>
> I want to try and just work more directly with people; try to find some way that my band can tie into the communities that we come into. I

> guess that's political action, a way to bypass that whole electoral thing. Human politics. I think that people on their own can do a lot. Where do the aesthetic issues that you write about intersect with some sort of concrete action, some direct involvement, in the communities that your audience comes from? It seems to be an inevitable progression of what our band has been doin', of the idea that we got into this for. We wanted to play because we wanted to meet girls, we wanted to make a ton of dough, and we wanted to change the world a little bit, ... (Loder 154-55)

Certainly the various causes that Springsteen has supported throughout his career, such as Vietnam veterans, local food banks, Amnesty International, gay rights issues, anti-death penalty groups, immigration policy reform, and opposition to Proposition 209 in California during the 1996 election, which would have reduced affirmative-action programs—all connect to his earlier conception of "human politics" that he expressed in the Loder interview.

However, in his article "The Pop Populist," Nicholas Dawidoff offers other reasons why Springsteen was reluctant to enter the political fray earlier in his career, which can be summarized as a lack of self-confidence in his own voice in speaking about political matters, as well as a fear of perhaps doing damage to his public persona by "getting above his raising" or "be[ing] viewed as a charlatan" (264). There was also the risk of potentially becoming a target for political attacks, like other celebrities who have taken up progressive causes, and thus becoming more identified with politics than

music. Although Dawidoff's arguments are certainly valid, Marc Dolan's observation that for Springsteen earlier in his career "politics was something that happened outside of his life, to his life, while he was trying to make his dreams come true" (*Promise* 175) seems to be more accurate in attempting to understand Springsteen's reluctance to enter partisan political combat prior to 2004. It certainly can be argued that for Springsteen these dreams were not only about his career but also personal dreams of having a family, which became reality in the 1990s with his marriage to Patti Scialfa and the births of their three children.

Although "Chords for Change" is politically partisan in expressing support for John Kerry, what Springsteen called "human politics" and their connection to American values are what lie at the heart of the essay. In addition to the "set of ideals" he set forth in the passage quoted above, Springsteen also included a paragraph relating to the larger purpose of his work by framing it as a series of questions:

> Why is it that the wealthiest nation in the world finds it so hard to keep its promise and faith with its weakest citizens? Why do we continue to find it so difficult to see beyond the veil of race? How do we conduct ourselves during difficult times without killing the things we hold dear? Why does the fulfillment of our promise as a people always seem to be just within our grasp yet forever out of our reach? ("Chords")

These questions are not partisan; there is no mention of a specific issue that was part of the 2004 campaign. This list of questions is more about American values that connect less to a particular candidate, political party, or ideology than they do to the basic

American idea of community that is at the heart of American identity, and the threats and potential loss of that sense of community that increasingly became the focus of Springsteen's post-*Rising* work.

The turning point in Springsteen's jeremiad was simply the Iraq war. As he said in a *Rolling Stone* interview with Jann Wenner, "I knew after we invaded Iraq that I was going to be involved in the election. It made me angry . . . I felt we had been misled…I felt they had been fundamentally dishonest and frightened and manipulated the American people into war" ("We've Been Misled" 74). In "Chords of Change," Springsteen is not quite as direct, but he does point out how the war and its justification and conduct effectively destroyed the national unity that emerged and defined American identity after the events of 9/11:

> Like many others, in the aftermath of 9/11, I felt the country's unity. I don't remember anything quite like it. I supported the decision to enter Afghanistan and I hoped that the seriousness of the times would bring forth strength, humility and wisdom in our leaders. Instead, we dived headlong into an unnecessary war in Iraq, offering up the lives of our young men and women under circumstances that are now discredited. ("Chords")

It is interesting to note that in this passage Springsteen was open about his support for the Bush administration's decision to engage in military operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan due to their direct involvement in the 9/11 attacks, so Springsteen was

not so much anti-war as anti-Iraq War, given the essentially false reasons for justifying the war.

In the final paragraph of "Chords for Change," Springsteen returns to his larger theme of American identity and shifts to a more spiritual tone to challenge not just his audience but a truly national audience from his now-familiar national pulpit:

> It is through the truthful exercising of the best of human qualities—respect for others, honesty about ourselves, faith in our ideals—that we come to life in God's eyes. It is how our soul, as a nation and as individuals, is revealed. Our American government has strayed too far from American values. It is time to move forward. The country we carry in our hearts is waiting. ("Chords")

There is obviously a spiritual dimension in this paragraph in which Springsteen evokes the civil religion of citizenship that is found in being mindful of our responsibilities as citizens in keeping the American values of mutual respect, honesty, and faith in our founding ideals close to our hearts and in our minds. In his view, what is truly at stake is the soul of America that reaches beyond political partisanship and fuels and maintains our national values. In the tradition of the American jeremiad, there is anxiety here in that the soul of the nation is truly waiting for its citizens to return to the important work of mindfully maintaining our true American identity.

"Chords for Change" actually served as something of a draft for Springsteen's "Public Service Announcements" during the Vote for Change tour and for his speeches in campaign appearances with John Kerry during the final week of the 2004 campaign in

which he further refined the responsibilities of American citizenship. Springsteen's most eloquent expression of this theme of American citizenship is found in his "Public Service Announcement" during the Vote for Change concert in Washington, D.C., on October 11:

> We remain a land of great promise but we need to move America towards the fulfillment of the promises that she has made: economic justice, civil rights, protection of the environment, a living wage, respect for others, and humility in exercising our power at home and around the world. These are not impossible ideals, they are achievable goals with strong leadership and the will of a vigilant and informed American people. These core issues of American's identity are what's at stake on November 2nd.
>
> America is not always right, but America should always be true and it is in seeking her truths, both the good, and the bad, we find a deeper patriotism, a more authentic experience as citizens, and we find the power that is embedded only in truth to change our world for the better. That is how our soul as a nation and as a people is revealed.
>
> Remember the country we carry in hearts in waiting. ("Bruce's Comments from the Washington D.C. Vote for Change Show")

Once again, we see that Springsteen emphasizes the importance of American values that define American identity, and that it is truly up to us as citizens to make sure that

these values are maintained and nurtured, because the soul of the nation is waiting for us to truly think and act like citizens.

The content of Springsteen's speeches did not escape the notice of the political press as John Nichols observed, "In a year when so many meaningless words have been spilled along the campaign trail, Bruce Springsteen is saying something that matters" (Nichols). Dave Marsh even took this a step further in commenting on Springsteen's appearance with Kerry in Madison, Wisconsin, that "you didn't have to be a cynic to wonder whether, of the two guys on that stage, the wrong one was the candidate" (*On Tour* 292). Of course, Springsteen was not the actual candidate that year as much as he may have sounded like one, and President George W. Bush was re-elected President of the United States with 286 electoral votes to John Kerry's 251 with a popular vote margin of approximately three million votes. Springsteen found the day after the election that "the lawn of his Rumson, New Jersey home had been covered with 'Bush for President' signs" (Marsh, *On Tour* 293). Although John Kerry's campaign against George W. Bush was unsuccessful, Bruce Springsteen's campaign against the re-elected president was just beginning.

CHAPTER FIVE: "I FEEL A DIRTY WIND BLOWING": "DEVILS & DUST" AND *WE SHALL OVERCOME—THE SEEGER SESSIONS*

If Bruce Springsteen's jeremiad in 2003 and 2004 had taken the form of making "public service announcements" during concerts, participating in the Vote for Change tour, and endorsing and appearing on the campaign trail with Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, he would continue the jeremiad in musical form in 2005 with a new song titled "Devils & Dust," which was the title track of the *Devils & Dust* album released on April 25, and in 2006 with the release of the album *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*, an album of traditional folk and protest songs. Backgrounds and details for both of these albums are discussed in the Career Overview section.

Springsteen has said that "Devils & Dust" was written "towards the end of the last tour, shortly after we entered Iraq" (*VH1 Storytellers*). Christopher Phillips notes that

> At the soundcheck for the 4/9/03 Sacramento show, Springsteen tried out a new number with the band; based on the overheard chorus, word circulated of a song called "Devils and Dust." Springsteen and the E Street Band continued to try the song at soundcheck—including at the very next show, 4/11/03 in Vancouver, BC, and in 2004, in preparation for the Vote for Change tour—but they never performed it for an audience. ("The Devil's" 51).

"Devils & Dust" is written from the perspective of a soldier, and Springsteen has commented that the song is "a story about being placed in a situation where the choices are untenable and the price that inflicts in blood and spirit" (*VH1 Storytellers*). The song opens with the lines, "I've got my finger on the trigger / But I don't know who to trust" (1-2). in these two lines the "personal meets the political" (*VH1 Storytellers*), where a soldier, who literally holds the power of life and death in his or her hands, is put into this situation by political and military leaders in whom the soldier has placed his or her trust, as well as being involved in a military conflict in which the enemy is not always readily apparent. This tension continues in the next two lines of the song when the soldier says, "When I look into your eyes / There's just devils and dust" (3-4). Springsteen has said that these lines express not only the soldier's tension but also his uncertainty in that he is thinking, "When I'm looking at you, I don't know if I'm seeing you, I don't know if I'm seeing myself, I don't know if I'm seeing my fears. I don't know if I'm seeing my highest ideals that I promised to sacrifice my life for. I don't know if I'm seeing my death coming at me, and the problem is I have to know right now" (*VH1 Storytellers*). If the cause the soldier is laying his or her life on the line to defend is ultimately unclear, then this trust disappears, and the soldier's mission is compromised, although the physical danger remains. We can view the soldier's personal anxiety in this situation in a larger sense as also symbolizing the "anxiety" part of Springsteen's jeremiad from a national perspective. Not only does the soldier not know whom to trust, but we do not either, since the Iraq war is being fought under seemingly false pretenses.

For Springsteen, the larger consequences of this idea are that the nation itself is pulled into this conflict under the guise of its being a "noble" war when actually is not. He explores this conflict in the fourth verse of "Devils & Dust" when he shifts from the perspective of a soldier to "us" as Americans when he says:

> We've got God on our side
>
> We're just trying to survive
>
> What if what you do to survive
>
> Kills the things you love
>
> Fear's a powerful thing
>
> It'll turn your heart black you can trust
>
> It'll take your God-filled soul
>
> Fill it with devils and dust. (25-33)

With their echoes of Bob Dylan's song "With God on Our Side," Springsteen is asking in these lines if a nation truly dedicated to the ideas of freedom, equality, and justice can be a just messenger of such ideas, while in the service of false justifications for engaging in war. Do these ideas then die and essentially become false themselves in such a context? Do we become *less* American as result of our hearts turning black through the use of fear? Or to take this a step further, as Dave Marsh argues, can this ultimately lead to the destruction of the American community, because the community itself is built on illusions? ("Creation of Community"). David Masciotra is more forceful in his synopsis of the key issues addressed in this verse, which is worth quoting in full:

> If human solidarity, communal trust and love, along with ideals of tolerance and judicial ethics, must be destroyed in order for one's survival to remain secure, what kind of life is left? This inquiry is vital both to the individual on the ground in Baghdad and an entire nation at war. Convinced by dishonest leadership and governed by inexorable fear, the American public sacrificed civil liberties, ethnic and immigrant progress, and moral standing after 9/11 to invade a nation that posed no threat. They overlooked increased government surveillance, allowed the torture of detainees and betrayed the Constitution. All of this was done in the name of survival. Fear corroded American faculties and led to a welcoming of practices and policies that were traditionally considered categorically un-American. Hearts were blackened against countless Arab-Americans, and entire nations of people suddenly became vulnerable to increased suspicions from the world's only superpower. Yet much of the American public and leadership maintained that during all of the bombing, spying and torturing the United States enjoyed the blessing and approval of the Christian God. (*Working* 169)

For a nation that has built its theory of government on the Jeffersonian idea of "consent of the governed" as found in the Declaration of Independence, our "consent" to these activities means that we as Americans were allowing these compromises and abuses to occur. Springsteen's larger question in "Devils & Dust" is are we citizens of a nation truly built on the foundation of a set ideas literally set in stone, or are we citizens of a nation

crafted only out of illusions and rhetoric manipulated by our political leaders for questionable purposes?

Beyond all of the political problems that Springsteen addresses in this verse, Donald Deardorff adds a religious component by pointing out that the

> song's narrator upsets the notion that somehow God is on America's side, an idea that harkens back to our deepest Edenic myth that casts the United States as a city on a hill, designated by God as the land in which divine principles would forge a great nation. Certainly, such a nation could consider its wars as holy, the essence of manifest destiny. (98)

For Springsteen, this verse is actually the beginning of the "lament" of his jeremiad. For all of his "Public Service Announcements" from concert stages, public statements, and partisan political activity in 2003-2004, the most effective form for his jeremiad is through a song. Springsteen is lamenting the ideal of national unity and sacrifice in the wake of 9/11 as expressed in "The Rising" and symbolizing a larger national commitment to larger American ideals is now in "Devils & Dust" truly in danger of being lost. The tangled web of an unjust war and compromises with fundamental American ideals leading only to a sense of disunity is truly turning American hearts black through fear and filling them only with "devils and dust." The American city upon the hill is starting to crumble at its very foundation.

The musical context of "Devils & Dust" also deserves mention. As we have seen, Springsteen played the song in pre-concert soundchecks with the E Street Band in 2003 and 2004. He also recorded it "as both an angry rock song and an acoustic ballad . . ."

(Hiatt, "Springsteen Goes Back" 18). The recorded version of "Devils & Dust" that finally emerged on the album is essentially a solo performance with some extra instrumentation emerging in the middle of the song and then building at the end to an orchestrated climax. Of the song, Springsteen has said the "music is working against the lyrics…that's the sound of resistance. It's the unspoken subtext that the lyrics rest on" (*VH1 Storytellers).* Terry Staunton supports Springsteen's description of the musical context for the song, because "Stripped of the bombast with which the E Street Band might have buried the song, it slowly builds from Springsteen alone with an acoustic guitar to a final verse embellished by hymnal organ and ominous strings, suggesting conflict—or the fear of conflict is just around the corner" (106). As noted earlier, Springsteen performed "Devils & Dust" on the 2006 Grammy Awards, since it was nominated for Song of the Year. As Ryan White observes about Springsteen's solo performance of the song, "Standing half in darkness and half in the light, everything about the performance suggested high stakes . . . Relative to the rest of the night, 'Devils & Dust' was a deadly serious whisper Springsteen built to a raging finish and punctuated with the show's only political exclamation: 'Bring 'em home!'" (194). This exclamation not only referred to Springsteen's desire for the soldiers fighting in the Iraq War to come home, it was also a glimpse of his next album.

On April 25, 2006, almost exactly one year after the release of *Devils & Dust,* Bruce Springsteen released the album *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*. This album was a unique project in his long career, since it was his first album to feature traditional American folk songs and spirituals associated with other artists, most notably

folk singer Pete Seeger. *The Seeger Sessions* project can be seen as a continuing affirmation of Springsteen's own consciousness of his role as a public voice in American culture, connecting with both *The Rising* album in 2002 as a response to the events of 9/11 and with his involvement with the Vote for Change Tour and John Kerry presidential campaign in 2004, as well as an attempt to solidify his own place in the larger American musical tradition. Bruce Springsteen's *The Seeger Sessions* thus became more than just an album of traditional of American folk songs performed by a popular musical artist, as it turned into an organic musical project further defining Springsteen's distinctly American cultural identity while continuing to build upon his fundamental idea that music can both create and reinforce the spirit of American community. As Neil Spencer argues about the larger purpose of this album, "perhaps he [Springsteen] saw a chance to pass comment on his country's political course without making what would be shouted down as a 'protest record'" (110).

A closer look at *The Seeger Sessions* reveals that the songs, regardless of their age, speak to the same issues that Springsteen's own songs have explored throughout his career and continue to highlight his own awareness of himself as a public voice in American life. Songs such as "John Henry," "O Mary Don't You Weep," and "My Oklahoma Home" speak of the need of the individual to maintain their individual integrity in the face of larger forces and to not lose hope, while "Jacob's Ladder," "Eyes on the Prize," and "We Shall Overcome" emphasize the collective nature of the American experience through an emphasis upon community as a conduit for individual achievement. This approach also manifests itself in songs that Springsteen performed

on tour with The Sessions Band that did not appear on the original release of the album but were incorporated in the *American Land* edition of the album. Pete Seeger's "Bring 'Em Home," originally written about the Vietnam War, certainly fits Springsteen's concerns stated in "Devils & Dust," complete with new verses which make the song more contemporary and directly address the Bush administration: "They want to test their grand theories / Bring 'em home, bring 'em home /With the blood of you and me /Bring 'em home, bring 'em home" (9-12), and "We'll give no more brave young lives / Bring 'em home, bring 'em home / For the gleam in someone else's eye/Bring 'em home, bring 'em home" (13-16).

The key song, however, was his updating of Blind Alfred Reed's 1929 Depression song "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live." Reed's original song, which he recorded on December 4, 1929, "just over a month after Black Tuesday. . .cites the disparity between high prices and small incomes. Both would remain economic factors for the next several years, as the depression spread from the farm to the rest of the nation" (Spottswood 66). Springsteen's version of "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live" directly connects to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, and the Bush administration's indifferent and incompetent response to this tragedy. Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy offer this description of Katrina and the failure of not just the Bush administration but of government itself at many levels during and after the hurricane:

> For while the storm looked like a wanton attack by Mother Nature, it soon became clear that man-made forces, some years in the making, had

> done far worse damage. The flood protections designed by the Army Corps of Engineers were wholly inadequate and ill-conceived, the response plans by local and state officials a mess; but it was the White House and especially the Federal Emergency Management Agency, run by Bush crony Michael Brown, that became the all-purpose target of disgust among people who watched in horror as hours, then days, passed without help reaching those trapped in the broken soup bowl that was New Orleans . . . . As the temperature rose, the whole city was poached in a vile stew of chemicals, corpses, gasoline, snakes, canal rats; many could not escape their flooded homes without help. The pictures of so many African Americans standing on roofs literally dying to be rescued suggested that the U.S. government had lost the ability—and the will—to take care of its own. (497)

Of course, the main target of the American public's frustration with the slow governmental response to Katrina was President George W. Bush. Katrina directly hit New Orleans and other areas of the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, but Bush, who was on vacation in Texas when Katrina hit, did not survey the devastation caused by the hurricane until August 31 and only then from a window in Air Force One. As Peter Baker observes, "With rescue efforts still under way, he was told it would be too disruptive to land the plane, but his pilots said they could give him a good look from the air" (406). Unfortunately, "the image of Bush staring out the window at the damage . . . gave the impression of a leader flying above the fray, dangerously detached from reality on the

ground" (Baker 407). In his memoir *Decision Points*, Bush admits that photographs taken of him looking out the window of Air Force One at Katrina's devastation "suggested I was detached from the suffering on the ground. That wasn't how I felt. But once the public impression was formed, I couldn't change it" (318). As Robert Draper notes, the public impression was simply that "the president was having trouble summoning empathy. He could see their pain but not feel it" (336).

Springsteen's version of "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" is a direct and rather personal attack on President Bush's indifferent response to Katrina's many tragedies. If within the structure of Springsteen's jeremiad, "Devils & Dust" functions as a "lament" about how an essentially false war based on fear can turn American hearts "black," then Springsteen's version of "How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" can be seen as fulfilling what Bercovitch refers to as making "anxiety its end as well as its means. Crisis was the social norm it meant to inculcate" (23). For Springsteen, all of these problems—the war, the erosion of civil liberties, and now the bungled and indifferent response to Katrina—lie at the feet of George W. Bush. If, as we have seen, the American city upon a hill is metaphorically crumbling at its foundation in "Devils & Dust," then in "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" it has literally crumbled and been swept away through neglect and indifference.

In Springsteen's version of the song, he kept Reed's original opening verse: "Well the doctor comes 'round here with his face all bright / And he says 'in a little while you'll be alright' / All he gives is a humbug pill, a dose of dope and a great big bill/Tell me how can a poor man stand such times and live" (1-4). In this new version of the

song, we can see that Springsteen is equating the "doctor" and his comments and actions in the first line with Bush with the "humbug pill" now symbolizing only the empty words and actions of Bush's slow response and his lack of empathy to Katrina and its victims. After Reed's original opening verse, Springsteen then added three original verses. In the new second verse of the song, the narrator notes, "He says, 'me and my old school pals had some mighty high times down here / And what happened to you poor black folks, well, it just ain't fair' / He took a look around, gave a little pep talk, said 'I'm with you' then he took a little walk / Tell me, how can a poor man stand such times and live?" (5-8). As Marc Dolan argues, this verse "directly parodied Bush's quick 2 September 2005 visit to New Orleans, during which the president had thought a sly allusion to it as 'the town where I used to come from Houston, Texas, to enjoy myself—sometimes too much' would be cute" (*Promise* 398-99). After this rather personal attack, Springsteen shifts his focus in the third and fourth verses to the actual human results of Katrina. They contain a subtle reference to Woody Guthrie's song "I Ain't Go No Home," which Springsteen recorded for the 1988 Guthrie and Leadbelly tribute album *A Vision Shared*: "There's bodies floatin' on Canal and the levees gone to Hell / Martha, get me my sixteen gauge and some dry shells / Them who's got out of town and them who ain't got left to drown" (13-15), and "I got family scattered from Texas all the way to Baltimore /And I ain't got no home in this world no more" (18-19). He then concludes the song with a dark warning that the Bush administration's indifferent response to this tragedy might just bring about some kind of change enacted by the very people affected by this event: "Gonna be a judgment that's a fact, a righteous train

rollin' down this track / Tell me, how can a poor man stand such times and live?" (20-21). The political threat contained in these lines is apparent.

"How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" is symbolic in a couple of ways about the organic nature of *The Seeger Sessions*. First of all, the song itself is not completely an original Springsteen song but is a contemporary adaptation of an earlier protest song about a very specific event in American history. With this song, as well as with "Bring 'Em Home," we can see Springsteen working in a very traditional manner when it comes to folk songs through adding his own verses to make the songs more relevant to the contemporary world. The second reason this song is revealing about the continuing nature of this project is that it appeared on Springsteen's official website on Friday, April 28, 2006, for downloading three days after the official release of the album. The recording took place at rehearsal shows for the Seeger Sessions tour held at Convention Hall in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Both the adaptation of Reed's original and the quick availability of this song through his website demonstrated that Springsteen was still actively engaged in the project and expanding its reach and context even more. He then did the same thing with "Bring 'Em Home," which also appeared for downloading on his official website on June 12, 2006, and was recorded in Oslo during the European leg of the Seeger Sessions tour.

There was one American concert on the *Seeger Sessions* tour which may well go down in Springsteen history as one of his most important and even greatest performances—the tour's opening performance at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage

Festival on Sunday, April 30, 2006. New Orleans was still reeling from Katrina at the time of this performance, but, as Dave Marsh observes music

> can provide inspiration and foster connection [;] Springsteen's always been a man on a mission when it came to those jobs, and changing bands and singing traditional songs didn't affect that. If anything, this is the strongest outreach he's made in years, stronger than *The Rising* because he's playing a species of dance music, designed to activate the ass and the mind." ("Greetings from New Orleans").

Of course, he performed "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live," preceded by rather pointed and partisan comments that "The criminal ineptitude makes you furious and this is what happens when political cronyism guts the very agencies that are supposed to serve American citizens in time of trial and hardship. And this is what happens when people play political games with other people's lives" (Donnelly 57). He then dedicated the song to "President Bystander" (Donnelly 57). Springsteen also debuted his slower version of the New Orleans standard "When the Saints Go Marching In," which became a concert staple of the tour. However, the performance of Springsteen's song "My City of Ruins," originally written about the decay of his beloved Asbury Park, but which, as we have seen, evolved on *The Rising* into a lament for the events of 9/11 and New York City was adapted to and adopted by yet another American city in ruins. Of the song's powerful call to "Come on, rise up / Come on, rise up!" and its insistence that salvation for the city starts with us and our faith in each other and

God—"With these hands / With these hands/I pray for the strength, Lord," Keith Spera, a reporter for *The Times-Picayune*, observed:

> Thousands of New Orleanians stood, hushed, letting the moment wash over them and resonate. Those who needed someone to express all their anger, frustration, grief, and resolve expended in the previous eight months had found their man. Fists were raised and tears were shed as Springsteen delivered a Jazzfest moment for the ages. ("How the Fest Was Won")

Throughout *The Seeger Sessions* project, it seems as if Springsteen was attempting to establish his own place in the larger American music tradition, not just the rock tradition or the Woody Guthrie tradition, by placing his voice in the American music continuum through a different and fresh performance context. Yet Springsteen has said that the songs he picked to record on the album are "ones I heard my own voice in" (Wilkinson 46) and, as we have seen, the songs certainly echo themes found in his own songs throughout his career. By both recording and performing these truly timeless songs he was "Trav'ling in the footsteps of those who've gone before," while adding his own unique footprints to the long road on which American music continues to travel. However, the musical road that Springsteen travelled after *The Seeger Sessions* albums and tour led back to recording songs again with the E Street Band in which he offered a more blistering critique of President George W. Bush's foreign policy and the endless Iraq War.

CHAPTER SIX:

"IT'S GONNA BE A LONG WALK HOME": *MAGIC*

After the distinct musical detours of the *Devils & Dust* and *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions* albums and tours in 2005 and 2006, Springsteen returned to recording new songs with the E Street Band from February through May 2007 (White 218). The resulting album was titled *Magic* and released on October 1, 2007. Of *Magic,* Springsteen has said, "I wrote most of this album on tour with the *Sessions* band. I wrote some of it the minute I came off *The Rising*. My idea was to pick up with the political and social results of what came out of the tragedy of 9/11" (Levy 54). Of course, as we have seen, Springsteen had certainly been dealing with those results through songs like "Devils & Dust" and the traditional, reworked protest songs on *The Seeger Sessions*, such as "Bring 'Em Home," but the songs on *Magic* were his first sustained critique of the policies of George W. Bush's administration, especially the Iraq War and its effects on both American soldiers and citizens on the home front. If Springsteen's revised version of Blind Alfred Reed's "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" represented the beginnings of the "crisis" part of his 21st-century American jeremiad, then the songs on *Magic* simply added more evidence that America's foundation was indeed crumbling and slipping away, or as Ryan White suggests, "Across the dozen tracks, blood falls and spills and colors the sky. That blood is the price of deceit, of falling for the trick and giving in to the illusion" (220).

During his *Today* show performance on September 28, 2007, just a few days before the official release of *Magic*, Springsteen in introducing the song "Livin' in the Future" (discussed below) from *Magic* went into his onstage "preacher" persona in which he, as Marc Dolan relates:

> reel[ed] off a list of *the things that we love about America* , . . . Springsteen then followed this crowd-pleasing list of good things with an alternative list of grievances against King George that wouldn't have been out of place during his performance in New Orleans a year and a half before. *Over the past six years,* he declared, *we've had to add to the American picture: rendition, illegal wiretapping, voter-suppression, no habeas corpus, the neglect of our great city New Orleans and her people, and an attack on the Constitution and the loss of our best young men and women in a tragic war*. (*Promise* 412)

Dolan also points out that "This may have been the most direct assault on the administration of a sitting president that had ever been uttered by a musical guest on a network morning show. Probably only Springsteen in full E Street mode could have gotten away with it without being censored in one way or another" (*Promise* 412).

Although NBC did not censor Springsteen's political rant, it did not escape the attention of Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly. As Ryan White notes, on O'Reilly's October 3, 2007, show he "granted that Springsteen's speech was 'legitimate dissent.' However, it would only truly be *respected* once Springsteen agreed to come on O'Reilly's show and defend his positions. 'Pop stars, as you know, are rarely held

accountable,' O'Reilly said" (220). Of course, Springsteen wisely did not take the bait, and then "Five days later, O'Reilly offered $25,000 to charity if Springsteen would come on the show" (White 220). Even with the charity offer, Springsteen never appeared on O'Reilly's show. By this point in 2007, Springsteen was aware that over the past three years since his endorsement and support for John Kerry and his involvement in the Vote for Change tour that he had long since crossed the partisan divide in our political culture, and, as White also observes,

> He knew he was releasing the album on the eve of an election year. He knew he'd become something of a barometer, each release an update on the current weather conditions in the American Dream. As such, *Magic* was going to be batted about by the right and the left as they yelled at each other for fun and profit. The rabid snarling of the discourse, the reliance on blunt-force opinion, wasn't news to Springsteen. (221)

Springsteen's only response was to remind everyone that his larger purpose as a singer and songwriter was to be, as he told Scott Pelley on *60 Minutes,* "the canary in the coal mine. When it gets dark, you're supposed to be singing. It's dark right now. The American idea is a beautiful idea. It needs to be preserved, served, protected, and sung out" ("Scott Pelley" 354).

Magic opens with the song "Radio Nowhere," which for all of its radio-friendly guitar licks and a Clarence Clemons saxophone solo, repeatedly asks the same question: "This is radio nowhere, is there anybody alive out there?" (line 5) The question "Is there anybody alive out there?" has been a particular favorite of Springsteen's in his

performances dating back to the "Tunnel of Love Express Tour" in 1988-1989 when he began to include it during his "sermons" extolling the healing power of the "ministry of rock n' roll," so its appearance in a song is not exactly surprising. Yet in the context of the album, Springsteen is asking a very serious question that as the song progresses becomes more of an indictment that during the Bush years we as Americans were just not paying attention anymore; that our hearts in which we are supposed to carry this country and its ideas have turned to stone. The song's setting of a solitary late night drive is certainly not a new one for Springsteen, since that has always been one of his favorite tropes in songs as varied as "The Promised Land," "Drive All Night," "State Trooper," and "Open All Night" from his earlier albums *Darkness on the Edge of Town, The River,* and *Nebraska.* Yet in "Radio Nowhere," there is a larger sense of isolation as the narrator says,

> I was tryin' to find my way home
>
> But all I heard was a drone
>
> Bouncing off a satellite
>
> Crushin' the last lone American night
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Dancin' down a dark hole
>
> Just searchin' for a world with some soul. (1-4; 9-10)

No sense of a community exists anymore as the narrator continually asks the question, "Is there anybody alive out there?," although he longs for it as he pleads in typical Springsteen fashion of finding community through the shared experience of rock n' roll:

"I want a thousand guitars/I want pounding drums/I want a million different voices speaking in tongues" (18-20).

The reason for this isolation is simply the long shadow cast by the Iraq war, which has separated us from our basic American ideas. Springsteen, however, does not write about the war in partisan terms, so the song does not necessarily function in an overtly polemical way. His opposition ultimately is based on how the war and how it has been conducted have compromised and profoundly damaged our American identity. The familiar maxim about politics is that "perception is reality," but Springsteen sees this as being very dangerous to our national identity if we allow perception to completely overwhelm and destroy our sense of reality. David Masciotra argues that "Radio Nowhere" "uses radio as a symbol for the distorting of meaningful communication throughout society . . . and is emblematic of a larger failure of America to overcome its own isolation" (*Working* 25).

As noted earlier, Springsteen has said that he began writing the songs that wound up on *Magic* right after the end of *The Rising* tour in 2003 (Levy 54). The first song he wrote was "Livin' in the Future," which opens with this verse:

> A letter come blowin' in on an ill wind
>
> Somethin' about me and you
>
> Never seein' one another again
>
> Yeah, well I knew it'd come
>
> Still I was struck deaf and dumb
>
> Like when we kissed, that taste of blood on your tongue. (1-6)

Peter Ames Carlin describes this song as "seemingly a rueful response to a Dear John letter, and it begins with its narrator reminiscing about his ex, from the moment he first saw her strutting his way, boot heels snapping like 'the barrel of a pistol spinnin' 'round'" (425). Carlin also suggests that in this song, along with others on the album, Springsteen was actually writing about "what he saw as the essential themes and failures of the Bush administration in terms intimate enough to describe a broken romance" (425). During the *Magic* tour in 2007-2008, Springsteen used "Livin' in the Future" as the setting for his nightly "Public Service Announcements," which were generally similar in content to his comments during his *Today* show performance.

In the opening verse of the song, the political theme emerges in the last line: "Like when we kissed, that taste of blood on your tongue" (6). The connotation of "that taste of blood" signifies that even when the narrator's relationship was supposedly going well there was still a sense that something was wrong, because who wants to taste blood during a kiss? Of course, the "blood" that the narrator refers to is not just his partner's blood but can also be seen as the blood of the many casualties of the Iraq war. This line also reaches back to an important verse in Springsteen's song "Lonesome Day" from *The Rising* that was discussed earlier: "Better ask questions before you shoot / Deceit and betrayals bitter fruit / It's hard to swallow, come time to pay / That taste on your tongue don't easily slip away" (14-17; see Chapter Three for full discussion). In the context of *The Rising*, this verse can be seen as a warning about undertaking what the narrator calls "a little revenge" (10) for the events of 9/11.

Larger political themes appear in the second verse when the narrator says,

Woke up Election Day, skies gunpowder and shades of gray

Beneath a dirty sun, I whistled my time away

Then just about sundown

You come walkin' through town

Your boot heels clickin'

Like the barrel of a pistol spinnin' 'round. (11-16)

In this verse, we can see the complacency and disconnection from "Radio Nowhere" return through the juxtaposition of its being an election day, with the narrator just biding his time until he notices his future partner "walkin' through town" (14). For Springsteen, this larger sense of disengagement with our public life is one of the threats to the larger sense of American community that is one of the foundations of American citizenship. As we have seen, in a nation based on the idea of "consent of the governed," citizens have to be engaged in our public life and know the kind of government to which we are giving our consent.

Even if we think we are engaged as citizens, we can still have our hearts broken as the government that we elect may not always have our best interests in heart. In the third verse of "Livin' in the Future," the narrator admits that this is what has happened because as "I opened up my heart to you it got all damaged and undone / My ship Liberty sailed away on a bloody red horizon" (22-23). In the fourth verse, the narrator continues to develop this particular point when he says, "My faith's been torn asunder, tell me is that rollin' thunder / Or just the sinkin' sound of somethin' righteous goin' under?" (27-28). In these lines, we can see that the narrator realizes that something

deeper is happening than just the usual disappointment with elected officials, as the very foundations of American life are being betrayed and lost. Yet for all of the concern about these developments, in the chorus of the song repeated after each verse, the narrator emphasizes, "Don't worry Darlin', now baby don't you fret / We're livin' in the future and none of this happened yet" (7-8), which suggests that even with some awareness on the part of the American citizenry that there were disturbing things taking place in our public life, there was still a larger sense of disengagement and a certain willingness on the part of American citizens to literally look the other way as foundational American ideals are compromised and even abandoned. As Masciotra argues, such disengagement is ultimately very dangerous, because

> Perhaps the most threatening and terrifying aspect of apathy is that consequences are not without limit. Power will not draw a line separating the acceptable from the unacceptable because that job is given to the people. If the people do not draw the line, no line will ever exist and we will watch traditions die, principles perish and way of life perish. (*Working* 175)

The danger of disengagement is also explored in the album's title song. In "Magic," the narrator, who is a magician and symbolizes the perspective of those in power, tells us, "Trust none of what you hear / And less of what you see" (12-13), reminding us that what we perceive is not necessarily reality. As Springsteen told Scott Pelley on *60 Minutes,*

> I think we live in a time when what is true can be made to seem a lie, . . . And what is a lie can be made to seem true. And I think the successful manipulation of those things have characterized several of our past elections. That level of hubris and arrogance has got us in the mess that we're in right now. And we're in a mess" ("Silence Is Unpatriotic").

However, the magician also tells us that our belief in manufactured perception and lack of attention to reality can literally separate us from our national identity:

> I got a shiny saw blade
> All I need's a volunteer
> I'll cut you in half
> While you're smiling ear to ear
> And the freedom that you sought
> Driftin' like a ghost among the trees
> This is what will be, this is what will be. (15-21)

With our identity then split, we then become enemies unto ourselves by destroying from the inside the ideas we hold dear.

Springsteen also explores this idea of split identity in the song "Your Own Worst Enemy," which is narrated in second person and gives the song a perspective rooted in duality as the narrator essentially carries on a dialogue with himself. The first verse opens with the image of a house at night where a crime has taken place: "You can't sleep at night /You can't dream your dream / Your fingerprints on file / Left clumsily at the scene" (1-4). The narrator is restless, because he is guilty of something that is never

identified in the song, but he has changed in some way and disturbed his peaceful home: "Yesterday the people were at ease / Baby slept in peace / You closed your eyes and saw her / You knew who you were" (7-10). There is the admission that he has lost his identity through his crimes—whatever they may be—and given Springsteen's concern about losing our national identity we can read this song metaphorically as being about how the loss of our identity has made us restless as a nation. The meaning of the loss of national identity actually comes out in the last two lines of the song when the narrator says, "Your flag it flew so high / It drifted into the sky" (31-32). There is the sense in these two lines that the emphasis upon patriotic fervor that is a necessary part of the "home front" in any war actually blinds us with its bright lights and distracts from what may actually be occurring. And, in our blindness, we may lose sight of the very ideas we supposedly celebrate.

On *Magic*, Springsteen also deals with the wounding and deaths of soldiers in the Iraq war in three different songs: "Gypsy Biker," "Last to Die," and "Devils Arcade." We can view all three songs as logical continuations of "Devils & Dust," in that the philosophical questions raised in that song have been answered with real bullets and bombs. Both "Gypsy Biker" and "Last to Die" are about the deaths of soldiers in the war with "Gypsy Biker" written from the perspective of a soldier's family and friends, while "Last to Die" is more politically direct in blending the idea of human loss with the loss of national identity. "Devil's Arcade," which closes the album, is about a wounded soldier in the hospital "in the ward with blue walls, a sea with no name/Where you lie adrift

with the heroes/Of the devil's arcade" (12-14), narrated from the perspective of the wounded soldier's partner. Donald L. Deardorff suggests that

> One can only imagine an arcade run by the devil. No doubt, it would feature games that seem promising and worthwhile but, in the end, result in only destruction. This is how Springsteen seems to view the soldiers who fought in the war on terror, as being caught in a game that couldn't be won. (99).

Technically, the final song on *Magic* is "Terry's Song," which is Springsteen's tribute to his longtime assistant Terry Magovern and is discussed in the Career Overview section in the Appendix. "Devil's Arcade" is the final song for the thematic sequence on *Magic*.

In "Gypsy Biker," the soldier who has died in the war was a biker and his remains are headed home, so the narrator tells us that "We pulled your cycle out of the garage/And polished up the chrome/Our Gypsy biker's comin' home" (7-9). His family and friends then burn his motorcycle as their memorial to him as "We stood 'round her in a circle/As she lit up the ravine" (23-24). Yet within this rather personal event, Springsteen still addresses larger themes generated by the Iraq war. One of these themes is how divided Americans were over the war, and this theme comes out in the second verse of the song when the narrator informs us that

> This whole town's been rousted
> Which side are you on
> The favored march up over the hill
> In some fools parade

Shoutin' victory for the righteous. (12-16)

This theme of division also appears in a more personal way in the song's final verse when the narrator admits, "To the dead it don't matter much/'Bout who's wrong or right/You asked me that question I didn't get it right" (27-29). Regardless of the division in the community and between the narrator and the soldier, the result of the war in the very real sense of young men and women being killed and only coming home to be buried is "there ain't much here but graves" (17). Unfortunately, for those who were the architects of the war there is no sorrow for the loss of the "Gypsy biker" or any of the soldiers killed and wounded, because as the narrator reminds us, "The speculators made their money/On the blood you shed" (1-2), and "To them that threw you away/You ain't nothin' but gone" (34-35). As Deardorff argues, "Gypsy Biker" is ultimately and unfortunately about the reality that "As one forgotten victim is brought home in a war that benefits only the military-industrial complex, the flag-waving crowd, fueled by misdirected patriotism, is poised to send another unfortunate victim into the fray" (99).

Unlike "Gypsy Biker" in its more personal approach to the death of a soldier in the Iraq war, "Last to Die" is written on a much broader and politically direct canvas about the larger costs of the war, and as Deardorff suggests, "actually captures Springsteen's feelings about all the wars in his lifetime" (98). On *Magic*, "Last to Die" immediately follows the song "Magic," thus making the obvious connection that there are real casualties in the battle to manipulate perception. The song's rather rousing chorus asks the important question: "Who'll be the last to die for a mistake / The last to

die for a mistake / Whose blood will spill, whose heart will break / Who'll be the last to die for a mistake" (5-8). The question asked in this song is a direct reference to John Kerry's famous testimony to Congress in April 1971 when he asked Congress that same question in connection with the Vietnam War (Dolan, *Promise* 407). Yet Springsteen does not let the song just turn into an anti-war rant, because in the third verse he comes back to his idea that we are allowing this to happen through our continued disengagement with reality:

> Kids asleep in the backseat
>
> We're just counting the miles, you and me
>
> We don't measure the blood we've drawn anymore
>
> We just stack the bodies outside the door (9-12).

Yet in the final verse of the song, Springsteen attempts to wake us up from this disengagement by reminding us that these dead soldiers do not want us to be indifferent to their sacrifices:

> A downtown window flushed with light
>
> Faces of the dead at five
>
> Our martyr's silent eyes
>
> Petition the drivers as we pass by. (22-25)

Masciotra sees this verse as the dead soldiers imploring us to recognize that "Their untimely deaths must be recognized, honored and applied to developing a deeper understanding of war, along with a nobler vision of American power" (*Working* 165). Deardorff posits that all three of these songs work together to

> issue a bitter indictment of the failed policies of several generations of politicians, military leaders, and industrial giants who have gained power and made money through wars that harmed many Americans who, ironically, were easy targets precisely because they were so loyal to their country. Yet, it is important to remember that Springsteen's wrath is reserved for the policies and the perpetrators, not for America. (100).

During the "Magic Tour" which began on October 2, 2007, and ended on August 30, 2008, Springsteen placed "Last to Die" immediately following "The Rising," a combination which A.O. Scott observes is

> Springsteen's take on the post-9/11 history of the United States [that] can be measured in the space between the choruses of those two songs. The audience is hurled from a rousing exhortation ("Come on up for the rising") to a grim, familiar question: "Who'll be the last to die for a mistake." ("In Love with Pop")

In performance, the songs are joined by a sustained chord, so that they literally flow musically into each other, thus audibly signifying their connection (Scott). In the space of these two songs joined with that sustained chord, we have a succinct summation of Springsteen's jeremiad from the ideal of that burst of national community to the slide into a war and the willing acceptance of policies of an administration elected and sustained both through our consent and disengagement. This dichotomy has eroded

and damaged the national community, along with the very foundations upon which it is built.

The key song on *Magic* is "Long Walk Home," which Springsteen first performed with the Sessions Band on the "Seeger Sessions Tour" in London on November 11, 2006 ("Nov. 11 Setlist"). On its surface, "Long Walk Home" seems to be almost typical Springsteen, extolling the virtues of someone returning to his hometown, such as in "My Hometown" on *Born in the U.S.A.,* but a closer reading and listen reveal that he is actually writing about the distance that has grown between us and our national identity. The narrator is walking through his hometown but nothing is the same as before:

> In town I passed Sal's grocery
>
> The barbershop on South Street
>
> I looked into their faces
>
> They were all rank strangers to me
>
> The veterans' hall high up on the hill
>
> Stood silent and alone
>
> The diner was shuttered and boarded
>
> With a sign that just said "gone." (12-19)

As in "Radio Nowhere," there is a sense of desolation here, and we can imagine the narrator asking, "Is there anybody alive out there?" as he walks the streets of his hometown. Once again, we can see that the hometown symbolizes our national identity, which is "gone" just like the familiar diner. Springsteen has said that the

character in this song finds "The world that he knew feels totally alien. I think that's what's happened to the country in the past six years" (Scott).

Yet in his isolation the narrator then remembers words his father told him when he was younger:

> My father said, "Son, we're lucky in this town
>
> It's a beautiful place to be born
>
> It just wraps its arms around you
>
> Nobody crowds you, nobody goes it alone.
>
> You know that flag flying over the courthouse
>
> Means certain things are set in stone
>
> Who we are, what we'll do and what we won't. (30-36)

For all of the desolation and darkness in *Magic*, this is the key verse to the entire album, because in these eight lines Springsteen is bringing us back to two fundamental American ideas: the importance of community and of our identity as a nation of laws that are created by our consent, as engaged citizens. Unfortunately, however, as Masciotra asserts the character in walking through his hometown has come home to only find that

> Those that live inside, who at one time were dependable friends and allies in an uncertain world, are now strangers who, because of their betrayal of communal principles and civic responsibilities, have become untrustworthy and unknowable. He remembers the clarity and importance of those values with the recollection of his father and the

> instruction he eagerly and happily gave. Through that bittersweet reminiscence he again realizes that it will be a long walk home to the home that is now so far away—the decency and dignity of communal strength and civic pride. (*Working* 185)

Another musical critical critique of the policies of the Bush administration is Springsteen's song "Hey Blue Eyes," which was released on April 19, 2014, on *American Beauty,* a special four-song vinyl EP for Record Store Day. Springsteen said in the liner notes for *American Beauty*, which were posted on Springsteen's official website the day it was released:

> "Hey Blue Eyes" rounds out the EP with one of my darkest political songs. Written during the Bush years, it's a metaphor for the house of horrors our government's actions created in the years following the invasion of Iraq. At its center is the repressed sexuality and abuse of power that characterized Abu Ghraib prison. I feel this is a shadow we as a country have yet to emerge from. ("*American Beauty* Liner Notes")

Although Springsteen does not indicate exactly when "Hey Blue Eyes" was written, he does mention in his liner notes that it was considered for inclusion on his 2014 album *High Hopes* ("*American Beauty* Liner Notes"), so he may have written it after the songs on *Magic.* It is certainly striking that even in 2014 five years after George W. Bush left the White House that for Springsteen the scars of those years remain "a shadow we as a country have yet to emerge from."

As Springsteen noted in his comments about the song, the focus of "Hey Blue Eyes" is the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and what it symbolized about the policies of the Bush administration. What occurred at Abu Ghraib became known to the general public on CBS's *60 Minutes II* broadcast on April 28, 2004, and was followed by Seymour M. Hersh's article in *The New Yorker* "Torture on Abu Ghraib," which was published in the May 10, 2004 issue of the magazine. As Peter Baker relates,

> *60 Minutes II* aired photographs of Iraqi detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison being abused by American soldiers. The photographs were depraved in every way. Several showed Iraqi prisoners stripped naked and blindfolded or hooded, with American soldiers posing next to them smiling or flashing thumbs-up. One showed naked Iraqi prisoners stacked on top of each other in a pyramid. The most horrific image, one that would be seared into the consciousness of the world as a symbol of American hypocrisy, showed an Iraqi forced to stand on a box of military rations, his head covered with a sandbag and wires attached to his fingers and genitals. He was told if he fell off the box, he would be electrocuted. (326)

Certainly one of the many disturbing things about these photographs was the involvement of female soldiers in the abuse of Iraqi prisoners, especially in degrading sexual abuse. Seymour Hersh reports that one of these female soldiers, Lynndie England, with "a cigarette dangling from her mouth, is giving a jaunty thumbs-up sigh and pointing at the genitals of a young Iraqi, who is naked except for a sandbag over his

head, as he masturbates" ("Torture at Abu Ghraib"). Another photograph showed that the soldiers "placed a dog chain around a naked detainee's neck so a female guard could pose with him . . . (Baker 326). Of course, these soldiers were not necessarily carrying out such actions on their own, since just after the events of 9/11,

> President Bush signed a memorandum authorizing the CIA to capture, detain, and interrogate terrorism suspects. Eventually, the CIA would maintain an entire secret prison system overseas. The president did not want anyone to know whom he held, what we were doing to them, or what we were learning from them.
>
> In the wake of 9/11, President Bush authorized rendition. This practice consists of transporting captives to nations other than the United States, where they are held for interrogation and sometimes tortured. (Bruff 419-20)

In his comments during his *Today* show performance, Springsteen specifically mentions rendition as one of his main issues with the Bush administration and "Hey Blue Eyes" can be seen as his musical response to this very disturbing policy.

A female soldier is the main character in "Hey Blue Eyes," although the song is mainly narrated from the perspective of a prisoner. If Springsteen's soldier in "Devils & Dust" is essentially in a state of confusion about knowing whom to trust and worrying about how fear how can turn our hearts black, then the soldier in "Hey Blue Eyes" reveals no such confusion as her heart has been turned black. In the first verse in the opening lines of the song, the prisoner tells us, "They're holdin' a committee, of treason

and lies / Doublespeak and sedition, then somebody dies" (1-2) and then in the second verse, "She says in this house we've abandoned history / In this house there are no laws / Just the false taste of paradise, and then the fall / In this house the guilty go unpunished, the nameless remain jailed" (7-11). In both of these verses, we can see that Springsteen is more explicit in his critique of the Bush administration in actually charging the administration with treason through its willingness to sacrifice foundational American ideals that Springsteen had written and spoken about previously in the songs, interviews, and public comments on and associated with *Magic*. In the third verse, he even references the photograph of the female soldier with the dog chain around a prisoner's neck when the prisoner informs that the soldier tells him, "Tonight I'll have you naked, and crawlin' at the end of my leash" (19). In the final verse, the prisoner relates,

> She says, in this it's so easy
> To set a world on fire, all you need is a name, the money
> And a soul full of reckless desire
> Now upstairs the landlord is dining with all of his very close friends
> Don't worry they'll have their bags packed and be long gone
> Before the real fucking begins. (22-27)

In this verse, we can see that Springsteen is truly laying all of the problems of the Bush years on George W. Bush himself as the "landlord," who was able to use the Bush family name and money to get elected president in the first place and then to engage in his reckless "cowboy diplomacy" leading to the many casualties of the Iraq war.

Metaphorically, Springsteen's use of the repeated "house" as the setting of this song refers not only to the actual prison of Abu Ghraib but also to the house constructed by the actions of the Bush administration in which fundamental American ideals have been lost.

Of course, for Springsteen, Bush and his cronies will bequeath all of the damage, both physical and spiritual, to his successors for many years to come, while they basically get away clean. As he did in "Livin' in the Future," Springsteen offsets the darkness of these verses with a repeated chorus of "Hey blue eyes, what'cha doin' tonight / Hey blue eyes yea it's all right" (6-7) at the end of each verse, which creates a sense of distance from the actual events taking place, as well as the sense of disengagement for the participants in the events, and, in a larger sense, for Americans in general, because in a message similar to what we have seen in several of the songs on *Magic* "it's all right."

The reality that the American promise had been damaged and foundational American ideals compromised and even lost was certainly the backdrop for the 2008 presidential election, which was in essence a referendum on the Bush administration. As he did in the 2004 election, Springsteen stepped onstage in the partisan political arena with his public endorsement of Barack Obama on April 16, 2008, during the very competitive Democratic nomination contest between Obama and Hillary Clinton. In his endorsement statement published on his official website on April 16, 2008, in which he references "Long Walk Home," Springsteen noted that Obama

> speaks to the America I've envisioned in my music for the past 35 years, a generous nation with a citizenry willing to tackle nuanced and complex problems, a country that's interested in its collective destiny and in the potential of its gathered spirit. A place where " . . . nobody crowds you, and nobody goes it alone . . . ."
>
> After the terrible damage done over the past eight years, a great American reclamation project needs to be undertaken. I believe that Senator Obama is the best candidate to lead that project and to lead us into the 21st century with a renewed sense of moral purpose and of our ourselves as Americans. ("Bruce Endorses Obama")

In this statement, we can see that Springsteen includes one of the key themes of *Magic* about the relative disengagement of the American public with all of the erosions of freedom perpetuated by the Bush administration. For Springsteen, true citizenship in the "country we carry in our hearts" requires constant engagement with its founding ideals. The "terrible damage done over the past eight years" was a direct result of Americans' disengagement both with actual political developments and our ideals.

According to Peter Ames Carlin, Springsteen's endorsement of Obama

> caught the candidate by surprise. "We were on the campaign RV in Pennsylvania, and he came back and said, 'Bruce Springsteen just endorsed me!'" campaign chief David Axelrod remembers. Obama sat down, handed his Blackberry to him, and kind of beamed. "I'm not usually impressed by celebrity endorsements, but I just read this thing,"

> the candidate said. "And I *like* the guy. I've got a bunch of his music on my iPod. I *really* like him" (427).

Of course, as Dolan points out, Springsteen's endorsement should not have come as a surprise, since "Was there ever a presidential candidate who fit better with Bruce Springsteen's worldview? . . . Barack Obama actually thought like a rock star, and the rock star he most frequently sounded like was Bruce Springsteen" (*Promise* 417). In fact, as Dolan also notes, that Obama while "Backstage at a fund-raiser that fall, . . . [Obama] joked to his wife, Michelle, 'The reason I'm running for President is because I can't be Bruce Springsteen'" (417).

As he did in 2004 for John Kerry, Springsteen appeared at "Vote for Change" rallies for Barack Obama, although unlike the 2004 concerts, these events in Philadelphia, at Ohio State University, at Eastern Michigan University, and a Cleveland rally with Obama two days before the election, featured Springsteen performing solo sets. In his remarks from the stage at the Philadelphia "Vote for Change" on October 4, Springsteen once again stepped up into the national pulpit to continue and expand his jeremiad. If songs like "Devils & Dust," "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live," and the songs and public comments in connection with *Magic* had created a larger sense of national anxiety and crisis, then his public comments in support of Barack Obama offered a glimpse of hope that maybe American ideals could still be saved after all; although saving the American spirit would definitely take some work. In his Philadelphia remarks, Springsteen used the metaphor "house of dreams" in referring America and its bedrock ideals as a larger framework for the responsibilities of

citizenship. Although George W. Bush was not on the ballot in the November election, Springsteen acknowledged that he was leaving the White House, he still launched a direct attack on the Bush administration within the "house of dreams" metaphor in order to remind voters of what had happened during the past eight years:

> They will, however, be leaving office, dropping the national tragedies of Katrina, Iraq, and our financial crisis in our laps. Our sacred house of dreams has been abused, looted, and left in a terrible state of disrepair. It needs care; it needs saving, it needs defending against those who would sell it down the river for power or a quick buck. ("American Reclamation Project")

Although the feelings of anxiety and crisis are still there, Springsteen does offer some hope, rather than just focusing of the darkness of Bush years. Of course, his remarks assert a way out of the current darkness was by electing Barack Obama as the next President of the United States. Springsteen mentioned that the "house of dreams" needed "Senator Obama's understanding, temperateness, deliberativeness, maturity, compassion, toughness, and faith, to help us rebuild our house once again" ("American Reclamation Project"). For Springsteen, however, this work was not just for the future President; the house must be rebuilt by an engaged American citizenry "with the generosity that is at the heart of the American spirit. A house that is truer and big enough to contain the hopes and dreams of all of our fellow citizens. That is where our future lies. We will rise or fall as a people by our ability to accomplish this task" ("American Reclamation Project"). For Springsteen, the 2008 election had become

more than just a referendum on the Bush administration and the Iraq War; it became a referendum on reclaiming the American spirit itself.

In his remarks at the Cleveland "Vote for Change" rally on Sunday, November 2, with Barack and Michelle Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha on stage with him, Springsteen expanded on his idea of engaged citizenship that he had articulated in his Philadelphia remarks in October. Once again using the "house of dreams" metaphor, Springsteen said that

> most of all it needs us—it needs you and it needs me. And he's [Obama's] gonna need us. 'Cause all that a nation has that keeps it from coming apart is the social contract between us, its citizens. And whatever grace God has decided to impart to us, it resides in our connection with one another, and in our life and the hopes and the dreams of the man or the woman up the street or across town—that's where we make our small claim upon heaven.
>
> Now in recent years, that social contract has been shredded. We look around today and we can see it shredding before our eyes. But tonight and today we are at the crossroads. We are at the crossroads, and it's been a long, long, long time coming. ("Obama Campaign Speech" 334-335)

Springsteen's language in his remarks is significant. First of all, his use of the term "social contract" as the basis for citizenship brings us back to the political theorists Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, who wrote *Leviathan* (1651) and *The Second Treatise of*

Government (1690) respectively. These works created the modern theoretical foundations for citizenship as a "social contract" in which individuals in a society are willing to work for a larger "common good" of that society. During the Bush years, as Springsteen said, "that social contract has been shredded" ("Obama Campaign Speech" 335) as the American citizenry lost sight of the "common good" inherent in the American spirit through disengagement with this "contract," allowing the Bush administration to erode the foundations of our ideals and the Constitution itself. As we have seen, one of Springsteen's key themes in his jeremiad is that for a nation whose government and public life in general is based on "consent of the governed," such "consent" must be based on having an engaged citizenry.

With the election just two days away, Springsteen concluded his Cleveland remarks by moving beyond political theory to more immediate political concerns saying, "Now is the time to stand with Barack Obama and Joe Biden, roll up our sleeves, and come on up for the rising" ("Obama Campaign Speech" 335). Springsteen's use of the phrase "come on up for the rising" from the song "The Rising" in the context of the eve of the 2008 presidential election created another, more overtly political meaning for idea of "the rising." If the meaning on the album *The Rising* was a celebration of national unity and spirit in the aftermath of the events of 9/11, then the 2008 meaning of "the rising" was not only electing Barack Obama as President, but also a reenergizing of the American spirit that had been so present after 9/11.

This meaning for "the rising" was dramatically symbolized in Washington on January 18, 2009, when Springsteen headlined the "We Are One" concert honoring

President Obama and his family at the Lincoln Memorial. As Springsteen stood in front of a large gospel choir with Abraham Lincoln's statue in the background singing "The Rising" at Obama's request, his deep concerns and questions about American identity, which had dominated his music during this creatively prolific stretch of his career, were dramatically answered in the affirmative by a majority of the American community deciding to truly change the direction of the nation and government and thus beginning a new "rising" and reclamation of the American spirit. The long walk home had indeed begun.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

"WHERE'S THE PROMISE FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA": *WRECKING BALL*

If the *Working on a Dream* (2009) album, which is discussed in the Career Overview section in the Career Overview in the Appendix, was a brief optimistic hiatus in Springsteen's jeremiad, then his next album *Wrecking Ball*, which was released on March 6, 2012, was a full-throated return to his continuing angry exhortations about American "anxiety" due to the loss of national unity and purpose after the events of 9/11. The cause for the "anxiety" for this part of his jeremiad was the global economic crisis that hit in the fall of 2008. Donald Deardorff describes this crisis and its connection to *Wrecking Ball* as

> an economic disaster largely caused by individual and corporate greed that left the swelling ranks of the poor even poorer and the shrinking middle class ever more pressed while the wealthy emerged relatively unscathed . . . . The housing bubble of 2008 that was caused by predatory lending companies peddling subprime mortgages; the fraudulent bankers of companies such as Bear Stearns making reckless investments at the expense of middle—class investors; oil companies raking in huge profits while the working class suffered at the pump; runaway inflation; and skyrocketing unemployment rates are the unholy amalgam that gave rise to *Wrecking Ball*. (62-63)

We can thus view *Wrecking Ball* as a continuation of *Magic*, which as we have seen, focused on Springsteen's frustration with the George W. Bush administration over the conduct of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and their apparent betrayal of foundational American ideals. If *Magic* serves as an indictment of the foreign policy of the Bush administration, then *Wrecking Ball* is its economic counterpart, which is arguably even more searing in its critique not only of the continuing betrayal of American ideals but also of its effects upon American citizens. As Springsteen writes in *Born to Run*, this is the main theme of *Wrecking Ball*:

> After the crash of 2008, I was furious at what had been done by a handful of trading companies on Wall Street. *Wrecking Ball* was a shot of anger at the injustice that continues on and has widened with deregulation, dysfunctional regulatory agencies and capitalism gone wild at the expense of hardworking Americans. The middle class? Stomped on. Income disparity climbed as we lived through a new Gilded Age. This was what I wanted to write about. (468)

As Springsteen also notes in *Born to Run*, the *Wrecking Ball* album was not just about the effects of the economic crash on the individual lives of American citizens but also about what the economy revealed about the current state of American democracy: "If this much damage can be done to average citizens with basically no accountability, then the game is off and the thin veil of democracy is revealed for what it is, a shallow disguise for a growing plutocracy that is here now and permanent" (469).

The theme of loss defines the first half of *Wrecking Ball.* As Dave Marsh and Danny Alexander argue, "Bruce Springsteen is approximately the last artist whose records almost always divide as if Side One and Side Two were pertinent digital terms" (Marsh and Alexander). Thus on "Side One" of the album, the sense of loss is both personal and national in that the "characters have lost homes, jobs, and pensions. Gone is a basic sense of fairness and decency, the bedrock of the American core Springsteen had been mining since the 1970s" (White 249). The song "We Take Care of Our Own" opens the album, and David Fricke describes it as "Springsteen's State of the Union Address" in which "Anguish and challenge run thick" (61). Like "Lonesome Day" and "Radio Nowhere," which are the opening songs on *The Rising* and *Magic* and, as we have seen, establish the larger contexts for both of those albums, "We Take Care of Our Own" functions in exactly the same way on *Wrecking Ball.* In fact, we can view "We Take Care of Our Own" as essentially a summation of the main themes of Springsteen's "anxiety" portion of his jeremiad to this point.

In an interview with the European press prior to the release of *Wrecking Ball,* Springsteen noted of "We Take Care of Our Own," that "the idea behind that song was that's what's *supposed* to happen, but was not happening" ("International Press Conference" 407). The song is structured mainly as a question asking whether we as a nation and as individual citizens take care of our own or not? Has that fundamental idea at the heart of our national unity and community during and after 9/11, which Springsteen developed in the songs "Into the Fire" and "The Rising" on *The Rising* and symbolize the "ideal" part of his jeremiad, somehow been lost? In the opening verse of

the song, the narrator is searching for something that has been lost: "I been looking for the map that leads me home / I been stumbling on good hearts turned to stone / The road of good intentions has gone dry as a bone" (lines 2-4). In these lines, we can see that the narrator is lost and is looking for his way home, but he cannot get there, because it seems no one will help him. Symbolically, the narrator represents that America is now lost, whether it is through the loss of national unity and community or through individual Americans losing individual compassion for fellow citizens. These lines lead into a four-line chorus that is part of the first two verses of the song in which the song's narrator says:

> We take care of our own
>
> We take care of our own
>
> Wherever this flag's flown
>
> We take care of our own. (5-8)

These lines work as both a statement and a question. As we have seen, one of the more fundamental American ideas is that as Americans we do "take care of our own" in our families, our communities, and our nation, and these lines directly state this idea. However, these lines create a dichotomy given the realities expressed by the narrator in the earlier lines of the verse that this idea seems to be missing from the current American landscape, thus the idea of "we take care of our own" becomes more of a question than statement.

Such a questioning continues in the next two verses of the song. In the opening lines of the second verse, the narrator's perspective becomes more specific through a

direct reference to the effects of and lack of government response to hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005:

> From Chicago to New Orleans
>
> For the muscle to the bone
>
> From the shotgun shack to the Superdome
>
> There ain't no help, the cavalry stayed home
>
> There ain't no one hearing the bugle blowing. (9-13)

As we saw in Chapter Five, the George W. Bush administration's slow response to the devastation of Katrina, as well as Bush's deafness to the actual suffering of countless American who were direct casualties of the devastation, is one of the key points in Springsteen's jeremiad, especially through the song "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" on *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions—American Land Edition.* In these lines, which are followed by the same chorus as in the first verse, Springsteen is emphasizing this point once again, referencing in the Katrina crisis during which we simply did not "take care of our own."

In the third verse of "We Take Care of Our Own," the narrator poses a series of questions which directly connect to the current state of the American spirit in conjunction with this fundamental American idea. These questions connect back to the narrator's concerns expressed in the opening verse, invoking a line from the patriotic song "America the Beautiful," as well as the American flag, in order to raise these questions within the larger context of American patriotism:

> Where're the eyes, the eyes with the will to see

Where’re the hearts that run over with mercy

Where’s the love that has not forsaken me

Where’s the work that’ll set my hands, my soul free

Where’s the spirit that’ll reign over me

Where’s the promise from sea to shining sea

Where’s the promise from sea to shining sea

Wherever this flag is flown

Wherever this flag is flown

Wherever this flag is flown. (18-27)

In this verse, we can see that through these questions the narrator is essentially asking what has happened to the American spirit that animates the deeper sense of citizenship that Springsteen in his 2004 essay “Chords of Change” called “the country we carry in our hearts,” which was discussed in Chapter Four. By invoking the phrase “from sea to shining sea” from “America the Beautiful” in a line asking if the American promise is indeed now broken, the narrator juxtaposes the reality of the broken promise of American community with a sacred song in our civil religion, as well as with the flag in the final lines in the verse, which supposedly symbolizes this very idea.

After this verse, the song continues with two repetitions of the chorus, which work to emphasize Springsteen’s central question in this song: do we really take care of our own? From the evidence presented and the questions raised in the verses of the song, we can surmise that Springsteen’s answer is no. As June Skinner Sawyers suggests, in “We Take Care of Our Own” Springsteen is saying that

> The social contract, the covenant of an America where everyone helped one another from "sea to shining sea"—even if this was an ideal never fully realized—has been broken. America, Springsteen contends, has reneged on its promise to look after its own citizens. American institutions have failed the Americans they are supposed to care for. (40)

Interestingly, within the larger political contexts of 2012, "We Take Care of Our Own" was "adopted by the Obama campaign as part of its official rally mixtape" and was played in the convention hall immediately following Barack Obama's speech at the 2012 Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina (Alterman, "Springsteen's Political Voice" 15; Hogan). Also, former Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm used the song as a framework for her column on *politico.com* in which she argued that the Supreme Court should uphold the Affordable Care Act by noting that the ACA was implementing and upholding the very idea of American community:

> If you believe we should take of our own, as Springsteen sings, you believe that we owe a duty to one another—both a moral duty to the individual and a financial duty to our country. You understand that there are many people who cannot pull themselves out of their life circumstances. (Granholm).

Within the larger thematic context of *Wrecking Ball*, the line in the third verse of "We Take Care of Our Own" wherein the narrator asks, "Where's the work that'll set my hands free, my soul free" (21), is key in recognizing the idea of work as central to the American promise, and that, for many American workers, jobs that provide work have

been lost as a result of the economic crisis. Within this question, two ideas emerge. The phrase "Where's the work" seems to imply that the narrator is unemployed or perhaps underemployed, with both situations reflecting current symptoms of our economic downturn with some workers reflecting high levels of unemployment and others having certain skills and training but able to find work that matches their skills, thus leading to underemployment. The second phrase "work that'll set my hands free" seems to refer not only to the reality that having a job does mean having some sort of income and means for survival, but it also seems to contain the implication that having a job is an important component of an individual's identity, in that being "free" not only means economic sustenance but spiritual and psychological sustenance as well. Of course, within the larger context of this song, this question about the current status of work itself in our nation also carries the implication that we are certainly not taking care of our workers.

In his Foreward to Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson's 2011 work *Someplace Like America: Tales from the New Great Depression*, Springsteen comments on the nature of work and contemporary perceptions about the working class that are at the heart of *Wrecking Ball*:

> When you read about workers today, they are discussed mainly in terms of statistics (the unemployed), trade (the need to eliminate and offshore their jobs in the name of increased profit), and unions (usually depicted as a purely negative drag on the economy). In reality, the lives of American workers, as well as those of the unemployed and the homeless,

> make up a critically important cornerstone of our country's story, past and present, and in that story, there is great honor. (x)

In this passage, Springsteen defines his conception of the nature of work through emphasizing that workers are indeed people and not just statistics and/or political targets, as well as using the word "honor" to recognize not only the workers' labor but also their significant place in our nation's history.

In his Introduction to *Someplace Like America*, Springsteen also adds another component to this conception of "the working life," which takes on our political and economic system for essentially abandoning "the men and women who built the buildings we live in, laid the highways we drive on, *made* things, and asked for nothing in return but a good day's work and a decent living" (x). In Springsteen's 2012 *Rolling Stone* interview with Jon Stewart, he is even more critical of the economic system, which he refers to as a "hustle" that "has been legitimized over the past four years, when you have the level of risk and greed at the top of the financial industry, and people are basically walking away, relatively scot-free, completely unaccountable. That lack of accountability is the poison shot straight into the heart of the country" (41). It is in this collision of the dignity and honor of "the working life" and our current political and economic system, which seems determined to destroy the existence and the foundational idea of an American working class that we encounter Springsteen's songs about workers in *Wrecking Ball*.

The three songs on *Wrecking Ball* that directly address the current plight of American workers are "Shackled and Drawn," "Jack of All Trades," and "Death to My

Hometown," the third, fourth, and fifth songs on "Side One" of the album in Marsh's and Alexander's construct for *Wrecking Ball.* Springsteen has even said, "On the first half of the record, you're just pissed off" ("State of the Union" 41). For "Shackled and Drawn," Springsteen sets the lyrics against one of his Irish-influenced melodies and arrangements that characterized many of the songs on *The Seeger Sessions* with a horn section taking full flight on a hummable repetitive riff interspersed throughout the song. The lyrics of the song are arguably the best sustained example in Springsteen's recent work of how he currently views "the working life" through the development of three key themes. The first theme is certainly familiar with its distant echoes of "Factory" as the narrator defines his working life:

> Gray morning light spits through the shade
> Another day older, closer to the grave
> Closer to the grave and come the dawn
> I woke up this morning shackled and drawn.
>
> Shackled and drawn, shackled and drawn
> Pick up the rock son, carry it on
> I'm trudging through the dark in
> A world gone wrong
> I woke up this morning shackled and drawn. (1-9)

The phrase "shackled and drawn" obviously refers to the narrator feeling as if he is literally chained to both his job and the drudgery of its routine, which is emphasized

throughout the song by the repetition of the phrase. The word "drawn" deepens this meaning through the image of the narrator not being in chains but also drawn in the medieval context of the word in having his limbs pulled to their breaking points. The lines in the second verse emphasize physical labor and its effects: "Pick up the rock son, carry it on / I'm trudging through the dark in / A world gone wrong" (6-8). The image of picking up rocks symbolizes hard physical labor, but there is also another possible meaning here in that the "rock" that the narrator is carrying could refer to the narrator being unemployed with all of the anxieties that weigh so heavily on those individuals who are without work. The accompanying image of "trudging through the dark in / A world gone wrong" also juxtaposes the idea that the narrator is concerned about the current state of the world, which has, in his view, "gone wrong" leaving him unemployed, shackling him even more and increasing the tension on his "drawn" limbs.

Springsteen's use of the word "son" in these lines echoes the use of the dramatic monologue form that he began to use so effectively on *The River* and expanded upon in both *Nebraska* and *Born in the U.S.A.* In fact, his use of the word "son" brings to mind one of the key verses in "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." (18-22)

However, the major difference in Springsteen's use of his conversational technique in "Shackled and Drawn" is a reversal in that the persona in the song is the one who is

addressing his “son,” rather than being the one who is addressed in this way, which creates the sense that the character is older and now imparting hard truths to a younger man.

In the verses three and five, Springsteen introduces a new theme which coincides with his belief that “the working life” does indeed have dignity and honor, even in its drudgery:

> I always loved the feel of sweat on my shirt
>
> Stand back son and let a man work
>
> Let a man work, is that so wrong
>
> I woke up this morning shackled and drawn. (10-13)
>
> . . .
>
> Freedom son’s a dirty shirt
>
> The sun on my face and my shovel in the dirt
>
> A shovel in the dirt keeps the devil gone
>
> I woke up this morning shackled and drawn. (18-21)

In these verses, the narrator celebrates the satisfaction of physical labor and the nature of work itself. However, the use of the past tense in the line, “I always loved the feel of sweat on my shirt” does seem to signify that the narrator felt this kind of satisfaction in work in the past, and that whatever work he does now or the lack of work does not provide the same kind of satisfaction. Also, the repeated phrase “let a man work” seems to indicate to a state of unemployment, which can be interpreted both in a personal sense for the narrator and in the larger national context of people wanting to

work but unable to find jobs. Verse five also contains both personal and national connotations. The line, "Freedom son's a dirty shirt" is interesting in Springsteen's use of a contraction in "son's" for "Freedom son *is* a dirty shirt." Once again, we see Springsteen celebrating the nature of work itself with the "dirty shirt" symbolizing the completion and satisfaction found in a day's hard work, which can be applied to any form of work, whether it's physical labor or not. However, his use of "freedom" to open the line brings a larger American context to his idea of the dignity of "the working life" and echoes the idea he develops in his Introduction to *Someplace Like America* that many of the good things we take for granted in American life, such as our infrastructure, were built by the working class. As Marc Dolan observes, Springsteen is writing about "the workingman's world of his youth, a world of factories and union halls, in which good-paying jobs, benefits, and affordable housing were much more widely available to those who might not have an Ivy League education but were willing to get their shirts dirty" ("Springsteen in the Age of Occupy").

Springsteen brings in his third theme in the seventh verse of "Shackled and Drawn":

> Gambling man rolls the dice,
>
> Workingman pays the bill
>
> It's still fat and easy up on banker's hill
>
> Up on banker's hill, the party's going strong
>
> Down here below we're shackled and drawn. (27-31)

In these lines, we can see that Springsteen's third theme in the song is that there are definitely culprits responsible for the narrator's and thus the nation's current economic problems, particularly the financial industry, which is symbolized by the images of both the "gambling man" and "banker's hill." The idea of the lack of accountability by the financial industry, which Springsteen discussed in his interview with the European press, is symbolized in the third and fourth lines of this verse; although their "gambling" practices wrought financial havoc on our economy and negatively affected millions of American workers in very profound and real ways for the affluent "It's still fat and easy" and "the party's going strong."

If the narrator of "Shackled and Drawn" presents the philosophical side of how Springsteen views the nature of work, then "Jack of All Trades" is literally its flipside as its narrator gives us an arguably more realistic character study of an unemployed or underemployed worker's daily struggles just to survive in these difficult economic times through a litany of jobs that he is willing to do. Set against a musical background that is a slow ballad punctuated by a simple, repeated piano figure, the narrator tells us,

> I'll mow your lawn,
>
> Clean the leaves out of your drain
>
> I'll mend your roof, to keep out the rain
>
> I take the work that God provides
>
> I'm a jack of all trades
>
> Honey we'll be all right

I'll hammer the nails, I'll set the stone

I'll harvest your crops,

When they're ripe and grown

I'll pull that engine apart,

And patch 'er up 'til she's running right

I'm a jack of all trades, we'll be all right. (1-12)

As in "Shackled and Drawn" in which the narrator speaks of work and its rewards in past tense for a working life that "used to be," Springsteen's use of future tense is significant in that the narrator in "Jack of All Trades" is talking about jobs that he is willing to do in order to survive. There is no evocation of work symbolizing freedom and the American agrarian idea; the list of jobs is simply the narrator's advertisement for work that he can do, a photocopied handwritten flyer posted on the community bulletin board at the local convenience store.

In the song's third and fourth verses, Springsteen brings in the theme of culprits for the current economic situation as he does in "Shackled and Drawn." The third verse echoes the larger ideas in "We Take of Our Own" of the responsibilities of community and its contemporary challenges as he appears to reference the effects of a natural disaster like Hurricane Katrina:

The hurricane blows, brings the hard rain

When the blue sky breaks

It feels like the world's gonna change

And we'll start caring for each other

> Like Jesus said that we might
>
> I'm a jack of all trades, we'll be all right. (13-18)

In the fourth verse, however, the idea of community is juxtaposed against the realities that

> The banker man grows fat,
>
> Working man grows thin
>
> It's all happened before and it'll happen again
>
> It'll happen again, yeah they'll bet your life
>
> I'm a jack of all trades,
>
> Darling we'll be all right. (14-19)

As in "Shackled and Drawn," bankers are once again his target in their greed and lack of accountability, especially in how they prey on the "working man." However, there is a darker sense here in that "they'll bet your life" in a continuing cycle of greed and fiscal irresponsibility. As Robert Loss points out,

> If there's one thing Springsteen is shouting on *Wrecking Ball*, . . . it's that we have abandoned an idea central to the American character: the common good . . . . The promise of America was that a balance would be struck between the individual and the collective . . . . These days, however, individualism has never been a stronger ideal, and the collective good has consumed by materialism . . . . (Loss)

In the first three verses of the final verse of "Jack of All Trades," the narrator tells us: "So you use what you've got / And you learn to make do / You take the old, you

make it new" (25-27). These lines reflect the awareness that the traditional jobs associated with the working class, such as factory work, are no longer there, and that workers must now adapt to a different kind of working life in our current society. Of course, Springsteen was aware of this reality thirty years ago when he wrote in "My Hometown" on *Born in the U.S.A.*: "Foreman says these jobs are going boys / And they ain't coming back" (31-32). The narrator of "Jack of All Trades" echoes their loss through offering his services in the litany of jobs he mentions in the first two verses of the song, as he is willing to do the kind of work *now* that it takes to survive, rather than mourning a kind of work that no longer exists in the American economy. In his interview with the European press, Springsteen noted this shift to a service economy:

> in the United States right now, you have a service economy overtaking a manufacturing economy. You've got a lot of guys who worked in manufacturing whose jobs have disappeared, and who are not necessarily coming out of those manufacturing jobs with the skills to move into a service economy. ("International Press Conference" 415).

Yet for all the understanding of the current situation of American workers that the narrator of the song demonstrates in these opening lines of the sixth and final verse, the next two lines reveal his true anger and a desire to do something to those who have caused our economic mess: "If I had me a gun, I'd find the / Bastards and shoot 'em on sight" (28-29). Whether or not the threat of violence is real, these lines do indicate that the narrator wants to confront the fat banker who is literally toying with the narrator's life only for the sake of greed. The narrator wants to be the agent of change and

demonstrate some kind of control to those who control him through a potential act of violence. However, his desire to commit a violent act and his actual willingness to act on his desire are two very different things, and the song ends with the now familiar refrain: "I'm a jack of all trades, we'll be all right / I'm a jack of all trades, we'll be alright" (30-31), and we are back where the song began as the narrator is talking to his wife. Marsh and Alexander see the phrase "we'll be alright" in terms of the narrator "sit[ting] with his hands around a cold coffee cup, leaning across the kitchen table, looking straight into the eyes of the person he loves most and telling the biggest lie of them all: 'Honey, we'll be alright'" (Marsh and Alexander). This interpretation is certainly valid, but the last two lines of the fifth verse, "There's a new world coming, I can see the light/I'm a jack of all trades, we'll be all right" (23-24), do seem to suggest that the narrator does feel some hope that his own situation will improve through some type of large but undefined change.

However, this brief glimmer of hope is definitely not present in the song "Death to My Hometown," which immediately follows "Jack of All Trades" and closes the three-song worker's trilogy on "Side One" of *Wrecking Ball.* "Death to My Hometown" is the apogee of the "anxiety" part of Springsteen's jeremiad and is arguably one of the angriest songs that he has ever written. Ryan White describes it as "close to open rebellion, an Irish stomp punctuated with the sound of an AK-47" (249). In this song, the narrator offers a larger view of the economic crisis than the narrators of "Shackled and Drawn" and "Jack of All Trades" through violent imagery and casts the architects of the crisis, who the narrator calls "robber barons," as perpetrators of a war-like attack on

ordinary Americans that was just as destructive and devastating as any attack on a city or town in a traditional war. In fact, we can view the "hometown" in the song, not just as any generic American city or town, but also as being symbolic of America itself under attack. Such imagery is readily apparent in the opening two verses of the song:

> Well, no cannon ball did fly, no rifles cut us down
>
> No bombs fell from the sky, no blood soaked the ground
>
> No power flash blinded the eye
>
> No deathly thunder sounded
>
> But just sure as the hand of God
>
> They brought death to my hometown
>
> They brought death to my hometown
>
>
> Now, no shells ripped the evening sky
>
> No cities burning down
>
> No army stormed the shores for which we'd die
>
> No dictators were crowned
>
> I awoke on a quiet night, I never heard a sound
>
> The marauders raided in the dark
>
> And brought death to my hometown
>
> And brought death to my hometown. (1-15)

In the next verse of the song, the narrator clearly describes the destructive perpetrators of this attack as "the marauders [who] raided in the dark": "They

destroyed our families, factories / And they took our homes / They left our bodies on the plains / The vultures picked our bones" (16-19). The results of this attack is that the American "hometown" is now a virtual apocalyptic wasteland as workers have lost their jobs and their homes to the predatory "vultures" who have lost all sense of the "common good" of the American community in the relentless pursuit of seemingly boundless greed.

Yet even in this wasteland, the narrator urges his listeners to not give up the fight and to be prepared for yet another attack. However, the narrator says that the counter to another attack is not with weapons or violence but through the power of song:

> So, listen up my sonny boy, be ready when they come
> For they'll be returning sure as the rising sun
> Now get yourself a song to sing
> And sing it 'til you're done
> Sing it hard and sing it well. (20-24)

In these lines, Deardorff argues that Springsteen is essentially describing his own career:

> Indeed, this song within the song is a reminder of how consistent Springsteen's message has been. So much of his early material came straight out of Freehold and Asbury, New Jersey, towns where he grew up and watched regular Americans struggle and sometimes fail to achieve an American Dream that seemed so elusive. (105)

It is thus through artists like Springsteen singing their songs about the injustices perpetrated on the American people and the economy by the "marauders" that we can then "Send the robber barons straight to hell" (25) through some type of collective action, because, as the narrator points out, they have not been punished for their crimes: "The greedy thieves who came around / And ate the flesh of everything they found / Whose crimes have gone unpunished now / Who walk the streets as free men now" (26-29). As Deardorff also notes, such collective action is at the heart of Springsteen's work and his conception of citizenship that as citizens we should always be vigilant "of what we should expect of our government and how we can hold our representatives accountable for working toward a society in which the American Dream approximates the American reality" (105).

With "Side One" of *Wrecking Ball* defined by loss and anger, there is a thematic shift on "Side Two" in the trilogy of songs that end the album. These three songs—"Rocky Ground," "Land of Hope and Dreams," and "We Are Alive"—work to move the album away from the desperation found on "Side One" by ending the album with the theme of hope and community. As James A. Morone points out, such a theme is not inconsistent in a jeremiad, since "every jeremiad returns to the theme of redemption. America restores its covenant with God, the people resolve to deal righteously with one another and return to their great errand . . . ." (214).

The theme of redemption is especially apparent in "Rocky Ground" in which the narrator assumes the role of a minister speaking to his congregation. White describes this song as

> an especially masterful mashup, featuring a gospel foundation and a hip-hop break (provided by singer Michelle Moore after Springsteen decided he didn't have the flow for the job). It is heavy with religious imagery: flocks wandering, angels shouting, money changers in the temple, and a new day coming. (250)

The narrator's sermon opens with the line "We've been traveling over rocky ground, rocky ground" (1) repeated four times by a choir of singers and is reiterated throughout the song. The narrator opens his sermon in the first verse by saying: "Rise up shepherd, rise / Your flock has roamed far from the hill / The stars have faded, the sky is still / The angels are shouting 'Glory hallelujah'" (5-8). In this verse, we have the familiar exhortation to "rise up" through which Springsteen began his jeremiad just a few days after 9/11 when he performed "My City of Ruins" on the *America: Tribute to Heroes* telethon. In it he urged Americans to "rise up" in his call for national unity and community in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. In the context of "Rocky Ground," the call to "rise up" is once again needed in the aftermath of another national crisis as the "flock" has now strayed from that "ideal" of national unity and community that became reality after 9/11, which, as we have seen, has been the focus of Springsteen's jeremiad. The figure of the shepherd is rather ambiguous in this song and can be interpreted in different ways. First of all, we can view the shepherd in terms of a political leader in a traditional call for national unity in a time of crisis or as an abstract conception of America itself calling its flock back to its foundational principles. Another way to view the shepherd is like the singer in "Death to My Hometown" in that the singer or artist is

responsible for reminding his or her audience of our commitment to one another and thus unifying the "flock."

In the second verse of "Rocky Ground," the minister references the financial crisis by reminding his listeners of Jesus's actions in the temple and that there are still difficulties to be faced: "Forty days and nights of rain washed this land / Jesus said the money changers, in this temple will not stand / Find your flock, get them to higher ground / The floodwater's rising, we're Canaan bound" (11-14). The juxtaposition of Old and New Testament imagery is striking in this verse as we can view the financial crisis as being the "forty days and nights of rain," which has resulted in a "flood" that is still causing devastation upon the land as Americans continue to lose their jobs and homes. If we join together however we can still obtain "Canaan" or the "promised land." In connection with this imagery, the narrator reminds his listeners that even Jesus was not exactly fond of those working in the financial world, since he in a burst of anger "overthrew the table of the money-changers" in the Jerusalem temple and then admonished them saying, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (*Authorized King James Version* Matt. 21: 12-13).

In the third verse of "Rocky Ground," the minister also reminds his listeners that having a sense of community and compassion for our fellow citizens is essentially a holy calling as "We'll be called for our service come judgment day / Before we cross that river wide / The blood on our hands will come back on us twice" (17-19). There is also a deeper meaning in these lines that connects back to Springsteen's conception of citizenship that we saw in the song "Death to My Hometown," as he once again reminds

us of our commitment as citizens by ensuring that our government is accountable to us for the laws and policies it enacts. If we are not vigilant as citizens and we essentially allow laws and policies to be enacted that inflict harm on our institutions and our citizens, then we are as much to blame as the thieves in the financial temples for the "blood on our hands."

The hip-hop verse of the song sung by Michelle Moore functions as a response to the minister's call that the "Sun's in the heavens and a new day is rising" (28) by once again making the effects of the financial crisis personal as we saw in "Jack of All Trades" on "side one" of the album: "You try to sleep you toss and turn the bottom's dropping out / Where you once had faith now there's only doubt / You pray for guidance only silence now meets your prayers / The morning breaks, your awake, but no one's there" (29-32). Yet the minister continues to exhort his listeners that "There's a new day coming / A new day's coming / A new day's coming" (33-35). Even in the darkness of doubt, there is still hope that things can and will get better.

Such hope is the main theme of the next song in the closing trilogy. "Land of Hope and Dreams" was written in 1999 for the "Reunion Tour" and is discussed in the Career Overview in the Appendix, so there is no need for a detailed analysis of the song here, other than to note, as Nick Hasted suggests, Springsteen's use of "the traditional, transmuting image of a moving train to carry the listener forward to a still promised land, where '*faith will be rewarded*'" (131) and provides the vehicle for belief in "a new day coming. The egalitarian and communitarian theme of "Land of Hope and Dreams" leads into "We Are Alive," which is the final song on *Wrecking Ball* and adds a political

dimension to the religious framework of "Rocky Ground" and the idealism of "Land of Hope and Dreams." In *Born to Run,* Springsteen discusses his thinking and the overall theme for "We Are Alive" on *Wrecking Ball*:

> I needed the song that would address the new voice of immigration, the civil rights movement and anyone who'd ever stuck their neck out for some righteous injustice and was knocked down or killed for their effort. Where were they? I decided they were all here now and speaking to those who would listen. Those spirits don't go away. They haunt, they rabble-rouse, from beyond the grave. They have not been and can never be silenced. Death has given them an eternal voice. All we have to do is listen. That would be the message of my last song, "We Are Alive." Listen and learn from the souls and spirits who've come before. (469)

In the second verse of the song, we hear these voices in their graves expressing this theme:

> We are alive
> And though our bodies lie alone here in the dark
> Our spirits rise
> To carry the fire and light the spark
> To stand shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart
> A voice cried I was killed in Maryland in 1877
> When the railroad workers made their stand
> I was killed in 1963

> One Sunday morning in Birmingham
>
> I died last year crossing the southern desert
>
> My children left behind in San Pablo . . . . (9-19)

But what exactly are these voices telling those who will listen? Their larger message is mentioned in the second verse but is articulated more fully in the closing verse of the song when they tell us:

> We are alive
>
> And though our bodies lie alone here in the dark
>
> Our souls and spirits rise
>
> To carry the fire and light the spark
>
> To fight shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart
>
> To fight shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart
>
> We are alive. (38-44)

The lines in this verse encapsulate the main theme that runs throughout Springsteen's jeremiad from *The Rising* through *Wrecking Ball* from the "ideal" through "anxiety" and ultimately hope and redemption. If we are to maintain the "ideal" of national unity and community through an egalitarian commitment to the American Promise that emerged after 9/11 but then was lost in deception and division over the Iraq War and then the devastation of the financial crisis, then it is truly up to us as Americans to join together to "carry the fire and light the spark." As Deardorff argues, for this perpetual American "rising" to occur, then we have to always remember:

> Our souls remain, and if we have lived well, our souls "will rise" to sustain those who come after us. Our stories remind us there is an ultimate right and wrong and that we will be rewarded if we strive toward righteousness through actions based on using our talents sacrificially in the service of others. (141)

Springsteen's overall purpose on *Wrecking Ball* is always remembering our foundational principles of unity and community, as well as those who have gone before and sacrificed for those principles. For Springsteen, this kind of remembering is essential to believing in and maintaining the American Promise, and the final three songs on *Wrecking Ball* specifically work in this way. As Tom Chiarella observes about *Wrecking Ball,* "It's an album on which never forgetting is the only route to forgiveness" (149).

Because Springsteen concluded the *Wrecking Ball* album with the hopeful strains of "Land of Hope and Dreams" and the collective power of national memory in joining spiritually with those who were victims of earlier battles for the American spirit in "We Are Alive," then his decision to actively support President Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign should not have come as a surprise, given his previous support for Obama in the 2008 campaign, as well as his symbolically attempting to create solutions to the national problems explored in *Wrecking Ball* through true political action. As we have seen, Springsteen's jeremiad is not just comprised of albums, songs, and concert performances but also through direct political action involving written statements of endorsements for presidential candidates and campaign appearances. Within the

context of *Wrecking Ball*, we can view Springsteen's willingness to publicly support President Obama's re-election as a way to potentially address through pragmatic political means both the inherent greed of the financial industry through tighter regulations and the continuing struggles of Americans who were (are) directly affected by the financial collapse of 2008, such as the workers we previously met in "Shackled and Drawn" and "Jack of All Trades."

However, Springsteen's endorsement of Obama was a bit surprising since in his interview with the European press prior to the release of *Wrecking Ball* in March 2012, he appeared to indicate that in the 2012 presidential election he would "prefer to stay on the sidelines. I generally believe an artist is supposed to be the canary in the coal mine, and you're better off with a certain distance from the seat of power" ("International Press Conference" 410). In David Remnick's lengthy 2012 piece in *The New Yorker*, Springsteen noted that his involvement in the 2004 and 2008 presidential campaigns was "because things were so dire . . . . It seemed like if I was ever going to spend whatever small political capital I had, that was the moment to do so," but he also added, "But that capital diminishes the more often you do it" (55), a statement that indicated some reluctance on his part to become involved in the campaign. It is also worth noting that in his interview with the European press in March 2012 Springsteen was somewhat critical of Obama when he expressed concerns that:

> He's more friendly to corporations than I thought he would be, and there aren't as many middle class or working class voices heard in the administration as I thought there would be. I would have liked to see

> more active job creation sooner than it came, and I'd like to have seen some of these foreclosures stopped or somehow mitigated. The banks have had some kind of a settlement, a partial settlement, but really, there's a lot of people it's not going to assist. ("International Press Conference 410-11")

Springsteen's comments about his apparent reluctance to get involved in the 2012 presidential campaign reveal practical concerns regarding the actual political influence a creative artist has in the political process, particularly an actual election, as well as his own concern that getting involved in yet another presidential campaign could somehow diminish his own influence. Of course, Springsteen's comments about Obama certainly reveal some disappointment with the President's job performance, especially on issues at the heart of *Wrecking Ball,* although he was also clear in his interview with the European press that "I still support the president" ("International Press Conference" 411).

Whatever artistic and political concerns Springsteen had about getting involved in the 2012 presidential campaign ended on October 17, when he published on his official website *brucespringsteen.net* his endorsement of the re-election of President Obama. In his endorsement statement, Springsteen included support for both Obama's domestic and foreign policies, as well as bringing out a key theme of *Wrecking Ball* when he stated, "Right now, there is an ever increasing division of wealth in this country, with the benefits going more and more to the 1 percent. For me, President Obama is our best choice to begin to reverse this harmful development" ("Bruce Endorses Obama

2012”). The heart of Springsteen’s endorsement is found near the end of his statement when he noted:

> For me, President Obama is our best choice because he has a vision of the United States as a place where we are all in this together. We’re still living through hard times but justice, equality, and real freedom are not always a tide rushing in. They are more often a slow march, inch by inch, day after long day. I believe President Obama feels these days in his bones and has the strength to live them with us and to lead us to a country “where no one crowds you and no one goes it alone.” (“Bruce Endorses Obama 2012”)

For all of the legitimate political aspects of Springsteen’s endorsement of Obama, the key component is Springsteen’s belief that the President truly wants to “take care of our own” in the broadest possible sense coupled with a pragmatic understanding that true political progress and change does take time and will not completely happen during just one four-year presidential term.

On Thursday, October 18, 2012, Springsteen appeared at swing-state rallies with former President Bill Clinton in Parma, Ohio, and Ames, Iowa. Interestingly, at both of these rallies Springsteen actually followed Clinton, which Springsteen noted was “like going on after Elvis” (“Setlist-October 18”). Springsteen also performed at other swing-state rallies on October 23 in Charlottesville, Virginia, and on October 27 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, both of these rallies occurring before *Wrecking Ball* tour shows in both cities on these dates. However, Springsteen’s most dramatic campaign appearances

were with President Obama himself on Monday, November 5, the day before the election, at rallies in Madison, Wisconsin, where he introduced the President, in Columbus, Ohio, and in Des Moines, Iowa, for Obama's emotional final campaign appearance, where Springsteen introduced First Lady Michelle Obama. President Obama even commented on the nature of these election-eve rallies in his letter to Springsteen included in the program for being named MusiCares Person of the Year in January 2013:

> On the final day of my last campaign, you and I were on the road together in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Iowa. It was a day full of big rallies under the Obama banner, but I knew I was not the only or even the primary draw for tens of thousands of people who packed the streets and strained for a good look. They were there to see The Boss. ("Barack to Bruce")

In his speech at the Parma, Ohio, rally, Springsteen offered what can be viewed as essentially the overall thesis statement of *Wrecking Ball* when he emphasized that one of his key reasons for supporting President Obama was

> the continuing disparity in wealth between our best-off citizens and our everyday citizens. That's a disparity that I believe our honorable opponents' policies will only increase and that threatens to divide us into two distinct and foreign nations . . . . If we marginalize so many of our citizens, their talents, their energies, their voices will go unfound and unheard. We will lose their contributions to this great land of ours; we

> will impoverish ourselves and set ourselves on the road to decline. So their opportunities must be protected, and I think President Obama understands this. ("Casing the Promised Land")

Of course, President Obama was re-elected in 2012 and carried all of the swing states where Springsteen campaigned for and with him. Whether or not Springsteen's endorsement and campaign appearances for and with Obama factored into his re-election is difficult to determine. However, what is important about Springsteen's activity in the 2012 election was that he was willing to be involved in presidential politics for the third consecutive presidential election. As we have seen, just as Springsteen's involvement in the 2004 and 2008 elections were both important components in his jeremiad, we can also view his involvement in the 2012 campaign as directly ancillary to the *Wrecking Ball* component of his jeremiad. For Bruce Springsteen in his American jeremiad in the years 2002-2012, it was not enough to just be a "canary in the coal mine" through albums, song, and concert performances, but to also be an active public voice in American presidential politics trying to reduce the distance between American reality and the American dream.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A:

"THIS LIFE": BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN—A CAREER OVERVIEW

This career overview provides information about Bruce Springsteen's life and work from throughout his performing and recording career, which now exceeds fifty years. Included in this career overview is specific information about his musical influences, early performing career, officially released albums and other recordings, specific songs, concert tours, awards, as well as a review of selected scholarship which deals with specific albums and songs. Through this career overview, it is possible to see how the progression of Springsteen's career as both a recording and performing artist allowed him to build his artistic and public credibility that served as the foundation for his American jeremiad in his work from 2002-2012.

EARLY LIFE AND MUSICAL INFLUENCES

Bruce Springsteen was born on September 23, 1949, in Freehold, New Jersey,into the working family of Doug and Adele Springsteen. David Kamp describes Doug Springsteen as "a high-school dropout who drifted from one blue-collar job to the next—as a floor boy at a local rug mill, on the line at the Ford Motor plant in Edison. He was short-fused, a loner, and a drinker . . . "(198), while Adele worked as a legal secretary (Carlin 4). Throughout his career, Springsteen has been open about his problems with his father, about whom he has said, "You couldn't access him, you couldn't get to him, period" (qtd. in Carlin 15). Peter Ames Carlin creates a memorable

portrait of Doug in the Springsteen household in this description: "When dinner was over and the dishes were done, the kitchen became Doug's solitary kingdom. With the lights out and the table holding only a can of beer, a pack of cigarettes, a lighter, and an ashtray. Doug passed the hours alone in the darkness" (15-16). With this image of Doug in mind, it is relatively easy to feel his alienation from the world and its impact on the young Bruce. As Ryan White argues, through this image of his father one sees "The loneliness, the helplessness, and the struggle against those things are what fuel some of Springsteen's best work" (Gleason). It appears that the difficult relationship between father and son was not fully resolved until 1990 when, as Kamp relates, Doug showed up at Bruce's door one morning, and then "Over beers at 11 A.M., Doug, uncharacteristically, made a small peace offering to his son. 'Bruce, you've been very good to us,' he said. And then, after a pause: 'And I wasn't very good to you'"(198). Springsteen's relationship with his father is developed more fully in his autobiography *Born to Run* (2016), and it has also served as the context for specific songs about fathers and sons, like "Adam Raised a Cain" on *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (1978), "Independence Day" on *The River* (1980), and "My Father's House" on *Nebraska* (1982).

Doug's difficult relationship with his son was not helped by Bruce's early interest in rock music and progression as a rock musician in his teenage years. Springsteen's first direct musical influence was Elvis Presley, who he remembers watching perform on television on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1956 and 1957 ("Keynote Speech" 388; Carlin 19-20). However, Presley's influence was not just musical. As Springsteen observes in his 2012 SXSW Keynote Speech, while watching Elvis on television " I realized a white man

could make magic, that you did not have to be constrained by your upbringing, by the way you looked, or by the social context that oppressed you. You could call upon your own powers of imagination, and you could create a transformative self" (388). When he speaks of Elvis, he could also be speaking of himself as a performer:

> It looked like so much fun. Imagine throwing out all the self-consciousness that's sort of like a blanket over you. What would happen if you threw all that off for two and half minutes, three minutes, as a performer! It was an enormous key that unlocked your imagination and soul. (qtd. in Carlin 20)

Presley's influence inspired the very young Springsteen to want to learn to play the guitar, but, unfortunately, his hands were too small, and, as Springsteen points out in his SXSW Keynote Speech, "They just wouldn't fit. Failure with a capital F. So I just beat on it, and beat on it, and beat on it—in front of a mirror, of course" (389). Although Springsteen was not able to translate Presley's influence into an immediate musical result, we can view his influence upon Springsteen as more profound than just learning how to play a handful of guitar chords or having fun while performing on stage. Presley's example of moving beyond one's own environment to achieve one's own dreams is the very foundation of the American Dream, and it is this idea that has been the heart of Springsteen's work throughout his career as applied both to individual Americans and the life of the American nation. For this reason, it should not be surprising that Springsteen sports an Elvis Presley button on his guitar strap on the

iconic *Born to Run* album cover as he leans on Clarence Clemons, an album about trying to make one's dreams come true.

Although Springsteen never met Presley, it was not for lack of trying. On April 29, 1976, Springsteen and the E Street Band performed in Memphis, Tennessee, and late that night Springsteen and Steve Van Zandt were in a cab and wound up at Graceland, Presley's home. Springsteen actually jumped over the wall and headed for Graceland's front door but was then stopped by a security guard and escorted out the front gates (Phillips and Poole). Although Presley was not home that night, Springsteen has said, "I guess in a way it was better that it worked out like that. And the guard who stopped me at the door did me the biggest favor of my life. Because it really wasn't Elvis I was going to see, but it was like he came along and whispered some dream in everybody's ear and somehow we all dreamed it" (qtd. in Phillips and Poole).

Like millions of teenagers around the world, Springsteen was also directly inspired by The Beatles. This inspiration was not just musical, but like Presley's influence on Springsteen, the Beatles taught him that through making music one could not only find some type of success but also forge a new identity. In discussing the Beatles' influence in his SXSW Keynote Speech, especially how they looked on the iconic *Meet the Beatles* album cover, Springsteen notes, "so these guys, they're kids. They're a lot cooler than me, but they're still kids. There must be a way to get from there to here" (391). Of course, the way involved becoming a musician. As Carlin relates, Springsteen first bought a cheap acoustic guitar that was basically unplayable, but then he showed his mother, Adele, the guitar he really wanted that "had the shimmering look, the

jagged edges, and the electrified volume this young rocker craved" (23). Adele took out a small loan for sixty dollars and bought him the Kent electric guitar, so "when Christmas morning dawned in 1964, the precious instrument was waiting right where Bruce knew it would be, just beneath the lights decorating the lower boughs of the Springsteens' Christmas tree"(Carlin 24). Springsteen's song "The Wish," which is on the *Tracks* (1998) compilation discussed below, is an affectionate tribute to his mother about getting this guitar for Christmas.

The first song that Springsteen learned to play on his new Kent guitar was the the Beatles' version of "Twist and Shout," which he has continued to play in performances throughout his career. On December 9, 1980, the day following John Lennon's death, Springsteen was performing at the Spectrum in Philadelphia, Pennyslvania, on *The River* tour and began the show talking about Lennon's death by acknowledging his influence and the difficulty he faced in performing that night:

> I'd just like to say one thing . . . it's a hard night to come out and play tonight when so much has been lost . . . the first record that I ever learned was "Twist and Shout" . . . and if it wasn't for John Lennon, we'd all be in some place very different tonight . . . it's an unreasonable world and you have to live with a lot of things that are just unlivable . . . and . . . it's a hard thing to come out and play but there's nothing else you can do. (qtd. in "1980-12-09-Spectrum")

A much more celebratory event involving Springsteen and a Beatle occurred on July 14, 2012, at the Hard Rock Calling festival in London's Hyde Park, when Sir Paul McCartney

joined Springsteen for performances of "I Saw Her Standing There" and "Twist and Shout" with Springsteen shouting from the stage as McCartney joined him and the E Street Band onstage, "I don't want to make no big deal out of it, but I've been waiting for fifty years!" (*Springsteen & I*)**.** Springsteen's performances with McCartney are included in a special six-song compilation from the Hard Rock Calling performance on the *Springsteen & I* documentary film, which is discussed below in the Literature Review. The two performances with McCartney are available on *youtube.com.* McCartney was also a surprise guest during Springsteen's show-closing performance of "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" on NBC's *Saturday Night Live* on December 19, 2015 ("2015-12-19-Studio 8H").

In addition to Elvis Presley and The Beatles, other specific important musical influences on Springsteen were Bob Dylan and The Animals. Springsteen describes Dylan as "the father of my musical country, now, and forever" ("Keynote Speech" 394), and that for this "musical country":

> Dylan was a revolutionary. The way Elvis freed your body Bob freed your mind. He showed us that just because the music was innately physical did not mean that it was anti-intellectual. He had the vision and the talent to expand a pop song until it could contain the whole world. He invented a new way a pop singer could sound, broke through the limitations of what a recording artist could achieve, and he changed the face of rock and roll forever and ever. ("Bob Dylan" 159)

In his early recording career, Springsteen was anointed as one of the many "new Dylans" of the emergent singer-songwriter wave of the early 1970s. Springsteen's early songwriting style on his first three albums, *Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey* (1973), *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle* (1973), and *Born to Run* (1975), does reflect Dylan's lyrical freedom, and Springsteen's vocal phrasing throughout his career has always shown Dylan's influence. However, Springsteen's songwriting style shifted to being more direct and even traditional beginning with his *Darkness on the Edge of Town* album, so that a direct Dylan influence on Springsteen's songwriting is less obvious. However, when we consider Springsteen in terms of being one of the more important voices in what he terms Dylan's "musical country," then the influence remains significant. Springsteen can be viewed as being in the direct lineage of Dylan, just as Dylan is in the direct lineage of Woody Guthrie, and Springsteen's career has been defined by exploring the continuing difficult questions in this "musical country." Springsteen and Dylan have performed together three times: in 1994 at a Dylan concert in New York City at the Roseland Ballroom, in 1995 at the Concert for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, and in 2003 at the final show of *The Rising* tour in Shea Stadium in New York City. In 1988, Springsteen inducted Dylan into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and in 1997, he performed "The Times They Are A-Changing" at Dylan's Kennedy Center Honors celebration (Graff 118-19).

The significance of The Animals as one of Springsteen's primary influences is one of the highlights of his "SXSW Keynote Speech." If we view Elvis Presley, The Beatles, and Bob Dylan more as influences upon Springsteen in terms of identity and musical

possibilities, then The Animals are more of a direct lyrical and musical influence, as well as also being an identity influence. As he notes in his speech, "the Animals were a revelation. The first records with full-blown class consciousness that I had ever heard" (391). In his speech, which is available on *youtube.com* and with audio only on *npr.org*, Springsteen plays a bit of The Animals' song "We Gotta Get Out of This Place," and then he simply says:

> That's every song I've ever written. Yeah. That's all of them. I'm not kidding either. That's "Born to Run," "Born in the U.S.A.," everything I've done for the past forty years, including all the new ones. But that struck me so deep. It was the first time I felt I heard something come across the radio that mirrored my home life, my childhood. (391)

The Animals not only influenced Springsteen through songs reflecting his family's economic realities, they also had an important musical influence on him. Just as he played some of "We Gotta Get Out of This Place," Springsteen also plays some of another one of The Animals' key songs, "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," and becomes a professor in his own rock music appreciation class:

> "Badlands," "Prove It All Night," "Darkness on the Edge of Town" were all filled with the Animals. Youngsters, watch this one. I'm gonna tell you how it's done, right now. I took "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" . . . (*Sings and strums beginning of "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," then sings melody of "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" while strumming chords of "Badlands.)*

> It's the same fucking riff, man. Listen up, listen up, youngsters, this is how successful theft is accomplished. (392)

Also, like The Beatles staring out of the *Meet the Beatles* album cover, The Animals were not just an influence on Springsteen lyrically and musically, they were an influence on his identity through their appearance and attitude:

> And the other thing that was great about the Animals was there were no good-looking members. There were none. They were considered to be one of the ugliest groups in all of rock and roll.
>
> And that was good. That was good for me, because I considered myself hideous at the time. And they weren't nice. They didn't curry favor. They were like aggression personified. It's my life. I'll do what I want. ("Keynote Speech" 391).

Having learned to play his Kent guitar and wanting to show off this new identity, Springsteen briefly joined a Freehold group called the Rogues, which was one of the many teenaged bands spontaneously sprouting in American cities and towns in the midst of Beatlemania. Unfortunately, after his debut performance with the Rogues at the Freehold Elks Club, Springsteen was booted from the band (Carlin 26). As Springsteen relates, "I got thrown out of my first band because they told me my guitar was too cheap—and it was pretty cheap, but it wasn't that bad. So I literally got thrown out because my guitar wasn't good enough" ("Magician's Tools" 30).

Springsteen, however, was not deterred by this rejection, and, in perhaps a symbolic musical shift, he notes, "I went home that night and I remember I put on 'It's

All Over Now' by the Rolling Stones, and I forced myself to learn the lead. I just sat there for hours until I learned the very rudimentary lead that [Keith Richards] plays on 'It's All Over Now.' It was the beginning of my lead guitar career" ("Magician's Tools" 30).

1965-1972

Springsteen's hard work on improving his guitar playing paid off when he joined another local Freehold band called The Castiles in 1965 when he was still in high school. Springsteen was primarily the group's guitarist, and he also began to write songs for the band. The Castiles recorded two songs at a recording studio called Mr. Music Inc. in Bricktown, New Jersey, on May 18, 1966. These two songs "That's What You Get" and "Baby I" were written by Springsteen and the band's singer George Theiss (Cross 150), but, as Marc Dolan points out, the two songs "contain almost nothing that would have struck a contemporary audience as noteworthy" (*Promise* 15). Springsteen has said that the Mr. Music studio "was not set up in those days for any kind of overdrive; they just simply weren't ready to record rock bands in Bricktown, New Jersey in 1965," which is why "the guitars sounded real klinky, because we had the volume down to 'one'—we couldn't get any distortion or speaker sound out of it" ("Magician's Tools" 31).

The Castiles performed at a variety of venues in 1966 and 1967 in around Freehold but also performed at the famous Café Wha? in New York City in December 1967 (Cross 168). "Baby I" and The Castiles' live cover of Willie Dixon's song "You Can't Judge a Book by its Cover" from a September 1967 performance are included on the

Chapter and Verse compilation discussed below, and "Baby I" was also featured as part of Springsteen's special exhibit *From Asbury Park to the Promised Land: The Life and Music of Bruce Springsteen* at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in 2009-2011, which is discussed below. There are two recordings that circulate in the Springsteen fan community of The Castiles that are part of *The Bruce Springsteen Story* series. Volume 1 contains live recordings from a performance at The Left Foot Teen Club at St. Peter's Church in Freehold, while Volume 2 contains "That's What You Get" and "Baby I," along with more live performances from The Left Foot Teen Club. "Baby I" and The Left Foot Teen Club recordings are also available on *youtube.com.* The live performances feature covers of the Willie Dixon song mentioned above, along with covers of songs by The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, and The Who and from the band's performances on September 16 and 23, 1967 ("1967-09-16-The Left Foot"; "1967-09-30-The Left Foot"). One must keep in mind, however, that The Castiles were essentially an enthusiastic, very good high school rock band of this era.

Recordings that circulate in the Springsteen fan community are generally "unauthorized" recordings and are more commonly known as "bootleg" recordings, since they have not been officially released by Springsteen's official record label, Columbia Records. The vast majority of these recordings are from Springsteen's concert performances from throughout his career, although there are several recordings featuring various studio performances. Many of the more "famous" of these recordings, especially from 1975 and 1978 were taken from FM radio broadcasts of full Springsteen concerts, which helped establish his reputation as a live performer. Some of these

recordings have been commercially released by European record labels in recent years, which are "taking advantage of a legal loophole which allows the commercial release of pre-1992 radio broadcasts that emanate from non-signatories of the 1992 EU Copyright Convention" ("1975-02-05-The Main Point"). Many of these recordings are also available on *youtube.com,* which are noted below.

However, with the advent of Springsteen's "E Street Channel" on SiriusXM satellite in 2007, many of these "unauthorized" recordings of concerts from all stages of Springsteen's career have been officially broadcast, which we can interpret as an official "endorsement" by Springsteen of their existence and importance in creating what can be viewed as a "parallel" canon of recordings that essentially document all of Springsteen's performances on tours in conjunction with his official albums. Also, in 2014, Springsteen inaugurated through his official website *brucespringsteen.net* in connection with *nugs.net* an archival series of officially released concerts from throughout his career, including several which have been particular favorite "bootlegs" in the Springsteen fan community. Given these recent developments in Springsteen making these previously "unauthorized" recordings available, we can view these recordings as now being essentially "authorized." In this Career Overview, several of these recordings that are viewed as being significant will be referenced as "recordings that circulate in the Springsteen fan community," although there is no attempt to comprehensively address the entirety of this now massive collection of recordings. The website *brucebase.wikispaces.com* is the main source of information for these recordings and is discussed in the Literature Review.

The Castiles, however, did suffer a significant loss, which also reflects the era as well. Bart Haynes, The Castiles' original drummer, joined the Marines in 1966, but was killed in action in Vietnam in 1967 (Carlin 35-36). During an April 2014 concert performance in Charlotte, North Carolina, Springsteen included Haynes in the introduction to his song "The Wall," which is about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. and is on the *High Hopes* (2014) album discussed below. Springsteen said that "The Wall" was written about Haynes and Walter Cichon, another Freehold musician who was in a local band called The Motifs who went missing in Vietnam in 1968. The losses of Haynes and Cichon, Springsteen said, were "a tremendous, tremendous loss to our neighborhood, to our town, to that thing inside of you that the best should get their shot" and offered the song as "a short prayer for my country" ("The Wall" Introduction).

Michael S. Neiberg and Robert M. Citino include "The Wall" in their 2016 article "A Long Walk Home: The Role of Class and the Military in the Springsteen Catalogue" published in *Boss: The Biannual Online-Journal of Springsteen Studies* (vol. 2, no. 1) in which they observe:

> "The Wall" presents an angry treatment of the sacrifices of a generation and the suffering loved ones left behind. It also provides a scathing indictment of a system that allowed some to get rich from military contracts while working-class men reluctantly risked their lives for unclear causes in far-away places. (54).

By 1969, Springsteen had become part of the Asbury Park, New Jersey music scene, especially at The Upstage club, which "was located up a couple flights of stairs over a shoe store. The stage beckoned any musician good enough to get up on it and show off his talent" (Santelli 9). Springsteen briefly had a band called Earth that apparently only had one public performance, and then he joined the band Child, which was formed by future E Street Band members organist Danny Federici and drummer Vini Lopez (Cross 168). Federici notes that he and Lopez went to see Springsteen perform at The Upstage, and "I couldn't believe how good he was . . . Vini and I looked at each other. We were both thinking the same thinking the same thing: We had to form a new band, and Springsteen had to be in it. There just wasn't any question about it" (qtd. in Santelli 10). Lopez brought in Tinker West to manage the band, and West had the band focus on original music rather than play covers like other Jersey Shore bar bands. As Santelli observes, "Child would play music to please itself. And when it came time to share its songs in public, it would do so in concert, not in some smoke-filled beer joint" (11). Child performed from May to December 12, 1969, at clubs on the Jersey Shore and in Richmond, Virginia, when the band then morphed into Steel Mill for that December performance at Monmouth College, due to the awareness of the existence of another band called Child (Cross 168). A recording of Child circulates in the Springsteen fan community. Titled *A Night Worth Remembering in Richmond*, this recording contains performances from the band's concert at The Center in Richmond, Virginia on September 20, 1969 ("1969-09-20-The Center") and is notable for being the first record we have of Springsteen, Federici, and Lopez performing together. `

Springsteen has described Steel Mill as "basically a riff-oriented hard rock thing, . . . " ("Midnight Cowboy" 73) with Springsteen as guitarist, singer, and songwriter. Steel Mill also performed on the Jersey Shore and Virginia circuit, but they also traveled to California early in 1970 and performed at The Matrix in San Francisco on January 13 and February 12 and 14 (Cross 168). On February 22, through the encouragement of famous rock music impresario Bill Graham, Steel Mill recorded three songs at The Fillmore Record Studios: "Goin' Back to Georgia," "The Train Song," and "He's Guilty (The Judge Song)" (Cross 168). This version of "He's Guilty (The Judge Song)" is included on the *Chapter and Verse* compilation discussed below. Graham offered Steel Mill a recording contract, but, as Carlin relates, "the advance Graham had in mind was only $1,000. For which Graham also expected to claim the publishing rights to Bruce's songs, thereby controlling how they would be used and claiming the lion's share of money they generated in perpetuity" (73). Tinker West encouraged the band to turn down the deal, saying, "Graham wants Bruce's publishing? No way I'm letting anyone have that. That's Bruce's fuckin' pension plan, right? And it's not mine to sell" (qtd. in Carlin 73).

Steel Mill came back east in late February and made two important changes to the band. Original bassist Vinnie Roslin was kicked out of the group due to his increased erraticism musically and personally and was replaced by Steve Van Zandt, and then Robbin Thompson joined the band as a second vocalist (Carlin 74-76). The band continued to perform through early January 1971 when they played their final shows at The Upstage on January 22-23 (Cross 168). A facsimile of a Steel Mill promotional flyer is included in Robert Santelli's *Greetings from E Street: The Story of Bruce Springsteen*

and the E Street Band, which probably dates from 1970, since Van Zandt is included, that states that "Original music is STEEL MILL'S only sound. Bruce Springsteen, the band's lead singer and guitar player, writes and composes all their material. It is their opinion that the constant duplication of other band's music tends to make a band become stagnated" (12). One particular performance in these months at Clearwater Swim Club in Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey was notable for being shut down by the police due to its exceeding a 10:00 p.m. curfew, and, as Carlin relates, "They came in, batons swinging, headed for the stage where Bruce and the band were ripping into the first chords of the night's closer, 'He's Guilty.' Of all songs" (79). In the melee that ensued between the police, the band, and the audience, Danny Federici tumbled a bank of speakers over onto several police officers but then was able to disappear into the crowd and escape the wrath of the police, thus earning the nickname "Phantom" (Carlin 82), which Springsteen used to introduce him at concerts until his untimely death in 2008.

In *Born to Run*, Springsteen describes Steel Mill as "We had become something people wanted to see. We had a raw stage show and songs that were memorable enough for people to want to come back, hear them again, memorize their lyrics and sing their choruses. We began to attract and hold real fans" (122). A line from the Steel Mill promotional flyer seems to back up Springsteen's memory by simply stating, "Creating excitement in the audience through honest music is STEEL MILL'S ultimate goal" (Santelli 12). There are three recordings of Steel Mill that circulate in the Springsteen fan community. *Steel Mill*, which is Volume 3 of *The Bruce Springsteen*

Story, includes the three songs recorded by Bill Graham in 1970 and live tracks that are identified as being from performance in West End, New Jersey, but according to the *brucebase.wikispaces.com* website, the actual date and location for these tracks is April 24 at Monmouth College ("1970-04-24—Monmouth College"). *Live at The Matrix, Volumes 1 and 2* include performances from the band's appearance The Matrix on January 13, 1970 ("1970-01-13-The Matrix") and is also available on *youtube.com. Steel Mill—Sunshine In (Early Show) Nov. 27, 1970* contains the band's entire performance opening for Black Sabbath and Cactus at the Asbury Park club ("1970-11-27-Sunshine In"). From these recordings, it is evident that Steel Mill was a rock band with a sound closer to the "power trio" sound of Cream and the Jimi Hendrix Experience, even with Federici's organ. Springsteen is a powerful lead guitarist, and, while his songs certainly do not come up to the level of songwriting that emerged later, Bill Graham was correct in believing that this band had a future. Given Springsteen's subsequent career and its importance, for historical and musical reasons Steel Mill deserves some kind of official compilation.

After Steel Mill disbanded in January 1971, Springsteen then put together two different bands. The first was called Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom, which included Lopez and Van Zandt, as well as new musicians including future E Street Band members keyboardist David Sancious and bassist Garry Tallent along with John Lyon (later to be known as "Southside Johnny"), a horn section and backup singers. Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom only performed two documented shows on May 14, 1971, at The Sunshine In in Asbury Park and on May 15 at Newark State College (Cross 171). The band had an

earlier performance on March 27, 1971 in which they opened for The Allman Brothers Band, although the band was not officially titled Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom just "Bruce Springsteen" ("1971-03-27-Sunshine In"; Goldstein and Mirkle 83) Even with the apparent musical firepower of the musicians in the band, Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom was seemingly something else entirely, an absurdist "spectacle of singing baton twirlers and skit players, the silent quartet of Monopoly players, and, near the front of the stage, the mechanic (Upstage bouncer Eddie Luraschi) who sprawled beneath a motorcycle while carefully adjusting and tightening the engine's spark plugs" (Carlin 94). Santelli points out that "Springsteen never took it seriously, but he discovered he liked the sound of the horns and backup singers—both provided musical depth and tone" (15). Beyond the musical significance of Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom, for Springsteen it also represented Asbury Park at that time, since he has said in commenting on this band, "It was fun. We had a big chorus, people's wives and girlfriends sang, and it was just an outgrowth of the little local scene" ("The Magician's Tools" 32). One recording of Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom circulates in the Springsteen fan community as Volume 5 of *The Bruce Springsteen Story* and is simply titled *Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom* and is also available on *youtube.com.* This recording contains the final performance of the band on May 15, 1971, at Newark State College in Union, New Jersey ("1971-05-15-Newark State College") and is notable for providing the first audio glimpse of the E Street Band sound.

Evolving out of Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom was the Bruce Springsteen Band, which featured a core group with Springsteen, Steve Van Zandt, David Sancious, Garry Tallent, and Vini Lopez and also an occasional horn section and backup singers. The first

performance of the Bruce Springsteen Band was on July 10, 1971, at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, New Jersey as part of a larger music festival ("1971-07-10-Brookdale"). The Bruce Springsteen Band performed through the rest of 1971 until its final performance on April 15, 1972 at The Ledge at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey (Cross 171). The Bruce Springsteen Band performed regularly in Asbury Park in 1971 at The Student Prince, and, as Stan Goldstein and Jean Mirkle point out, "After the Upstage closed down in October 1971, the music scene in Asbury Park migrated to this little bar, . . . "(82). The Bruce Springsteen Band also opened for Humble Pie at the Sunshine In in Asbury Park on July 11, 1971, which was a performance that apparently both intimidated and impressed Humble Pie, especially Peter Frampton. As Carlin relates, "when it [Humble Pie] got to the Sunshine In during the BSB's set, the jet-engine roar of applause and cheers greeting the hometown heroes left the headliners feeling more than a little queasy," but then after the show, Frampton was so impressed by the Bruce Springsteen Band that he actually offered to get the band a record deal with Humble Pie's label, A & M, but Tinker West turned it down (95-96). There are recordings of The Bruce Springsteen Band that circulate in the Springsteen fan community. The best is from a July 23, 1971 performance at the Guggenheim Bandshell at Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center in New York City, which is considered "the finest pre-CBS Springsteen concert currently in existence" ("1971-07-23-Guggenheim"). This performance is available on *youtube.com.* Recordings from a 1972 performance at The Back Door in Richmond, Virginia, along with tracks from an unidentified performance, as well as one Steel Mill track from 1971, are included on *The Bruce Springsteen Story,*

Volume Four. "The Ballad of Jesse James" from a rehearsal tape recorded on March 14, 1972 at the Challenger Eastern Surfboards in Highland, New Jersey, is included on the *Chapter and Verse* compilation discussed below ("1972-03-14-Challenger").

It was at The Student Prince that Springsteen first met future E Street Band member Clarence Clemons, probably on September 4, 1971 ("1971-09-04-Student Prince"). This meeting has taken on mythological proportions mainly due to Springsteen himself, because "In his onstage raps of the 1970s, the singer would spin elaborate tales of their first meeting, with Clemons rising out of the boardwalk mist, and electrical charges passing between them the first time they touched" (Dolan, *Promise* 73). Yet, regardless of the mythology, this was still an important connection for both Springsteen and Clemons, and as Springsteen has said about Clemons coming into The Student Prince that September night: "Here comes my brother, here comes my sax man, my inspiration, my partner, my lifelong friend" (qtd. in Carlin 137).

If Springsteen meeting Clarence Clemons that night in the Student Prince in 1971 can be viewed as adding an important musical and emotional component to the E Street Band, then Springsteen's signing a management and recording contract with Mike Appel in early 1972 can be seen as an important and necessary component for the business and recording side of Springsteen's career. Technically, this contract was with Appel and his partner, Jim Cretecos, for Laurel Canyon Ltd., although Appel was the prime force behind Springsteen's early career. Although Springsteen and Appel eventually engaged in a rather bitter lawsuit over royalties and ownership of Springsteen's songs with the success of *Born to Run* (1975) that is discussed below, Appel was not a music

business grifter only interested in making money off of an artist; he was truly dedicated to developing Springsteen into a star. This view is supported by Springsteen himself in *Born to Run* when asserts that he and Appel "were aiming for impact, for influence, for the top rung of what recording artists were capable of achieving. We both knew rock music was a culture shaper. I wanted to collide with the times and create a voice that musical, social, and cultural impact. Mike understood that this was my goal" (169).

One of Appel's first steps in trying to make Springsteen a star was getting him an audition with the legendary John Hammond at Columbia Records, who had signed Bob Dylan to the label and was "Recognized roundly as one of the true visionaries in the history of the American music industry" (Carlin 119). Appel somehow actually wrangled an audition for Springsteen with Hammond on May 2, 1972. Springsteen remembers that for this audition, "I was 22 and came up on the bus with an acoustic guitar with no case which I'd borrowed from the drummer from the Castiles. I was embarrassed carrying it around the city" ("Midnight Cowboy" 72). Regardless of Springsteen's appearance, his audition with Hammond went well. As Springsteen relates in *Born to Run*,

> I sat directly across from him and played "Saint in the City." When I was done I looked up. That smile was still there and I heard him say, "You've got to be on Columbia Records." One song—that's what it took. I felt my heart rise up inside me, mysterious particles dancing underneath my skin and faraway stars lighting up my nerve endings" (172).

Springsteen then performed two songs that night at the Gaslight Au Go Go club for Hammond—"Growin' Up" and "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City" ("1972-05-02-Gaslight"), and then the next day, May 3, 1972, Springsteen recorded a "demo" tape of twelve songs at the CBS Studios ("1972-05-03-CBS"). Four of these "demo" tracks—"Mary Queen of Arkansas," "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City," "Growin' Up," and "Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street"— were released on the *Tracks* (1998) compilation. The "Growin' Up" "demo" recording also appears on the *Chapter and Verse* compilation. A few days later after Springsteen's audition for Hammond, recording his first "demos" for Columbia Records, and also auditioning for Clive Davis, president of the label, Springsteen was offered and signed a recording contract with Columbia Records, the only label he has recorded for throughout his recording and performing career (Carlin 123).

Following Springsteen's "demo" recording session with John Hammond, he also recorded "demos" of several other songs for Mike Appel and Jim Cretecos during April-July 1972 at Mediasound Studios in New York City. The recording of "Henry Boy" from these sessions appears on the *Chapter and Verse* compilation. Various compilations of these "demo" recordings have been released commercially over the years under various titles. The most recent appearance of these recordings was a two-CD compilation titled *Before the Fame*, which was commercially released on Pony Express Records in 1998 and was probably spurred by the official release of the *Tracks* compilation that same year. Although, as noted above, Springsteen has always recognized the existence of "unauthorized recordings" of concerts that circulate in the Springsteen fan community

and has even been "authorizing" these recordings through official archival releases and play on his Sirius XM satellite radio channel, he has successfully sued the various record labels who have released these "demo" recordings both in the United States and in England (Graff 290-91).

In 2001, Springsteen won a lawsuit in United States District Court against Pony Express Records over the commercial release of the *Before the Fame* compilation as "Judge Harold Ackerman ruled . . . that Springsteen retained the copyright for the songs in question, . . . ," which thus prevented Pony Express Records from selling the compilation in the United States and internationally ("Springsteen Wins"). In regards to his litigation over the release of these recordings over the years, Springsteen explains, "You try to have some control over your releases . . . They were attempting to put it out as an actual legit release and they simply didn't have the right to do that" (qtd. in Graff 292).

1973-1986

Springsteen's debut album *Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.* was released in January 1973 on Columbia Records and features incredibly wordy songs, which Springsteen has described in *Songs* as mainly being "twisted autobiographies . . . (that) found their seed in people, places, hang-outs, and incidents I'd seen and things I'd lived. I wrote impressionistically and changed names to protect the guilty. I worked to find something that was identifiably mine" (7). Several key songs are found on this album: "Growin' Up," "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City," "Spirit in the Night," and "Lost in the

Flood," as well as "Blinded by the Light," which was a number-one hit for Manfred Mann's Earth Band in 1976. Springsteen still regularly performs both "Growin' Up" and "Spirit in the Night" in concert performances. Unfortunately, Springsteen's debut album "didn't make him a star. Over the course of 1973 it sold around 20,000 copies and failed to make the Billboard Top 200" (Roberts 13), but as Marc Dolan notes, "It was a true *album*, a collection of snapshots that shared one individual's vision of a unique world . . . It is a postcard from a friend you never knew you had, about the strange new world he has seen" (*Promise* 77).

There are recordings that circulate in the Springsteen fan community of performances from this era with a couple of recordings that are worth noting. *Bound for Glory*, which has been commercially released, contains a performance from January 9, 1973, for Boston radio station WBCN-FM and a performance from April 24, 1973 for Philadelphia radio station WMMR-FM from The Main Point ("1973-01-09-Radio Station WBCN-FM"; "1973-04-24-The Main Point"). Springsteen's performance with the E Street Band at Max's Kansas City in New York City was recorded for the "King Biscuit Flower Hour" radio concert series, although only one song wound up being part of the actual broadcast, which was "Bishop Danced" and then was officially released on the *Tracks* compilation ("1973-01-31-Max's Kansas City"). There is also a recording of Springsteen's performance with the E Street Band at the Berkeley Community Center on March 2, 1973 when he was opened for Blood, Sweat, and Tears ("1973-03-02-Berkely Community Center"). The documentary DVD *Wings for Wheels: The Making of* <u>*Born to Run*</u> included in the boxed set *Born to Run—30th Anniversary Edition*, which was released in

2005 and is discussed below, also contains video of three songs performed by Springsteen and the E Street Band on May 1, 1973, at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles as part of a week of promotional performances by CBS artists ("1973-05-01-Ahmanson Theatre"). This is the earliest officially released video footage of Springsteen and the E Street Band. Although these recordings feature much shorter concerts, mainly given Springsteen's relatively minor status as a recording artist at this point in this career, we can still hear the "E Street Band sound" clearly evolving.

This sound is what defines Springsteen's second album *The Wild, the Innocent, & the E Street Shuffle* was released in November 1973 and is a marked departure from his debut album with the first appearance on record of the "E Street Band sound." The band in this incarnation featured Springsteen on guitar, Danny Federici on organ, David Sancious on keyboards, Clarence Clemons on saxophone, Garry Tallent on bass, and Vinny Lopez on drums. The E Street Band takes its name from the actual E Street in Belmar, New Jersey, which is close to Asbury Park. 1105 E Street in Belmar is where David Sancious's mother lived and the band rehearsed (Graff 122). Musically ambitious and containing only seven songs, which allowed the E Street Band to stretch out even in the vinyl LP era, this album first defined the "E Street Band" sound that Springsteen characterizes as reflecting its time: "It was the early '70s: blues, R & B, and soul were still heavily influential and heard often along the Jersey Shore" (*Songs* 25). Jimmy Guterman observes that "Springsteen intended his second album to be the romanticized story of a community, and his band was intended to stand in for that community" (63). This community included the geography of both Asbury Park's boardwalk in the song

"4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)," which Springsteen describes as "a goodbye to my adopted hometown and the life I'd lived there before I recorded" (*Songs* 25) and New York City as found in the songs "New York City Serenade" and "Incident on 57th Street." Although *The Wild, the Innocent, & the E Street Shuffle* contains other important songs, such as the autobiographical "Rosalita (Come Out Tonight") and "Kitty's Back," both of which Springsteen still regularly performs, "the slightly swifter pace of sales for *Wild* didn't meet Columbia's expectations for a truly up-and-coming artist's second album. By the first weeks of 1974, the more dispassionate members of the company's power structure . . . began to murmur. Where is this Springsteen guy headed, exactly" (Carlin 167).

As he had in 1973 with the release of his first two albums, Springsteen performed relentlessly throughout 1974, mainly on the American east coast. As Guterman notes,

> Springsteen's records didn't sell, but something was happening in the bars and clubs up and down the Boston-Washington corridor that he toured so tirelessly . . . Springsteen sought to capture the breadth of rock 'n' roll in those shows, from the silly to the profound. Those who did attend these long, personal, unprecedented shows came away with the fervor of the newly converted. (79)

One of these newly converted fans was Jon Landau, who was then a writer for both *Rolling Stone* and the *Real Paper*, an alternative Boston newspaper in which Landau had written a positive review of *The Wild, the Innocent, & the E Street Shuffle.* As related in

numerous Springsteen biographies, Landau met Springsteen in April 1974 when Dave Marsh took Landau to see Springsteen perform at Charlie's Place in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with Landau and Springsteen then striking up a friendship based initially on Landau's positive review of *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle* in *The Real Paper*, which Springsteen read on the wall at Charlie's Place. (Carlin 178-79; Dolan, *Promise* 104-05).

Although Landau was impressed by his first exposure to Springsteen's live performance at Charlie's Place (Carlin 178), his reaction to Springsteen's performance at Harvard Square Theatre in Cambridge on May 9, 1974, opening for Bonnie Raitt, literally changed the course of both Springsteen's and Landau's careers. In his famous review of this performance published in *The Real Paper* on May 22, 1974, Landau is ecstatic in describing his reaction to Springsteen's performance:

> I saw rock and roll future and its name is Bruce Springsteen. And on a night when I needed to feel young, he made me feel like I was hearing music for the very first time. When his two-hour set ended I could only think, can anyone really be this good; can anyone say this much to me, can rock 'n' roll still speak with this kind of power and glory? And then I felt the sores on my thighs where I had been pounding my hands in time for the entire concert and knew that the answer was yes. (Landau)

As Devon Powers relates, given Landau's status as a rock critic his review was crucial for reviving Columbia Records' interest and investment in Springsteen:

> For Columbia, Landau's stamp of approval proved energizing: he was the vehicle through which the rock critics had spoken, convincing enough Columbia folk that Springsteen was worth rallying around. Full-page advertisements blared the "I have seen" quote in relevant publications, and *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle* and *Greetings from Asbury Park* were discounted in an attempt to stimulate sales. All told, by some estimates the promotional campaign that the quote would inspire cost Columbia $250,000. (211)

On May 11, 1974, two days after Springsteen's performance on May 9 at Charlie's Place, Springsteen entered 914 Sound Studios in Blauvelt, New York, to begin recording his third album ("*Born to Run*-Studio Sessions"). One of the new songs that Springsteen began working on in the recording sessions at 914 Sound Studios was "Born to Run," which he had first performed at the May 9 performance which Landau attended ("Born to Run-Studio Sessions"; "1974-09-05-Harvard Square"). "Born to Run" became the title song of Springsteen's third album, which upon its release over a year later on August 25, 1975, not only confirmed the enthusiasm of Landau's review and confidence of Columbia Records but also established Springsteen as a true rock star "on the streets of a runaway American dream" ("Born to Run" line 1).

In *Songs*, Springsteen writes that *Born to Run* represented a significant thematic shift away from the Asbury Park landscapes of his first two albums in that the "characters on *Born to Run* were less eccentric and less local than on *Greetings* and *The Wild, the Innocent.* They could have been anybody and everybody. When the screen

door slams on "Thunder Road," you're not necessarily on the Jersey Shore anymore" (47). He also notes in moving beyond the local landscapes he began to write about larger American themes with a more mature perspective as "the primary questions I'd be writing about for the rest of my work life first took form in the songs on *Born to Run* ("I want to know if love is real"). It was the album where I left behind my adolescent definitions of love and freedom" (*Songs* 47).

However, in addition to these important thematic shifts, *Born to Run* was what Springsteen knew was a make-or-break album in his career. As we have seen, his first two albums did not sell that well, and although things seemed to be turning around for him due to the buzz from Landau's "rock and roll future" review, Springsteen needed to make a strong album that would actually sell. As Carlin observes about Springsteen at this time, he was "Still convinced that this might be his last shot at making a record, he couldn't allow for any compromises. This record had to say it all" (187). As he explains in a 2016 interview with Anthony Mason on CBS's *Sunday Morning*, Springsteen's goal for *Born to Run* was simple: "I was trying to make the greatest record you'd ever heard. The record that after you heard it, you didn't have to hear another record, . . . " ("I'm Still in Love with Playing").

In order to achieve this goal, Springsteen spent a long time recording *Born to Run* with the sessions running from May 1974 through July 1975. The recording sessions shifted from 914 Sound Studios to The Record Plant in New York City during this time, and also included a shift in producers as Springsteen brought in Jon Landau, as well as Steve Van Zandt, to help with production of the album, thus beginning the gradual

diminishment of Mike Appel as Springsteen's producer and manager ("*Born to Run*-Studio Sessions"). The intensity of the recording sessions for the album, along with Springsteen's perfectionism seemingly for each note in each song, is revealed in video footage from the recording sessions included in the documentary film *Wings for Wheels: The Making of* Born to Run directed by Thom Zimny, which is included in *Born to Run*: *30th Anniversary Edition* (1995) and is discussed below. Also, during the recording sessions there were personnel changes in the E Street Band as pianist David Sancious and drummer Boom Carter left the band to pursue other opportunities and were replaced by pianist Roy Bittan and drummer Max Weinberg, who responded to Springsteen's *Village Voice* "help wanted" ad for a new pianist and drummer for the E Street Band. As Springsteen notes in *Born to Run* about both Bittan and Weinberg, "They were heads above all the others and would bring a new professionalism to our sound that we carried into the studio. They were the first guys who weren't from the neighborhood to play with the E Street Band" (211).

Of course, all of this effort paid off as *Born to Run* became the success that both Springsteen and Columbia Records wanted it to be when it became his first album to crack the Top Ten album chart, eventually rising as high as number three (Graff 47). Along with *Born in the U.S.A.* (1984), it is one of Springsteen's most popular albums both in terms of sales and perception and one of his most critically acclaimed. Louis P. Masur argues that *Born to Run* is "a masterpiece of twentieth-century American music and culture" (63), while Carlin suggests, "Like the Beatles' American debut, *Meet the Beatles*, Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde*, Elvis Presley's first albums, and Nirvana's *Nevermind*,

Born to Run established a sound and identity powerful enough to permanently alter the perceptions of those who heard it, whether they liked what they heard or not" (203).

The key songs on *Born to Run*, such as the title track, "Thunder Road," "Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out," "She's the One," "Backstreets," and "Jungleland" are songs that Springsteen and the E Street Band continue to perform religiously on every tour. "Born to Run," which is Springsteen's version of The Animals' song "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" with more hope, is still played at every show with the houselights in each arena or stadium creating a communal experience as everyone in the audience sings along with fists pumping in the air in the belief

> 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. ("Born to Run" 35-39)

In a 2016 interview with David Kamp, Springsteen explains that "Born to Run" is "still at the center of my work, that song. When it comes up every night, within the show, it's monumental" (194). As Springsteen notes in *Songs*, he wanted the songs on *Born to Run* to be more universal and exist outside of Asbury Park, and he definitely achieved his goal, especially with "Born to Run."

The commercial success of *Born to Run* was fueled in large part by the critical acclaim the album received, along with the praise Springsteen continued to garner for his live performances, as he continued to play concerts even during the months in 1974-

1975 when he was also in the studio recording the album. In fact, one of Springsteen's most important 1975 concerts took place on February 2 at The Main Point in Brym Mawr, Pennsylvania, before *Born to Run* was released. This show was broadcast by radio station WMMR-FM in Philadelphia, and "Not only is it one of the longest [160 minutes] single-show gigs up to this point but it's one of the most compelling of Springsteen's entire career" with early versions of "Born to Run," "Wings for Wheels" (the original title for "Thunder Road"), "She's the One," and "Jungleland," along with songs from his first two albums ("1975-02-05-Main Point"). A recording of this show circulates in the Springsteen fan community as *Main Point Night* and is also available on *youtube.com.* This show is also available commercially in a three-CD set titled *The Spirit of Radio* (2014) and also includes Springsteen's 1973 performances at the Main Point and for WMMR-FM in Boston, which are discussed above.

The official *Born to Run* tour began on July 20, 1975, at the Palace Concert Theatre in Providence, Rhode Island, before the actual release of the album. Part of the 1975 leg of the tour included a five-night stretch with two shows a night at The Bottom Line in New York City on August 13-17 with the early show on August 15 broadcast by New York City radio station WNEW-FM as part of Columbia Records' promotional push for the album ("Gig Page-1975"; "1975-08-15-Bottom Line"; Marsh, *On Tour* 73-75). As Springsteen observes in *Born to Run,* "The Bottom Line shows seriously raised the bar. We got born again there. When we left, something new had taken hold of our band. As 'Born to Run' had defined us on record, these shows defined us as a live act intent on shaking you by the collar, waking you up, and all-or-nothing performances" (225).

The August 15 early show also became one of Springsteen's first "bootleg" albums, since "it was a cannibalized home taping of this show off the radio that appeared on the first two vinyl bootlegs 'Live at The Bottom Line 8/15/75' (unknown label) and 'Bruce Springsteen/Live' (Coral Records) both issued in late 1975" ("1975-08-15-Bottom Line"). This show continues to circulate in the Springsteen fan community as *Live at The Bottom Line* and is also available on *youtube.com.* Given the historical significance of this performance, it should be officially released as part of Springsteen's current series of archival concert releases.

The 1975 leg of the *Born to Run* tour concluded with three concerts at the Tower Theater in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in late December. The December 31st performance was professionally recorded and was part of Mike Appel's plan "that the best way to leverage *Born to Run's* success would be to release a multidisc live album showcasing Bruce's exalted performances while also exposing his new fans to the wonders they'd missed on the first two albums" (Carlin 214). Although this planned live album did not materialize at this point in Springsteen's career, the Tower Theater performance was officially released forty years later in 2015 as a three-CD set and for download as *Tower Theater, Philadelphia 1975*. This release joins the *Hammersmith Odeon, London 1975* album and DVD, which are discussed below, as the official documents of the 1975 leg of the *Born to Run* tour. The tour continued in 1976 beginning on March 23, 1976, at Township Auditorium in Columbia, South Carolina, and concluded on August 22, 1976, at Springfield Civic Center in Springfield, Massachusetts ("Gig Page-1976"). As discussed above, it was after the Memphis, Tennessee,

performance on this leg of the tour on April 29 when Springsteen and Steve Van Zandt jumped over the wall at Graceland in their unsuccessful attempt to meet Elvis Presley.

Unfortunately, for all of the popular and critical success of *Born to Run* and for Springsteen as a performer, there was mainstream media criticism that Springsteen and the success of *Born to Run* were just a product of overblown hype by the music industry and press (Marsh, *Born to Run* 139). This criticism reached its peak when Springsteen appeared simultaneously on the covers of both *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines for their October 27, 1975 issues for cover stories about Springsteen and all of the media hype. The *Newsweek* cover story is titled "Making of a Rock Star" and was written by Maureen Orth, Janet Huck, and Peter S. Greenberg. The authors' story focuses mainly on the hype factor involved in Springsteen's sudden success:

> Bruce Springsteen has been so heavily praised in the press and so tirelessly promoted by his record company, Columbia, that the publicity about his publicity is now a dominant issue in his career. And some are asking whether Bruce Springsteen will be the biggest superstar or the biggest hype of the '70s. (Orth et al 54).

Marsh is very critical of this story arguing that "According to *Newsweek,* Springsteen was an unlettered dummy, and Landau and Appel were shadowy, subcriminal figures manipulating gullible press people who in turn twisted a captious public around their typing fingers" (*Born to Run* 142). Unlike the *Newsweek* story, the *Time* cover story written by Jay Cocks is more positive about Springsteen and is titled "Rock's New Sensation: The Backstreet Phantom of Rock." This story serves as an effective 1975

introduction to Springsteen, who Cocks describes "as the dead-on image of a rock musician: street-smart but sentimental, a little enigmatic, articulate mostly through his music" (65). In viewing this story from a 1975 perspective and not from a contemporary perspective where Springsteen has lived up to this early hype, we can see that Marsh's criticism is a bit overheated and that from a 1975 perspective, given Springsteen's rather sudden success with *Born to Run*, the hype question was legitimate at the time.

To honor the thirtieth anniversary of the album and beginning his work as curator of his classic albums, Springsteen released *Born to Run: 30th Anniversary Edition* on November 15, 2005, a boxed set containing one CD and two DVDS. The CD is a remastered edition of the album in a replica "gatefold" cover, like the original LP. One DVD features a documentary directed by Thom Zimny about the making of the album titled *Wings for Wheels: The Making of Born to Run*, which includes video footage from the recording sessions for the album, along with interesting contemporary observations on the album by Springsteen, Mike Appel, Jon Landau, and members of the E Street Band. This DVD also contains video of three songs performed on May 1, 1973, at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles as part of a week of promotional performances by CBS artists ("1973-05-01-Ahmanson Theatre") and is the earliest officially released video footage of Springsteen and the E Street Band. Although Zimny's documentary is rather mythological in nature, arguably making *Born to Run* into **the** album of 1975, the video footage of the recording sessions shows Springsteen as a meticulous and demanding artist, identities that manifested themselves in subsequent recording sessions for

Darkness on the Edge of Town and *The River.* In 2006, *Wings for Wheels: The Making of Born to Run* won the Grammy Award for Best Long Form Video (Margolis).

The other DVD is titled *Hammersmith Odeon, London '75* and features the entire debut performance of Springsteen and the E Street Band at the famed London concert hall on November 18, 1975. For this DVD, the video footage is "restored from thirty-two reels of silent 16 mm film and matched with multi-track audio. The reconstruction was painstaking, taking editor Thom Zimny over a year to complete" ("1975-11-18-Hammersmith Odeon"). An audio version of this concert with the same title was released as a double-CD set and for download on February 28, 2006. Both documents are essential to understanding Springsteen and the E Street Band in 1975 as simply a "young musician and his band, blowing through a fantastic set in front of a brand new audience" (Pont, "Rock 'n' Roll Future's" 11).

Born to Run has received both scholarly and popular attention through various books and articles. Historian Louis P. Masur's *Born to Run and Bruce Springsteen's American Vision* (2009) is a cultural history of the album and offers analysis of its songs and how the album was made, as well as its critical and commercial reception in 1975. Masur also includes a chapter linking the Springsteen's subsequent career to the album. Devon Powers's article "Bruce Springsteen, Rock Criticism, and the Music Business: Towards a Theory and History of Hype" (2011) explores the nature of hype in rock music criticism by focusing on the hype for Springsteen and *Born to Run.* Joshua Zeitz' article "*Born to Run* and the Decline of the American Dream" (2015) is a valuable retrospective look at the album and its historical context, while Peter Gerstenzang's article "How

Bruce Springsteen Made *Born to Run* an American Masterpiece" (2015) is a retrospective summary of the making of the album. The 1975 *Newsweek* and *Time* cover stories about Springsteen are included in June Skinner Sawyers's anthology *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader*, and full-size replications of both magazine covers are included in Robert Santelli's work *Greetings from E Street: The Story of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band* (2006). Eric Meola, the photographer of *Born to Run's* iconic album cover, published more photographs from his sessions for the album in *Born to Run: The Unseen Photos* (2006), which are accompanied by lyrics for all the songs on the album.

Unfortunately, Springsteen's next album *Darkness on the Edge of Town* was not released until 1978, so he was not able to instantly build on the momentum generated by the success of *Born to Run* and the 1975-1976 tour. The reason for the delay was that Springsteen and Mike Appel were engaged in battling lawsuits against each other over what Springsteen describes simply as being about "control":

> Who was going to be in control of my work and my work life. Early on I decided that was going to be me. The bottom line was my ass was on the line, and I was going to control where it went and how things went down. That for me was what the lawsuit was about. (*The Promise* documentary).

Of the key factors in these battling lawsuits was that "Springsteen was planning on going into the studio in August (1976) to record his fourth album with Landau as his sole coproducer." However, under his contract with Appel, Springsteen could not record

without Appel's involvement (Dolan, *Promise* 144). Springsteen sued Appel and then Appel countersued Springsteen with the main result that Springsteen could not legally record until all of these legal issues were resolved. However, Springsteen and the E Street Band were still able to perform and continued to tour on what is called "The Lawsuit" or "Chicken Scratch" tour. This tour began on September 26, 1976, at Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix, Arizona and concluded on March 25, 1977, at Music Hall in Boston, Massachusetts ("Gig Page-1976"; "Gig Page-1977"). The main point of this tour was to "make some money and keep the E Street Band together and working" (Graff 77).

Springsteen's legal issues with Appel were finally resolved in Springsteen's favor on May 28, 1977, and the recording sessions for *Darkness on the Edge* began quickly in June 1977 and continued through March 1978 at Atlantic Studios and The Record Plant, both in New York City ("*Darkness*-Studio Sessions"). As the video footage of the sessions included on the documentary film *The Promise: The Making of* <u>*Darkness on the Edge of Town*</u> directed by Thom Zimny, Springsteen is once again a musical perfectionist in the studio, just as he was for *Born to Run.* However, the album that emerged from these sessions is very different from *Born to Run*. As Springsteen writes about *Darkness on the Edge of Town*:

> I wanted my new characters to feel weathered, older, but not beaten. The sense of daily struggle in each song greatly increased. The possibility of transcendence or any sort of personal redemption felt a lot harder to come by. This was the tone I wanted to sustain. I intentionally steered

> away from any hint of escapism and set my characters down in a community under siege. (*Songs* 68)

As Jimmy Guterman suggests, on this album "no one is escaping anything" (108). We can imagine that the characters in "Born to Run" and "Thunder Road" who dreamed of leaving a "town full of losers" actually did not leave to "walk in the sun" but rather wound up staying in this town, going to work, having families, and facing all the problems that come with adult life. Yet, as Springsteen also notes about the album, "It's a reckoning with the adult world and life of limitations and compromises, but also a life of resilience and commitment to life, to the breath in your lungs, and how do keep faith with those things" (*The Promise* documentary). The characters know that they are not leaving town, but they still believe that their lives can still somehow be better.

Darkness on the Edge of Town was released on June 2, 1978, and the album reveals Springsteen's theme through key songs such as "Badlands," "Adam Raised a Cain," "Racing in the Street," "The Promised Land," "Factory," and the title track. "Badlands" and "The Promised Land" have become perennial concert favorites throughout Springsteen's career, since both songs conceptualize Springsteen's theme of limitations and commitment, which is reflected perfectly in the chorus of "Badlands" as the song's narrator defiantly cries:

> Badlands, you gotta live it everyday
> Let the broken hearts stand
> As the price you've gotta pay
> We'll keep pushin' 'till its understood

and these badlands start treating us good. (23-27)

Lyrically, the songs are much less wordy than the songs on Springsteen's first three albums, while musically the songs have a harder rock edge with guitars more up front than the more piano-centered sound of the songs on *Born to Run*. Springsteen also notes that he was influenced by punk rock during the recording of the album, and the songs "Adam Raised a Cain" and "Candy's Room" particularly reflect this influence (*The Promise* liner notes).

Darkness on the Edge of Town sold fairly well and made it into the Top Ten, peaking at number five, but as Landau notes, "It didn't have any legs. And it certainly wasn't having the impact of *Born to Run*" (Graff 104; qtd. in Carlin 254-55). As Bud Scoppa suggests, the main factor behind the album's lack of commercial punch in relation to *Born to Run* was that "its monochromatic severity was ultimately the album's greatest distinction" (39). Of course, such "severity" became a defining characteristic of many of Springsteen's albums that were released after *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, but in 1978 following three albums celebrating the Asbury Park boardwalk world and the romantic aspects of the American Dream, it is not difficult to see that *Darkness on the Edge of Town* was a quite a loud and jarring shift away from the themes and music of his first three albums. We can now view *Darkness on the Edge of Town* as one of Springsteen's greatest albums, since, as Guterman observes, "it was the album on which Springsteen found the topic—decency in the face of defeat—that would fuel a quarter century of writing" (106).

If *Darkness on the Edge of Town* as an album was not initially a commercial success, the tour supporting the album launched Springsteen into a much different realm as a live performer. As Guterman points out, the "tour was a huge success for the E Street Band, both commercially (they moved up from theaters to arenas in many markets) and artistically" (110). The tour began before the release of the album on May 23, 1978, at Shea's Buffalo Theatre in Buffalo, New York, and concluded with two shows on December 31, 1978 and January 1, 1979 at Richfield Coliseum in Richfield, Ohio ("Gig Page-1978"; "Gig Page-1979"). As on the 1975 tour before and after the release of *Born to Run*, five performances on this tour were broadcast in their entirety on FM radio stations, which helped to further Springsteen's continually growing reputation as a live performer.

The first concert broadcast was the July 7, 1978, performance at The Roxy Theatre in West Hollywood, California on KMET in Los Angeles. A recording of this show from the broadcast titled *Roxy Night* circulates in the Springsteen fan community and is also available on *youtube.com.* Eight of the songs performed during this show were included on the officially released *Live 1975-1985* (1986) album, which is discussed below ("1978-07-07-The Roxy"). Approximately a month later on August 9, 1978, Springsteen and the E Street Band performed at The Agora in Cleveland, Ohio. This concert was broadcast regionally by WMMS in Cleveland. In December 2014, this performance was officially released as a three-CD set and for download as *The Agora, Cleveland 1978* as part of Springsteen's archival concert series in conjunction with *nugs.net.* In his review of this release for *Rolling Stone*, Rob Sheffield describes it as

"simply the greatest live LP this greatest of live rockers has ever officially released" (Sheffield). A recording from the radio broadcast is also available on *youtube.com.*

In addition to the performance at The Agora, the shows that Springsteen played on September 19-20, 1978, at the Capitol Theatre in Passaic, New Jersey, are also considered two of his greatest performances on this tour. The September 19 performance was professionally recorded and broadcast regionally by WNEW in New York. Both the September 19 and September 20 performances are commercially available for download through *wolfgangsvault.com* and are also available on *youtube.com.* Both performances were also filmed in black and white and are also available on *youtube.com* ("1978-09-19-Capitol Theatre"; "1978-09-20-Capitol Theatre"). Just a few days later, Springsteen's performance on September 30, 1978, at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia, was broadcast regionally by several southern radio stations. A recording from the radio broadcast circulates under various titles in the Springsteen fan community and is also available on *youtube.com.* Yet another contender for the greatest Springsteen concert is his December 15, 1978, which was the first of two performances at the Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco, California. The December 15 show was broadcast by KSAN in San Francisco and has been described as "Probably the most famous show Bruce will ever do" ("1978-12-15-Winterland"). A recording from the broadcast of this show circulates in the Springsteen fan community titled *Winterland Night* and is also available on *youtube.com.* All five of these concerts are also available commercially in the fifteen-CD collection *The Complete 1978 Radio Broadcasts*, which was released in 2015 by the European label Soundstage.

As he did with *Born to Run,* Springsteen released a major boxed set for *Darkness on the Edge of Town* on November 16, 2010, titled *The Promise: The Darkness on the Edge of Town Story*. This boxed set contains three CDs and three DVDs: a remastered version of the original *Darkness on the Edge of Town* album, a two-CD set titled *The Promise—the Lost Sessions: Darkness on the Edge of Town,* a documentary DVD directed by Thom Zimny titled *The Promise: The Making of Darkness on the Edge of Town,* a performance DVD of the Springsteen and the E Street Band performing the *Darkness on the Edge of Town* album at Asbury Park's Paramount Theatre in November 2009 with archival performance footage from 1976-1978, and another performance DVD titled *Houston 1978 Bootleg: House Cut*, which is the closed-circuit arena video from the Houston show on the *Darkness on the Edge of Town* tour from December 8, 1978. The collection is housed in a special spiral notebook package, which is a facsimile of Springsteen's lyric notebook for the album and contains lyrics and photographs.

The two CD-set *The Promise: The Lost Sessions: Darkness on the Edge of Town* and the documentary DVD *The Promise: The Making of Darkness on the Edge of Town* were also released separately with the DVD containing extra footage of Springsteen and the E Street Band performing songs from *The Promise* at the Carousel in Asbury Park in 2009, and *Bruce Springsteen: A Conversation with His Fans*, which was filmed at a special Sirius XM satellite radio show hosted by Dave Marsh. In his liner notes for *The Promise: The Lost Sessions,* Springsteen notes that "What you have in your hands is a new/old record. The lost sessions of the recording of 'Darkness' that could have/should

have been released after 'Born to Run' and before the collection of songs that became 'Darkness on the Edge of Town'" (*"The Promise* Liner Notes").

Darkness on the Edge of Town has received specific scholarly and popular attention, usually in connection with the albums *Born to Run*, *The River*, *Nebraska,* and/or *Born in the U.S.A.* Steven Michels explores how Springsteen writes about the nature of work, which is a key theme on *Darkness on the Edge of Town,* in his essay "Who's the Boss? Springsteen on the Alienation and Salvation of Work and Labor," which is a chapter in *Bruce Springsteen and Philosophy: Darkness on the Edge of Truth* (2008). Larry David Smith and John Rutter examine the thematic connections and changes in the characters on *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and *The River* in their article "There's a Reckoning on the Edge of Town: Bruce Springsteen's *Darkness* on *The River*" (2008). Michael McGuire provides analysis of Springsteen's narrative techniques in the songs on *Darkness on the Edge of Town* in his essay "'Darkness on the Edge of Town': Bruce Springsteen's Rhetoric of Optimism and Despair," which is a chapter in the work *Rhetorical Dimensions in Media: A Critical Casebook* (1984). There are two essays that both deal with Springsteen's idea of America as a "promised land." Stephen Hazan Arnoff develops this idea through biblical contexts in "A Covenant Reversed: Bruce Springsteen and the Promised Land," which is a chapter in the anthology *Reading the Boss: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Works of Bruce Springsteen* (2010). In this essay, Arnoff extends his analysis through Springsteen's *Magic* album. Kate McCarthy examines the idea of Springsteen's "promised land" through American cultural contexts in her essay "Deliver Me from Nowhere: Bruce Springsteen and the Myth of the

American Promised Land," which is a chapter in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture* (2001).

There are also two published collections of photographs of Springsteen from this era that are notable for how he worked to create a visual image for himself that was decidedly different from his previously bearded, Jersey Shore-based identity on his first three albums.

Photographer Frank Stefanko's collection *Days of Hope and Dreams: An Intimate Portrait of Bruce Springsteen* (2003) contains photographs of Springsteen and the E Street Band taken during 1978-1982. Two of Stefanko's photographs were used for the album covers for both *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and for *The River* (1980), while another of his photographs from this era, and included is this collection, was used for the cover of Springsteen's memoir *Born to Run* (2016). These photographs present a beardless Springsteen as a brooding artist. In Springsteen's Introduction for this collection, he notes that Stefanko through his photographs

> seemed to photograph you within a set of very strict self-imposed limits, but within those limits he created a fully realized world—a world that I felt was deeply connected to the characters I was writing about on *Darkness.* The pictures' lack of grandeur, their directness, their toughness, were what I wanted for my music at the time. (12)

Eric Meola also photographed Springsteen in this era, and these photographs are collected in *Streets of Fire: Bruce Springsteen in Photographs and Lyrics 1977-1979.* This volume uses the lyrics from the songs on *Darkness of the Edge of Town* to provide

thematic contexts for several of the photographs in the collection. Several of these photographs were used in the boxed set *The Promise: The Darkness on the Edge of Town Story*, including the cover images for both the two CD-set *The Promise: The Lost Sessions: Darkness on the Edge of Town* and the documentary DVD *The Promise: The Making of Darkness on the Edge of Town* included in the boxed set and also released separately.

Following the conclusion of the *Darkness on the Edge of Town* tour on January 1, 1979, Springsteen did not waste any time beginning work in March on his fifth album at the Power Station recording studio in New York (Carlin 268). *The River* was the album that emerged after a rather torturous recording process, which was "a year and a half in the making with some ninety songs considered and recording costs reported at $500,000" (Graff 303). *The River* was officially released as a "double" album on October 17, 1980, and became Springsteen's first number one album (Graff 302). Nine songs from these sessions were subsequently released on the *Tracks* compilation with thirteen more songs released as part of the boxed set *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection* (2015) discussed below. Springsteen also had his first Top Ten single with "Hungry Heart." According to Carlin, Springsteen at first was not really happy with the song thinking "it sounded too airy for the hard-bitten album he'd envisioned" and would give the song to The Ramones, but then Jon Landau and Steve Van Zandt convinced him that "the time had come for (him) to have a real hit song on Top 40 radio" (279-80). "Hungry Heart" eventually reached number five on the chart and has since become a perennial concert favorite with the audience singing the first verse of the song, a

tradition began during *The River* tour at the November 20, 1980, concert in Chicago when "the chiming sound of the song's intro so excited the crowd that Bruce couldn't get the first line out of his mouth before the fans drowned him out, shouting every word in perfect unison" (Carlin 280).

The "double album" version of *The River* that was finally released was essentially a "final draft" of the album, because "In October (1979), Springsteen delivered a single-disc album to Columbia called *The Ties That Bind* (Graff 304). In *Born to Run,* Springsteen explains:

> as I spent time listening to it, I felt it just wasn't enough. Our records were infrequent and by now I'd set up my audience to expect more than business as usual. Each record was a statement of purpose. I wanted playfulness, good times, but also an underlying seriousness, a code of living, fusing it all together and making it more than just a collection of my ten latest songs. (277)

Springsteen then retreated into the recording studio for several more months of recording with a double album as the result. As Springsteen also points out in *Born to Run*, a double album

> would be the only way I could reconcile the two worlds I wanted to present to my fans. *The River* got its emotional depth from its ballads—"Point Blank," "Independence Day," "The River," and "Stolen Car" were all narrative-driven story songs—but the album got its energy from its bar band music, songs like "Cadillac Ranch," "Out in the Street" and

> "Ramrod." Then there was the music that bled across the lines: "Ties That Bind," "Two Hearts," and "Hungry Heart." All of this blended together into a logical extension of the characters I'd studied on *Darkness on the Edge of Town*. (278)

The original single album *The Ties That Bind* is included in the boxed set *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection*.

As Springsteen describes it, *The River* does present two different worlds across its two discs,

> which is why listening to the entirety of *The River* in one sitting is such a disorienting experience, a continuous careen between big night out and calamitous morning after, as it lurches from joyous, head-back, nigh mindless garage-rattling rock 'n' roll . . . and brooding, furrow-browed, pensive, bedsitter blues . . . . (Mueller 50)

Yet even with this juxtaposition of two worlds in the album, as Mikal Gilmore argues, *The River* represented a significant thematic shift for Springsteen in that he was now "*looking* at history, as a way of understanding the lives of the people in his songs had been shaped by the conditions surrounding them, and by forces beyond their control" (269).

Such environmental determinism is at the heart of the song ""The River," which is one of Springsteen's greatest songs and opens with the narrator saying, "I come from down in the valley/Where mister when you're young/They bring you up to do like your daddy done" (lines 1-3). Then more reality hits when the narrator tells us, "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" (10-12). This adds another layer of entrapment for this young couple as they are now faced by the realities and responsibilities of becoming an instant family, which seemingly destroys any sense of hope they may have had of somehow escaping their pre-determined fates. The narrator acknowledges this lack of hope when he asks, "Is a dream a lie if it don't come true/Or is it something worse" (32-33). In these anguished two lines, the narrator admits that he had a larger dream for his life, but it obviously has and will not come true. Not only has it not come true, but he also admits that actually having a dream is a "curse" that permeates his life and with which he must always live. Marsh argues that these two lines are the key to Springsteen's subsequent work: "In Springsteen's universe, that is a very dangerous question because it dredges up an irreconcilable contradiction" as any sense of hope collides with unescapable reality (*Glory Days* 135). This contradiction will define Springsteen's work throughout the rest of his career as he explores personal and larger political perspectives.

As with both *Born to Run* and *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, *The River* was supported by an extensive tour, which began on October 3, 1980, at Crisler Arena on the University of Michigan campus at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and concluded over a year later on September 14, 1981, at Riverfront Coliseum in Cincinnati, Ohio. The "Night for Vietnam Veterans" concert discussed in the Introduction took place during the final American leg of the tour. During the spring of 1981, Springsteen and the E Street Band had their first extended tour of Europe, which began on April 7, 1981, at Congress

Centrum Hamburg in Hamburg, West Germany, and ended with four concerts on May 29-June 2, 1981, at Wembley Arena in London, England. The European leg of the tour was supposed to begin on March 17, 1981, but was postponed to April 7 due to Springsteen's exhaustion from the first American leg of the tour ("Gig Page-1980"; "Gig Page-1981").

One of the factors in Springsteen's exhaustion was that during *The River* tour that he and the E Street Band began performing concerts that regularly easily exceeded three hours, which only served to further advance Springsteen's reputation as a dynamic live performer. One of the longest concerts of the tour took place on December 31, 1980, at Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, New York, and was a marathon that nearly hit the four-hour mark in length. This concert was officially released in 2015 as a three-CD set and for download as *Nassau Coliseum, New York 1980* as part of Springsteen's ongoing series of archival concert recordings available through his official website *Brucepsringsteen.net* in conjunction with *nugs.net.*

Like *The Promise: The Darkness of the Edge of Town Story, The River* also received the deluxe boxed-set treatment in 2015 with *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection*, which contains four CDs and three DVDs. *The River* album is on two CDs, while the original version of the album is one CD and the other single CD contains twenty-two outtakes from the recording sessions for *The River* with nine of these outtakes previously released on the *Tracks* compilation. One DVD is a documentary about the making of *The River* also, which only contains an interview with Springsteen and is much less comprehensive than the documentaries about the making of *Born to*

Run and *Darkness on the Edge of Town* that are part of the boxed sets for those two albums. The other two DVDs contain an incomplete but powerful concert from November 5, 1980, at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, that is described as "One of the finest, most intense shows of *The River* tour" ("1980-11-05-ASU Activity Center"). For some reason, ten songs from this concert were apparently not filmed. However, these missing ten songs were recorded and are available for download at *brucespringsteen.net* in conjunction with *nugs.net.* It was during this show that Springsteen made his comment from the stage about Ronald Reagan winning the 1980 presidential election that is discussed in the Introduction ("1980-11-05-ASU Activity Center"). *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection* also contains a hardbound book of photographs of Springsteen and the E Street Band from *The River* era and a facsimile of Springsteen's lyric notebook for the album, which includes lyrics both handwritten and typed for the outtakes CD.

As Dolan points out, at the end of *The River* tour in 1981 "With the even grander success of *The River* and the tour to support it, Springsteen was now unequivocally a pop star as well as a rock star" (*Promise* 187) and "had the financial freedom to do virtually anything he could imagine" (Carlin 291). Yet even with fame and fortune as constant companions, Springsteen views this particular point in his life and career as transitional:

> It was definitely a closing to a certain earlier section of my life, the initial section of the traveling and touring and those early records . . . There was more contemplation. I was thirty or thirty-one, and something turned

> me back around toward my early childhood. That moved me into *Nebraska,* so that was pretty telling. (qtd. in Carlin 291).

Springsteen's time of "contemplation" following the end of *The River* tour produced the songs that comprised his sixth album titled *Nebraska*, which was released on September 20, 1982. However, *Nebraska* was a much different album than the five albums that preceded it, since *Nebraska* was a solo album recorded without the E Street Band and represented an artistic risk for Springsteen, who had built his career up to this point by recording and performing with a band. However, recording and actually releasing a solo album was not Springsteen's original intent. Instead, he thought he was just recording "demos" of new songs that he and the E Street Band would record for their follow-up album to *The River.*

As we have seen, Springsteen spent inordinate amounts of time in the recording studio for *Born to Run, Darkness on the Edge of Town,* and *The River*. As Springsteen notes in *Born to Run*,

> Frustrated at blowing all my money on studio time, I sent my guitar tech out to get a recorder, a little less lo-fi than the cassette recorder I usually used to lay down my new song ideas. I needed a better and less expensive way to tell if my new material was record-worthy. He came back with a four-track Japanese Tascam 144 cassette recorder. We set it up in my bedroom: I'd sing, play, and with the two tracks left, I could add a backing vocal, an extra guitar or a tambourine. On four tracks, that's all you could do. (299-300).

Sometime in December 1981 and early in January 1982, Springsteen sat in his bedroom and recorded approximately fourteen new songs on this new equipment ("*Nebraska*—Studio Sessions"). Then on January 3, 1982, he made a master tape on a regular cassette, and then he "put the tape in my pocket, carried it around a couple of weeks, 'cause I was gonna teach the songs to the band. After a couple of days, I looked as this thing and said, "Uh-oh, I'd better stop carrying this around like this" (qtd. in Marsh, *Glory Days* 103-04). Among these fourteen songs were nine of the ten songs that eventually comprised *Nebraska*, along with five other songs that were recorded with the E Street Band for the *Born in the U.S.A.* album and are discussed below. The songs "My Father's House" which is on *Nebraska* and "The Big Payback" were probably recorded after the original fourteen songs. "The Big Payback" was released on "rarities" disc in the 2003 edition of *The Essential Bruce Springsteen*, which is discussed below ("*Nebraska*—Studio Sessions"). The fourteen songs on Springsteen's original tape circulate in the Springsteen fan community as *The Lost Masters Volume 1: Alone in Colts Neck (The Complete Nebraska Sessions)* with the recordings of the individual songs also available on *youtube.com.* The Tascam 144 cassette recorder on which these songs were recorded was featured in Springsteen's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum exhibit and listed in the exhibit catalog *From Asbury Park to the Promised Land: The Life and Music of Bruce Springsteen.*

As he relates in *Songs*, Springsteen then sent the tape to Jon Landau with a cover letter in which he said, "I got a lot of ideas but I'm not exactly sure where I'm going. I guess the only thing I looked for in the songs was that it someway [sic] break a little new

ground for me" (137). As he also notes in *Songs*, this "new ground" involved dealing with the overall theme of "the thin line between stability and that moment when time stops and everything goes to black, when the things that connect you to your world—your job, your family, your friends, your faith, the love and grace in your heart—fail you" (137). The key songs on *Nebraska* that reflect this theme include the title song, "Atlantic City," "Johnny 99," "Highway Patrolman," and "State Trooper" in which several of the characters have completely lost their dreams and their ability to connect with their own lives, much less with society as a whole. They may then turn to crime, because they "got debts no honest man can pay" ("Atlantic City" line 12), a line that is repeated by the narrators of both "Atlantic City" and "Johnny 99."

In addition to these songs of desolation, there are also three songs that relate to Springsteen's childhood—"Mansion on the Hill," "Used Cars," and "My Father's House." Of these songs, "My Father's House" is arguably the most powerful as a son attempts to find and reconcile with his father only to find that his father no longer lives in that house, and thus the house becomes a symbol for a relationship that can never be redeemed as it"stands like a beacon calling me in the night/Calling and calling so cold and alone/Shining 'cross this dark highway where our sins lie unatoned" (18-20).

Attempts to record these songs with the E Street Band were ultimately unsuccessful, and, as Springsteen comments in *Songs*, "succeeded in making the whole thing worse" (139). The decision was then made to release Springsteen's "demos" as they were, but there were problems with actually making a master tape and disc from his original cassette tape. These problems were so severe that Springsteen went into

the studio to record the songs again, but, as Marsh notes, "the songs didn't come out the same," as they lost "their feeling of isolation" (*Glory Days* 123). Eventually, the technical issues were solved with Springsteen's original "demos" used for the actual album. Even as a solo album recorded in his bedroom, *Nebraska* reached number three on the album chart. Also, a music video from the album was produced for MTV, "Springsteen's first conceptual video, a black & white travelogue for "Atlantic City" that did not include a single image of the artist" (Graff 255). The "Atlantic City" video is included in *Bruce Springsteen: The Complete Video Anthology 1978-2000.*

Nebraska is easily Springsteen's darkest and most desperate album, not only through its songs but also through his striking solo performances. In *Born to Run*, Springsteen explains that this was exactly what he wanted for this album:

> I wanted black bedtime stories. I thought of the records of John Lee Hooker and Robert Johnson, music that sounded so good with the lights out. I wanted the listener to hear my characters think, to feel their thoughts, their choices. These songs were the opposite of the rock music I'd been writing. They were restrained, still on the surface, with a world of moral ambiguity and unease below. (299)

Nebraska fully realizes Springsteen's goal both thematically and musically and may well be his true masterpiece. For all of the seemingly accidental nature of the album due to its format and place in Springsteen's discography at this point in his career as the follow-up to his most popular album, Ryan Sheeler argues that these very factors are what contributed to its artistic and commercial success, because "What Springsteen did with

Nebraska is to strip his own art of all overblown consumerism, making a statement that was at once very personal and very populist."

Given the artistic excellence of *Nebraska*, it should not be surprising that it has generated a significant amount of scholarship. David Burke's *Heart of Darkness: Bruce Springsteen's* *Nebraska* was published in 2011 and although the background, recording history, themes, and influence of *Nebraska* are the main focus of this work, he also writes about Springsteen's other albums as well with some notable insights into recent albums, particularly *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions* (2006) and *Magic* (2007). Frank P. Fury's essay "'Deliver Me from Nowhere': Place and Space in Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* was published in the anthology *Reading the Boss: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Works of Bruce Springsteen* (2010) and explores geographical aspects of the songs on the album. John Jacob Kaag's essay "Everything Dies: Facing Fatalism in 'Atlantic City'" was published in the anthology *Bruce Springsteen and Philosophy: Darkness on the Edge of Truth* (2008) and specifically examines the historical and thematic contexts of Atlantic City in connection with the characters and ideas in the song. Ryan Sheeler's article "A Meanness is This World: The American Outlaw as Storyteller in Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska*" (2007) examines the narrative structure of the songs on the album through the various perspectives of the criminals portrayed on the album. Law professor Samuel J. Levine analyzes the different types of criminals portrayed on the album in his article "Portraits of Criminals on Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska:* The Enigmatic Criminal, the Sympathetic Criminal, and the Criminal as Brother" (2005). One of the first scholarly articles to be published on

Springsteen is Mark Allister's article "'There's a Meanness in This World': Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* and Folk Music" (1983), which looks at the folk music contexts for the songs on the album, especially the influence of Woody Guthrie. *Nebraska* is also the focus of the "tribute" album *Badlands: A Tribute to Bruce Springsteen's* Nebraska (2000), which features performances of the songs on the album by Deana Carter, Ani DiFranco, Chrissie Hynde, Los Lobos, Hank Williams III, and other artists.

Although the specific songs on *Nebraska* that Springsteen tried to record with the E Street Band at the 1982 recording sessions did not work to Springsteen's satisfaction, there were other songs that he recorded with the band in those sessions that did work that wound up on his seventh album *Born in the U.S.A.*, which was released on June 4, 1984. Three songs on Springsteen's fourteen-song "demo" cassette tape from January 3, 1982, were recorded during these sessions: "Born in the U.S.A.," "Downbound Train," and "Working on the Highway," which was originally titled "Child Bride" on his demo tape. Six other songs that appeared on the album, including the hits "Cover Me," "Glory Days," and "I'm on Fire," were recorded during these 1982 sessions. Springsteen and the E Street Band then spent approximately two more torturous years recording more songs and working through various incarnations of the album before it was finally released ("*Born in the U.S.A.*—Studio Sessions").

The success of the *Born in the U.S.A.* album, along with its hit singles, its music videos, and the tour in support of the album, launched Springsteen into the popular culture stratosphere. Also, Springsteen's image during the time of *Born in the U.S.A.* of him in jeans, sleeveless t-shirt, and red bandana tied around his head, along with a buff

physique, became ubiquitous. Springsteen even notes in *Born to Run*, "I still see teenagers and young men, who couldn't have even been a glint in Mom and Pop's eyes in '84, at my shows in headbands and sleeveless shirts today" (326). Unfortunately, however, for many casual music fans this is where time seems to stop when it comes to Springsteen and his work, as he seems forever locked into this era and this image shouting "Born in the U.S.A." at full throttle into a microphone with raised fist in the air.

In retrospect, the overall success of *Born in the U.S.A.* is rather amazing when considering that Springsteen by 1984 had only had one number one album and exactly one Top Ten hit. Of course, as we have seen, he had been gradually but steadily building his audience both for his albums and tours from the release of his first two albums, so building on the success of *The River* should have been expected to some degree. Yet *Born in the U.S.A.* was, as John Lewis observes,

> absolutely enormous. Like Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, the album it replaced atop the *Billboard* chart, it spawned seven hit singles and topped the charts in virtually every territory on earth. It went platinum in the States within a month, eventually going 15-times platinum and selling more than 30 million copies worldwide. It is, by some considerable distance, Springsteen's biggest album ever. (62)

The song "Dancing in the Dark" became the biggest hit of Springsteen's entire career reaching number two on the singles chart followed by more Top Ten hits from the album: "Cover Me," "Born in the U.S.A.," "I'm on Fire," "Glory Days," "I'm Going Down," and "My Hometown." Along with "Born to Run," Springsteen continues to perform

"Dancing in the Dark" at every concert. Springsteen also released music videos for "Dancing in the Dark," "Born in the U.S.A.," "I'm on Fire," "Glory Days," and "My Hometown." The "Dancing in the Dark" video became iconic through its concert setting and Springsteen's dancing with actress Courtney Cox, while the videos for "Glory Days" and "I'm on Fire" featured credible acting by Springsteen. All of these videos are available on *Bruce Springsteen: The Video Anthology 1978-2000* and also on *youtube.com.* Springsteen even won his first Grammy Award for Best Male Rock Vocal Performance for "Dancing in the Dark," and in 2012, *Born in the U.S.A.* was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame (Margolis).

Yet for all of Springsteen's popular success through *Born in the U.S.A.*, it can also be viewed as both the culmination and end of this particular part of his career, since this was the final act of the "glory days" of Springsteen and the E Street Band until their revival during the "Reunion Tour" in 1999 and their albums and tours in the 2000s that are the specific focus of this dissertation. Springsteen alludes to this shift in his career in *Born to Run* when he writes, "*Born in the USA* changed my life, gave me my biggest audience, forced me to think harder about the way I presented my music and set me briefly at the center of the pop world" (317).

The commercial success of *Born in the U.S.A.* should not detract from its overall artistic success. Springsteen explains in *Born to Run* that "My *Born in the USA* songs were direct and fun and stealthily carried the undercurrents of *Nebraska*" (317). On *The River*, he literally separated the darker songs from the fun songs, with the darker songs mainly being ballads, but on *Born in the U.S.A.,* he was able to place some of the darker

thematic songs into more musically upbeat frameworks. The song "Born in the U.S.A.," which is one of his greatest and also most misunderstood songs, fits into this kind of structure.

"Born in the U.S.A." was one of the songs on Springsteen's original fourteen-song demo tape from January 3, 1982, and then was recorded with the E Street Band during the 1982 recording sessions. The original title for the song was "Vietnam," and as noted in the Introduction, Springsteen became interested in the ongoing problems of Vietnam veterans through Bobby Muller and Ron Kovic. Springsteen explains in *Born to Run* that "Born in the U.S.A."

> was a GI blues, the verses an accounting, the choruses a declaration of the one sure thing that could not be denied . . . birthplace. Birthplace, and the right to all the blood, confusion, blessings, and grace that come with it. Having paid body and soul, you have earned, many times over, the right to claim and shape your piece of home ground. (314)

The song revolves around juxtaposed ideas of "birthplace." As in "The River," environmental determinism is present in the opening verse of the song as the narrator, who is a Vietnam veteran, says,

> 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. (lines 1-4)

In this verse, we can see in this “dead man’s town” nothing seems to be alive, as it is the town itself that kills everyone’s hopes and dreams right at the beginning of life, and such despair continues to define the narrator’s life in always being in a defensive position continually fighting off another one of life’s painful blows.

This verse is followed by the chorus of the song, which is characterized by the repetition of the phrase “born in the U.S.A.”:

> 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. (5-8)

Through these repeated lines, we can see Springsteen’s juxtaposition of “birthplace” through the concept of the narrator being “born” as an American, with all of the hope that citizenship theoretically applies colliding with the reality of being physically born in an environment which prevents the inherent promises of citizenship from being fulfilled. In effect, the American promise is broken by the very real forces of environmental determinism.

As the song progresses, the narrator describes specific problems that he has encountered upon his return home from his tour of duty:

> 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.” (18-21)

Once again, the narrator is at the mercy of environmental forces as he is turned down for a job at the refinery where he used to work and even seemingly turned down for his veteran's benefits to which he is entitled, further breaking the American promise. This leads to the narrator's absolute desperation which he expresses in the song's final verse:

> 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. (26-29)

In the first two lines of this verse, the narrator presents the reality that since he is unable to find a job, which is symbolized by the refinery, then he may to turn to crime out of desperation to merely survive, as represented by the image of penitentiary, which was also the choice made by several characters in the songs on *Nebraska.* The dramatic final line in this verse suggests that the narrator is literally stuck going "nowhere" as a victim of both environmental and institutional forces beyond his control leaving him completely bereft of any hope in the American Promise.

Springsteen describes "Born in the U.S.A." as "a protest song" (*Born to Run* 314). Regardless of how dark the lyrics are, the musical context of the song, as recorded on the album and then performed on the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour through its pounding drums and Springsteen's full-blast vocals, cast the song in more patriotic terms than as a protest song. Although Springsteen originally recorded the song in an acoustic version and has occasionally performed it that way, he notes that the version on the *Born in the*

U.S.A. album "was its most powerful presentation. If I'd tried to undercut or change the music, I believe I would've had a record that would've been more easily understood but not as satisfying" (*Born to Run* 315).

In addition to the commercial success of the album, the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour was also Springsteen's most successful tour at this point in his career as his soaring popularity allowed him and the E Street Band to move out of arenas into the rarified air of performing in stadiums in both the United States and Europe. On this tour, Springsteen also performed in Australia and Japan for the first time. There were also personnel changes in the E Street Band as Steve Van Zandt left the band to pursue a solo career as Little Steven and was replaced by noted guitarist Nils Lofgren, and Patti Scialfia joined the band as a vocalist. The tour totaled one-hundred-fifty-six concerts and began on June 29, 1984, at St. Paul Civic Center Arena, in St. Paul, Minnesota, and concluded with three shows on September 27, 29, and 30, 1985, at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in Los Angeles, California ("Gig Page--1984"; "Gig Page—1985").

To officially document the tour, in 2015 Springsteen officially released *Brendan Byrne Arena, New Jersey 1984* as a three-CD set and for download as part of his archival concert series available through *brucespringsteen.net* in conjunction with *nugs.net.* Unfortunately, there has not been an officially released DVD of video from the tour, although NFL Films was involved in filming several concerts on the tour with some of this footage being used in the video for "My Hometown" (Marsh, *Glory Days* 404). However, there is a professionally shot video of Springsteen's June 29, 1985, performance at Parc de la Courneuve in Paris, France, that circulates in the Springsteen

fan community on DVD as *Breathless in Paris* and is also available on *youtube.com* to provide video documentation for this tour.

Springsteen has yet to release a boxed set for *Born in the U.S.A.*, although given the career progression of his previous boxed sets, one for this album should be next in line. Eighteen songs recorded during the *Born in the U.S.A.* sessions were released on the *Tracks* compilation, including the original acoustic version of "Born in the U.S.A." from Springsteen's January 3, 1982 demo tape and the five "B-Sides" from the hit singles, which included such notable songs as "Pink Cadillac" and "Shut Out the Light." Two more songs from the sessions were included on the "rarities" disc in the 2003 edition of *The Essential Bruce Springsteen,* while one song, "Murder Incorporated," was released as one of the "new" songs on the *Greatest Hits* (1995) compilation, which is discussed below.

Born in the U.S.A. has received specific popular and scholarly attention. Geoffrey Himes's *33 1/3: Born in the U.S.A.* (2007) is part of Continuum's continuing series of books which analyze important albums in the American popular music canon (other books in this series explore Bob Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited,* The Band's *Music from Big Pink,* and Joni Mitchell's *Court and Spark*). In this work, Himes looks at Springsteen's most popular album from cultural, lyrical, and musical perspectives and provides a valuable synthesis of both scholarship and popular writing about the album. Jason Schneider's article "Another Side of 'Born in the U.S.A.': Form, Paradox, and Rhetorical Indirection" (2014) explores how the song rhetorically questions national identity. Jefferson Cowie and Lauren Boehm analyze the song within the context of labor issues

in the 1980s in their valuable article "Dead Man's Town: 'Born in the U.S.A.,' Social History, and Working-Class Identity" (2006). Jim Cullen's article "Bruce Springsteen's Ambiguous Musical Politics in the Reagan Era" (1992) and Susan Mackey-Kallis and Ian McDermott's article "Bruce Springsteen, Ronald Reagan and the American Dream" (1992) explore the Springsteen's thematic and political connections with Ronald Reagan during the 1980s, which was discussed in the Introduction. Cowie's and Cullen's other works on Springsteen are discussed below in the Literature Review.

"Born in the U.S.A." is discussed within the larger context of works on the Vietnam War and war itself. Christian G. Appy discusses the 1984 political contexts of the song in his work *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (2015), while James Anderson Winn in his work *The Poetry of War* (2008) and David James in his article "The Vietnam War and American Music" (1989) analyze the song within the literary contexts of anti-war poetry and songs. *Born in the U.S.A.* is also the focus of a "tribute" album titled *Dead Man's Town: A Tribute to Bruce Springsteen's Born in the U.S.A.* (2014), which features performances from Nicole Adkins, Jason Isbell, the North Mississippi All-Stars, Holly Williams, and other artists.

Following the massive success of *Born in the U.S.A.*, Springsteen finally released an official live album titled *Live 1975-1985* on November 10, 1986, which was his first album to debut at number one on the album chart (Graff 223). For its time, it was also a rather massive live album spread across five LPs and three CDs and released as a boxed set. Bob Dylan's *Biograph* boxed set, which also contained five LPs and three CDs, had been released approximately a year earlier and thus unlocked both the artistic and

commercial viability of the boxed set in rock music (Carlin 328). *Live 1975-1985* essentially attempted to replicate a Springsteen concert and featured recordings from 1975, 1978, 1981, and 1985 concerts. As Carlin suggests, *Live 1975-1985* also "serve[d] as a monument to the sweep of Bruce's thirteen-year career as a recording artist, and the twenty-plus years he'd spent onstage with the core of musicians he'd played and lived with since they were all teenagers" (328). In addition to the usual Springsteen standards, *Live 1975-1985* also contained the previously unrecorded song "Seeds," versions of the songs "Fire" and "Because the Night," which had been recorded by the Pointer Sisters and Patti Smith, as well as versions of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land," Edwin Starr's "War," and Tom Waits's "Jersey Girl." The spirited version of "War" was released as a single and made it in to the Top Ten at number eight (Graff 412), along with a music video which featured Springsteen and the E Street Band performing the song during the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. This video is available on *Bruce Springsteen: The Video Anthology 1978-2000* and on *youtube.com.*

We can now view *Live 1975-1985* in Springsteen's discography as less than the monument suggested by Carlin but more as a fitting close to this phase of Springsteen's career, since his subsequent work during the rest of the 1980s and most of the 1990s ventured into other directions both thematically and musically. Unfortunately, however, as exciting and enjoyable as *Live 1975-1985* was when it was released, since at that point in his career, the only live recordings available were "unauthorized" and produced on LPs or cassette tapes of varying quality, it is now overshadowed by Springsteen's series of archival and current concert releases, which allow us to

experience these concerts in their entirety, rather than just as a synthesized collection of concert "greatest hits."

1987-2000

On October 9, 1987, Springsteen released the *Tunnel of Love* album, which was a significant departure both thematically and musically from all of his previous albums. Thematically, as Springsteen explains in *Songs*, the songs on the album dealt with "confronting the more intimate struggles of adult love" (190). In *Born to Run*, he expands on this theme when he writes,

> The twin issues of love and identity form the core of *Tunnel of Love*, but *time* is *Tunnel's* unofficial subtext. In this life (and there is only one), you make your choices, you take your stand and you awaken from the youthful spell of "immortality" and its eternal present . . . You name the things beyond your work that will give your life its context, meaning . . . the clock starts. You walk, now, not just at your partner's side, but alongside your own *mortal* self . . . This struggle to uncover who I was and to reach an uneasy peace with time and death itself is at the heart of *Tunnel of Love*. (349)

Springsteen's admission that *Tunnel of Love* was indeed a very personal album reflects his own personal struggles during this time in his life, especially the difficulties in his rather brief marriage to actress Julianne Phillips, whom he married on May 13, 1985, during the height of the *Born in the U.S.A.* fever and divorced in 1989. However, during his marriage to Phillips, Springsteen realized that he was actually in love with Patti

Scialfa. Springsteen admits this in *Born to Run* when he writes, "At first, I told myself it was just a 'thing.' It wasn't. It was *the* thing. The surreptitiousness didn't last long, and I came clean to Julie as soon as I knew how serious Patti and I were, but there was no decent or graceful way out of it" (351).

The key songs on *Tunnel of Love* mainly found on the second half of the album reside in that uncomfortable space when a couple knows their relationship is coming to an end, yet still cannot quite let go of each other. In the title song, this idea is presented as a carnival ride in which "There's a room of shadows that gets so dark brother/It's easy for two people to lose each other in this tunnel of love" (lines 13-14) and where "the house is haunted and the ride gets rough/And you've got to learn to live with what you can't rise above if you want to ride on down/in through this tunnel of love" (17-19). Dolan observes that on *Tunnel of Love* Springsteen "seizes a moment of personal failure as an opportunity for greater self-knowledge" (*Promise* 245).

"Tunnel of Love" is followed by three songs that all deal with the same idea of deception and personal struggle with deception: "Two Faces," "Brilliant Disguise," and "One Step Up." "Brilliant Disguise" is the key song in this thematic trilogy and is also one of Springsteen's greatest songs. He notes in *Born to Run* that "Brilliant Disguise" is "the song that sits thematically at the record's center. Trust is a fragile thing. It requires allowing others to see as much of ourselves as we have the courage to reveal. But 'Brilliant Disguise' postulates that when you drop one mask, you find another behind it until you begin to doubt your own feelings about who are" (349). The theme of masks comes out in the song at the end of the first two verses when the narrator asks his

partner, “So tell me who I see/when I look in your eyes/Is that you baby/or just a brilliant disguise” (9-12), and then in the song’s final full verse, he turns the question around and tells his partner, “So when you look at me/you better look hard and look twice/Is that me baby/or just a brilliant disguise” (41-44). Then in the song’s coda the narrator expresses a sense of overall doubt not only about his relationship but also about himself when he says, “Tonight our bed is cold/I’m lost in the darkness of our love/God have mercy on the man/Who doubts what he’s sure of” (45-48).

Not only is *Tunnel of Love* a departure lyrically from Springsteen’s previous albums but it is also a musical departure as well, since it is essentially a solo album with just a few instrumental contributions from members of the E Street Band on certain songs. Like *Nebraska*, this approach gives these more personal songs more immediacy and allows their emotion to be clearly heard and felt, which also works to imbue these songs with a universal meanings about the fragility of human relationships. Springsteen recorded only twenty-one songs in the recording sessions for *Tunnel of Love* with twelve of these songs comprising the album. Two songs, “Lucky Man” and “Two for the Road,” from these sessions were released as “B-Sides” for the singles for “Brilliant Disguise” and “Tunnel of Love.” These two songs, along with three other songs from these sessions, were released on the *Tracks* compilation (“*Tunnel of Love*-Studio Sessions-”).

Even with these thematic and musical shifts, *Tunnel of Love* became Springsteen’s fourth number one album of the 1980s, and he won another Grammy Award for Best Male Rock Vocal Performance, Solo for “Tunnel of Love” (Graff 387; Margolis). The album produced three singles, “Brilliant Disguise,” “Tunnel of Love,” and

"One Step Up," with "Brilliant Disguise" and "Tunnel of Love" making it into the Top Ten (White 281). Music videos were produced for the three singles and for the songs "Tougher than the Rest," "Spare Parts," and an acoustic version of "Born to Run," which he performed on the *Tunnel of Love* tour. All of three of these videos contain footage from performances on the *Tunnel of Love* tour with the "Tougher than the Rest" video being especially notable for the obvious chemistry displayed by Springsteen and Scialfa on stage. All of these videos are available on *Bruce Springsteen: The Video Anthology 1978-2000* and on *youtube.com.*

The *Tunnel of Love* tour, which began on February 25, 1988, at the Centrum in Worcester in Worcester, Massachusetts, and concluded on August 3, 1988, at Camp Nou in Barcelona, Spain, was a very different tour from the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour ("Gig Page—1988"). Springsteen describes the difference in the two tours in *Born to Run:*

> *Tunnel* was a solo album, so I wanted to distance the tour from being compared to our *USA* run. I shifted our stage layout, moving band members out of their long-held positions as a subtle way to signal to the audience that they should expect something different. I added a horn section, brought Patti to the front of the stage and left of center, and designed a carnivalesque proscenium to frame the action and play off my main metaphor of love as a scary amusement park ride. (350)

As Carlin points out, the tour was also different in that Springsteen did not want to "replay the same ritual night after night and year after year, [so] he made a list of his most-beloved stage songs—'Thunder Road,' 'The Promised Land,' 'Badlands,' and so

on—and put them on his do-not-play list." Also, "In a striking shift from every tour they had ever played, the set list for these shows would remain almost entirely consistent from night to night" (Carlin 340).

The results of this tour were mixed. One of the highlights of the tour was Springsteen's performance in East Berlin, East Germany, on July 19, 1988, which was discussed in the Introduction. In 2015, Springsteen officially released *LA Sports Arena, California 1988* as a three-CD set and for download through *brucespringsteen.net* in conjunction with *nugs.net* as an official document of this tour. This album presents a concert that is actually quite satisfying as Springsteen and the E Street Band perform most of the songs from *Tunnel of Love*, along with new songs like "I'm a Coward," "Part Man, Part Monkey," and "Light of Day," as well as the acoustic version of "Born to Run" that casts the song in a much less celebratory context than the full-band version. However, as Guterman argues, this tour

> was symptomatic of a larger problem: Springsteen worried about it before, but this time he really did not know where to put the E Street Band anymore. They could play strong, sometimes soaring, live shows together. There's no one alive with whom he could better play nearly all of his songs. Be he wasn't writing songs with them in mind anymore. (178)

The ultimate result of the *Tunnel of Love* tour was that on October 18, 1989, Springsteen called each member of the E Street Band to inform them that he was suspending his

working relationship with the band (Carlin 355). Springsteen writes in *Born to Run* that this separation from the band was not an easy decision,

> but in truth, we all needed a break. After sixteen years, a reconsidering was in order. I left in search of my own life and some new creative directions . . . When we would come back together I would find a more adult, settled powerful group of people. Our time away from one another gave us all a new respect for the man or woman standing next to us. It opened our eyes to what we had, what we'd accomplished and might still accomplish together. (376)

Following the end of the Amnesty International "Human Rights Now! Tour" in October 1988, which was discussed in the Introduction, Springsteen did not make a public appearance until November 1990, when he appeared with Jackson Browne and Bonnie Raitt at two benefit performances on November 16 and 17 for the Christic Institute, "an interfaith public interest law and political action group that tried to expose the CIA's involvement in Iran/Contra drug smuggling activities" (Graff 79). The Christic Institute is no longer in existence after it "filed a $24 million federal lawsuit using the Racketeer and Corrupt Influence Organizations (RICO) Act. But the charges were thrown out of court and the institute was hit with large fines, eventually causing its demise" (Graff 79). Springsteen's performances at these benefit concerts, which took place at The Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, California, were notable in that he performed entirely solo playing both guitar and piano, thus providing a preview of both of his solo tours in 1995-1996 and 2005, which are discussed below in this Career Overview. In

analyzing these performances, Dolan observes that "He may have been nervous, even a little off, but on the whole the two Christic shows were extraordinary, his finest and most spontaneous performances in years, . . . " (*Promise* 269). In 2016, these two performances were officially released on a three-CD set and for downloading as *The Christic Shows November 16-17, 1990* as part of Springsteen's archival series of concert recordings available through *brucespringsteen.net* in conjunction with *nugs.net.* Jonathan B. Pont provides a good overview of these performances in his article "Meeting the New Boss: The Christic Shows: Ten Years Burning Down the Road."

Springsteen's life dramatically changed on July 24, 1990, when Patti Scialfa delivered their son Evan (Carlin 357), and then changed again when he and Patti were married in June 1991 during a small, outdoor wedding where "the groom smiled broadly and wept happily. As Sciafla walked down the aisle to meet him, she was about three months pregnant with their second child. Little Evan was going to have a baby sister" (Dolan, *Promise* 270). Evan's baby sister, Jessica Springsteen, was born on December 30, 1991, and Sam Springsteen then followed on January 5, 1994, to complete the Springsteen and Scialfa family (Graff 350). All of these significant changes in Springsteen's personal life found their way into his next two albums *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, which were released simultaneously on March 31, 1992, and continued his exploration into the various facets of human relationships that began with the *Tunnel of Love* album. In releasing two albums on the same day, Springsteen followed the lead of Guns N' Roses, who released their two albums *Use Your Illusion I* and *Use Your Illusion II* on the same day in September 1991 (White 151).

In writing about *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, Springsteen notes that both of these albums "were about the blessings and the unanswerable questions that come with adult life, mortality, and human love" (*Songs* 219). Although the two albums dealt with similar ideas, they are actually two rather different albums. Springsteen admits that "*Human Touch* began as an exercise to get myself back into writing and recording. I wrote a variety of music in genres that I had always liked: soul, rock, pop, R &B" (*Songs* 216). Three of these songs—"57 Channels (And Nothin' On)," "Real World," and "Soul Driver"—Springsteen performed at the Christic Institute benefit in 1990. Springsteen recorded the songs on *Human Touch*, not with the still-exiled E Street Band with the notable exception of pianist Roy Bittan, but with studio musicians, which, as Dolan argues, leads this "exercise" to having a sound that may be "Digital perfection, but not even a touch of the gospel, let alone rock 'n' roll (*Promise* 367). Even though *Human Touch* may arguably suffer from being overproduced, there are notable songs on the album, such as the title track, and the three songs performed at the Christic Institute benefit that were mentioned above. "Human Touch" was released as a "single" and was something of a "hit" as it reached Number 16 on the singles chart (Graff 190).

If *Human Touch* can be viewed as being a bit labored and overproduced, then *Lucky Town* is its opposite. The song "Living Proof" is the bridge between the two albums. As Springsteen relates in *Songs*, he originally wrote "Living Proof" for *Human Touch,* but it wound up being the impetus for another album, which he wrote and recorded in only three weeks during the fall of 1991 (218; Graff 232). The songs on *Lucky Town* crackle with raw energy and insight as they mainly celebrate Springsteen's

marriage to Patti and the birth of their son Evan. In fact, as Dolan observes, "what is striking about the tracks Springsteen recorded that fall in this burst of testifying bliss is how loud they are, how prominent and joyous his electric guitar playing is . . . . " (*Promise* 272). Notable songs on *Lucky Town* include the title track, "Living Proof," "Better Days, "Leap of Faith," "If I Should Fall Behind," and "Local Hero" in which Springsteen pokes fun at his own celebrity status. Although both *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* hit number two and three respectively on the album chart when they were released, by the fall of 1992, as Dolan points out, "Springsteen may very well have had no proper place in the pop music universe of 1992 . . . Lucky now in love and family, Springsteen was apparently no longer lucky in pop" (*Promise* 298).

To promote these two albums, Springsteen made music videos for "Human Touch," Better Days," "57 Channels (And Nothing On)," and "Leap of Faith, all of which are available on the *The Complete Video Anthology 1978-2000* and are also available on *youtube.com*. He also made his first appearance on NBC's *Saturday Night Live* on May 9, 1992, performing three songs with a four-piece band, which included Roy Bittan, guitarist Shane Fontayne, bassist Tommy Sims, and drummer Zach Alford. This band had also performed with Springsteen three nights earlier at a performance for Sony music executives at the Bottom Line in New York City ("1992-05-09-Studio 8H"; 1992-05-06-Bottom Line"). Springsteen expanded this band by adding Crystal Taliefero on guitar and saxophone and five backup singers: Bobby King, Gia Ciambotti, Carol Dennis, Cleopatra Kennedy, and Angel Rogers. Springsteen and this band would go the road beginning with a European leg that began on June 15, 1992, at Globe Arena in

Stockholm, Sweden and concluded on July 13, 1992, at Wembley Arena in London, England. The American leg of the tour then began with eleven shows at Brendan Byrne Arena in East Rutherford, New Jersey beginning on July 23, 1992 and concluding on December 17, 1992, at Rupp Arena in Lexington, Kentucky ("Gig Page-1992"). In 1993, Springsteen and his band returned to Europe for the final leg of the tour which began on March 31, 1993, at SECC in Glasgow, Scotland and concluded on June 1, 1993 at Valle Hovin Stadion in Oslo, Norway ("Gig Page-1993").

During the American leg of the tour on September 9, 1992, Springsteen and the band filmed an episode for MTV's *Unplugged* concert series at a Los Angeles soundstage, which was broadcast in November 1992. Usually the performances on *Unplugged* were acoustic, but Springsteen broke with this tradition and only performed one acoustic song, the subtly salacious "Red Headed Woman," which he had also performed at the Christic Institute benefit in 1990. The remainder of Springsteen's performance was most definitely not unplugged as he and the band rumbled through several songs from *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, along with a few standards ("1992-9-22-Warner Hollywood Studios"). In December 1992, an expanded video version of this performance was released as *In Concert—MTV Plugged* (the "Un" in "Unplugged" was marked out with a prominent X) and was released on DVD in 2004. In 1993, Springsteen released a European-only single CD version of this performance with the same title as the video/DVD that was also released in the United States in 1997. The CD version contains fewer songs than the DVD version (Graff 194-95).

Although neither *Human Touch, Lucky Town,* or *In Concert—MTV Plugged* are on the top shelf of Springsteen albums, *Lucky Town* does stand out as an affirmational portrait of Springsteen's happiness in his new life with Patti Scialfa and their son that can be quite inspiring. Adam Sweeting also praises the album as being "one of the more pleasingly proportioned statements in the Springsteen repertoire. The writing feels confident and focused, and the material fits together comfortably as an album, all doubtless the result of being written in a defined period of time" ("Lucky Town" 68). The *In Concert—MTV Plugged* album and video, while essentially forgotten now in the current flood of current and archival concert releases that are discussed throughout this Career Overview, is actually quite an energetic and enjoyable live album and performance, which Dolan notes, "is livelier and more fun than most die-hard E Street fans give it credit for. What the new band members lacked in familiar synergy with Springsteen, they made up for in the youthful energy with which they attacked his songs" (*Promise* 297).

If Springsteen suddenly found himself lost in the popular music wilderness in 1992, he definitely found his way back in 1994 with his song "Streets of Philadelphia," which fueled his return to musical relevance and also launched him into a new realm of critical acceptance. Springsteen wrote "Streets of Philadelphia" at the request of director Jonathan Demme for his film *Philadelphia* about a lawyer (Tom Hanks) who is fired from his law firm for having AIDS and then sues his previous law firm for discrimination (Graff 363). In *Songs*, Springsteen writes that the song deals with two major questions: "How do we treat our sons and daughters confronting AIDS? How do

we provide them the acceptance and compassion that overcomes prejudice and ties disparate communities together?" (262). In trying to answer these questions, Springsteen casts the song as being more about discovering and losing identity than through emphasizing either homosexuality or AIDS within the context of American public life in the 1990s. David Masciotra provides a particularly insightful analysis which emphasizes this theme that is worth quoting in full:

> "Streets of Philadelphia" is not political, however, as much as it is purely and powerfully human. A man sings of wasting away in his own skin, and clothes, unable to recognize himself when he sees his own skeletal reflection, and suffering the loneliness of familial and communal abandonment. Springsteen's quiet, but desperate delivery over a soft beat and organ transforms the song into a prayer whispered into the night from a hospice unit. One of the most heartbreaking lines of any song begins the bridge. Springsteen sings, "Ain't no angel going to greet me . . . ," as he acknowledges the private catastrophe and crisis of his own solitary death. His only hope for solace and comfort is in the kiss of his lover—"Receive me brother with your faithless kiss . . . ." ("Dear Straight Springsteen Fans")

The popular response to "Streets of Philadelphia" pushed Springsteen back into the kind of popular stardom that he had previously achieved in the 1980s as the song "blew up into a worldwide smash, crowning the charts in eight countries, peaking at number 9 on *Billboard's* Hot 100 singles list, and selling more than a half million copies

in the United States alone" (Carlin 376). Springsteen also appeared in an interesting video for the song, which featured him literally walking the streets of Philadelphia alone with a live vocal track interspersed with brief scenes from the film. In addition to this popular success, the song brought Springsteen critical acclaim and awards as he won the 1994 Academy Award for Best Original Song and a Golden Globe award in the same category. In his Academy Award acceptance speech, Springsteen said, "You do your best work and you hope that pulls out the best in your audience and some piece of it spills over into the real world and into people's everyday lives and it takes the edge off the fear and allows us to recognize each other through our veil of differences" (qtd. in Graff 365). At the 1995 Grammy Awards, Springsteen also won an armload of awards for "Streets of Philadelphia," including Song of the Year, Best Rock Song, Best Male Rock Vocal Performance, and Best Song Written for a Motion Picture (Graff 365). "Streets of Philadelphia" appears on the *Philadelphia* soundtrack album, as well as on the Springsteen compilations: *Greatest Hits* (1995) and both the 2003 and 2015 editions of *The Essential Bruce Springsteen.* The video for "Streets of Philadelphia" is included on *Bruce Springsteen: The Video Anthology 1978-2000* and is also available on *youtube.com.* All of these compilations are discussed below.

Also, in connection with the popular and critical success of "Streets of Philadelphia," Springsteen was interviewed by Judy Wieder of *The Advocate* in the April 2, 1996 issue. In this notable interview, Springsteen expresses his support for gay rights including gay marriage and gay couples having children. Such early support for these issues corresponds to his continuing support of causes associated with modern

liberalism, but it also demonstrates his belief that the idea of the "American Promise" should be open to all Americans, regardless of sexual orientation. Springsteen's interview in *The Advocate* is included in *Springsteen on Springsteen: Interviews, Speeches, and Encounters* (2013), *Talk About a Dream: The Essential Interviews of Bruce Springsteen* (2013), and *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader* (2004), which are all discussed below in the Literature Review.

Following the success of "Streets of Philadelphia" in 1994, Springsteen released two albums in 1995. The first was *Greatest Hits*, which was released in February 1995 and is a single-CD compilation of eighteen songs. Somewhat surprisingly, there are no songs from his first two albums as the compilation begins with "Born to Run" and runs through "Streets of Philadelphia" for the "hits" part. *Greatest Hits* also contains four songs that were specifically recorded for the album with the briefly reunited E Street Band: "Secret Garden," "Murder Incorporated," "Blood Brothers," and "This Hard Land." Videos were released for "Secret Garden" and "Murder Incorporated," which was a live performance of the song by Springsteen and the briefly reunited E Street Band. Both videos are included in *Bruce Springsteen: The Video Collection 1978-2000* and also available on *youtube.com.* For the first time for an album, the booklet accompanying the CD contains Springsteen's comments about each song and also serves as preview for his book *Songs*, which was published in 1998 and is cited in this Career Overview and discussed below in the Literature Review. For an artist like Springsteen who conceives of his work in terms of "albums" and concert performances and less in terms of actual "hits," putting together any kind of compilation is a challenge with the

results invariably less than satisfying. Although the four extra songs on *Greatest Hits* still make this compilation relevant, the compilation of the "hits" included has now been supplanted by the more valuable 2003 and 2015 editions of *The Essential Bruce Springsteen*.

The recording of the extra songs for *Greatest Hits*, as well as other songs at these sessions, are the focus of a documentary film directed by Ernie Fritz and titled *Blood Brothers.* The film is available on DVD and is significant for showing "how hard Springsteen works on every aspect of his music, from the extra time he puts into writing lyrics to the attention he pays to achieving the perfect musical accompaniment" (Graff 37). When the film was originally released on VHS in 1996, it came with a five-song EP also titled *Blood Brothers*, which included different versions of "Blood Brothers and "Secret Garden," a live version of "Murder Incorporated," and two other songs recorded during these sessions, "High Hopes," written by Tim Scott McConnell, and "Without You." The *Blood Brothers* EP is commercially available for downloading. "High Hopes" reappeared in a different version as the title song of Springsteen's 2014 *High Hopes* album, which is discussed below.

In addition to *Greatest Hits*, Springsteen also released a new album in 1995 titled *The Ghost of Tom Joad*. Like *Nebraska* and *Devils & Dust* (2005), this album is considered one of Springsteen's "solo" albums. In *Songs*, Springsteen explains that for the songs on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* "the music was minimal; the melodies were uncomplicated, yet played an important role in the storytelling process. The simplicity and plainness, the austere rhythms defined who these characters were and how they

expressed themselves" (274). Also, as on *Nebraska* and *Devils & Dust*, the focus of *The Ghost of Tom Joad* is mainly on character studies, which fall into two categories. As Springsteen notes, the first category, which the song "The Ghost of Tom Joad" symbolizes through its distinct echoes of the character of Tom Joad from John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and Woody Guthrie's song "Tom Joad" in a more contemporary context, "chronicled the increasing economic division of the '80s and the '90s and the hard times and consequences for many of the people whose work and sacrifice helped build the country we live in" (*Songs* 274). For the songs "Youngstown" and "The New Timer," which also both fit into this category, Springsteen was directly inspired by Dale Maharidge's and Michael Williamson's work *Journey to Nowhere: The Saga of the New Underclass*, which was first published in 1985. For the 1996 edition of this work, Springsteen contributed an Introduction, which is discussed below in the Literature Review. The 1996 edition also included the lyrics for "The Ghost of Tom Joad," "Youngstown," and "The New Timer."

As Springsteen also notes, the second category of songs on the album focuses on "songs that traced the lineage of my earlier characters to the Mexican migrant experience in the New West . . . Their skin was darker and their language had changed, but these were people trapped by the same brutal circumstances" (*Songs* 276). These songs include "Sinaloa Cowboys" and the haunting "Across the Border," which was also recorded by Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris on their album *Western Wall: The Tucson Sessions* (1999). In addition to the Ronstadt and Harris version of "Across the Border," Rage Against the Machine recorded a completely reworked version of "The

Ghost of Tom Joad" as hard rock song featuring guitarist Tom Morello's blistering guitar for their album *Renegades* (2000). On his 2014 album *High Hopes*, Springsteen revisited "The Ghost of Tom Joad" in a full-band rock version with Morello featured on guitar. A video featuring evocative black-and-white photography by Springsteen's sister, Pamela, was produced for "The Ghost of Tom Joad." The photographs used in the video "were shot along lonely highways in the Mojave Desert—including Route 66, the road used by the fictional Joads for their western migration in John Steinbeck's book *The Grapes of Wrath"* (Graff 351). Springsteen also performed the song on NBC's *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, and also appeared on CBS's *The Late Show with David Letterman* where he performed "Youngstown" in November and December 1995. ("1995-11-27"; "1995-12-14"). Both the video and *Tonight Show* performance of "The Ghost of Tom Joad" are included on *Bruce Springsteen: The Video Anthology 1978-2000* and are also available on *youtube.com.*

As an album, *The Ghost of Tom Joad* can be viewed as being more respected than loved. Lyrically, the songs are strong, but as a listening experience, they come across essentially as character-centered short stories narrated within minimal musical contexts. As Andrew Mueller suggests, these minimal musical frameworks are "the most consistently mournful of any album in the Springsteen canon, every song a ballad, every song a sigh" (74). Although, as we have seen, this kind of musical minimalism was Springsteen's intent on this album, it just simply does not make for an album that one will listen to very often. Accordingly, *The Ghost of Tom Joad* only reached number eleven on the album chart, which was "his first album to miss the Top 5 since *The Wild,*

the Innocent, and *the E Street Shuffle* in 1973" (Carlin 386). Springsteen acknowledges in *Songs* that he knew the album "wouldn't attract my largest audience. But I was sure the songs on it added up to a reaffirmation of the best of what I do" (277). Springsteen's faith in *The Ghost of Tom Joad* was rewarded at the 1997 Grammy Awards when he performed the title song on the awards broadcast and won the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Folk Album (Graff 162).

As he had with all of his previous albums, Springsteen hit the road for lengthy tour of 127 concerts in the United States, Europe, Japan, and Australia. The tour began on November 22, 1995, with a performance at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, New Jersey, and concluded on February 17, 1997, at the Palais Theatre in Melbourne, Australia ("Gig Page-1995"; "Gig Page-1996"; "Gig Page-1997"). However, this tour was very different in that Springsteen performed solo, as he had at the 1990 Christic Institute benefit, with the concerts mainly taking place in theatre-type venues, rather than arenas or stadiums, and featuring most of the songs from the album, along with selected reworked standards. The most notable of these was Springsteen's stark version of "The Promised Land," in which he uses the guitar as a tuned drum and casts the song as much more desperate and resigned than the statement of triumphant hope found in the more familiar album and live versions of the song with the E Street Band. Although Springsteen has not released an official live album from this tour, one of the more interesting recordings from this tour that circulates in the Springsteen fan community and is also available on in its entirety on *youtube.com* as *Freehold Night,* is his concert at the Saint Rose of Lima School in his hometown of Freehold, New Jersey on

November 8, 1996, which was a benefit concert for the church's Hispanic community center (Graff 162; Lustig). Patti Scialfa and violinist Soozie Tyrell join Springsteen on selected songs during this concert, so it's not entirely a solo performance. Springsteen ends the concert with a performance of the song "Freehold," a still-unreleased and humorous song about growing up there.

However, as Dolan argues, the austerity of this solo tour meant that the familiar communal experience of a Springsteen concert with the E Street Band or even the "other band" of the 1992-1993 tour was missing, because "No matter how much he might sing about community in such concerts, whatever art they contained was not the result of collaboration between artist and audience. It was about an artist simply telling an audience what he thought" (*Promise* 333). However, as Bryan Garman argues in comparing Springsteen to the poet Walt Whitman, there was another, more important dimension to *The Ghost of Tom Joad* album and tour for Springsteen:

> Throughout the album and the tour that promoted it, Springsteen, as Whitman had done before him, constructed economic and racial oppression as a moral problem and tried to forge a culture that is not based on self-interest but that will teach men and women to balance individual freedom with the public good, to value people over profits, to create an egalitarian society based on love and compassion rather than hate than greed. (*Race of Singers* 236)

Garman's observation serves as an effective summary of Springsteen's own ideology that had been present in his work throughout his career, but that he began to articulate

more clearly through his public statements from the stage and performances in the 1980s and then through the song "Streets of Philadelphia" and *The Ghost of Tom Joad* album and tour. As noted in the Introduction, it was during this tour that Springsteen appeared at an anti-Proposition 209 rally in Los Angeles, California, as his political activism began to merge more with his music. We can then view "Streets of Philadelphia" and *The Ghost of Tom Joad* as a true turning point in Springsteen's career, which, as Marsh observes, "brought this new—this adult, mature, sober—Bruce Springsteen into full view" (*On Tour* 217).

The Ghost of Tom Road has received specific scholarly attention. Springsteen's connections to John Steinbeck are analyzed by Gavin Cologne-Brooks in "*The Ghost of Tom Joad:* Steinbeck's Legacy in the Songs of Bruce Springsteen," which is a chapter in the anthology *Beyond Boundaries: Rereading John Steinbeck* and by Lauren Onkey in "'Not Afraid of Being Heroic': Bruce Springsteen's John Steinbeck," which is a chapter in the *Political Companion to John Steinbeck*. Adam Lifsey explores important geographical aspects in the songs on the album which focus on Hispanic migrant workers in his article "The Borderlands Poetics of Bruce Springsteen" in the *Journal of the Society for American Music*. Also, in connection with the album, Springsteen was interviewed by Will Percy for an article in *DoubleTake* magazine that was published in 1998. In this interview titled "Rock and Read," Springsteen discusses specific literary influences on his work, such as Flannery O' Connor and Walker Percy, among the interview topics. This interview is included in *Springsteen on Springsteen: Interviews, Speeches, and*

Encounters, Talk About a Dream: The Essential Interviews of Bruce Springsteen, and *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader.*

Following the end of his solo tour in February 1997, Springsteen was awarded the prestigious Polar Music Prize by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music on May 5, 1997, thus joining other artists, such as Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney, and Joni Mitchell who have also been honored (Graff 284-86). As Dolan notes, the Polar Music Prize has been referred to as "the 'Nobel Prize of music,' which seemed fitting, since (like the Nobel Prize in Literature) it was handed out in Sweden and seemed to pay more attention to the content of an artist's work than its form or style" (*Promise* 333). This award, along with his recent Academy Award and Grammy Awards for "Streets of Philadelphia" and *The Ghost of Tom Joad,* solidified Springsteen's critical acclaim as this stage of his career. Correspondingly, in 1998, Springsteen published *Songs*, which contains the lyrics for songs on his albums through *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, along with written introductions in which he discusses the contexts and themes of each album. *Songs* is discussed more fully below in the Literature Review. Also, in 1998, he released *Tracks*, which is a four-CD compilation of unreleased songs from all phases of his career up to this point. Springsteen said in an interview with Charlie Rose:

> for *Tracks,* I specifically chose things that came from records that I'd released—that there'd be a context for, for my fans to go back . . . I wanted the things in this collection to refer back to the records that I'd released and fill those records out and give people a broader idea of what

> I was doing in the studio and the kind of music we were making. ("TV Interview" 266)

Among the highlights of *Tracks* are four songs from Springsteen's 1972 audition with John Hammond, important early songs like "Thundercrack" and "Zero and Blind Terry," numerous outtakes from *The River* and *Born in the U.S.A.*, including the original acoustic version of "Born in the U.S.A.," which Springsteen returned to in concert performances on the "Reunion Tour" in 1999-2000, along with notable "B-Sides" such as "Pink Cadillac" and "Shut Out the Light" and several songs recorded in the 1990s, including a version of "Back in Your Arms Again," which was recorded during the *Greatest Hits* sessions and featured in the *Blood Brothers* documentary. Yet for all of the music included, it is a rather uneven collection. As Luke Torn points out, "*Tracks* turns out to be a strangely incongruous beast, hardly filling in every crucial gap" (86). Since Springsteen did not include detailed annotations for the songs on *Tracks*, *Backstreets* magazine published "The *Backstreets* Liner Notes to *Tracks*" in the Winter 1998 issue. These rather comprehensive liner notes for each song on *Tracks* were compiled by Erik Flannigan and Christopher Phillips and are an essential companion to *Tracks*. The liner notes are available for download as a PDF file on *Backstreets.com* and can be cut to fit nicely in the *Tracks* box. In February 1999, Springsteen released *18 Tracks*, which is a single-disc compilation of selected key songs from the boxed set and also contains three songs not included in the set. Although originally considered something of a "cash grab" by Springsteen fans through the release of these additional

songs, this compilation actually provides a nice overview of the key songs on the *Tracks* box without having to wade through all four CDs.

Carlin observes that "*Tracks* didn't become the hit that the live box set had been a dozen years earlier, although it did cast a spell on listeners and fans who recalled how powerful Bruce's music sounded in the hands of the E Street Band" (395). As Carlin also notes, the impact of working on *Tracks* "had infused Bruce with a new appreciation for his old musical companions" (395). This renewed appreciation led Springsteen to reunite the E Street Band for what became known as the "Reunion Tour." Springsteen and the E Street Band began rehearsing in early March 1999 at Convention Hall in Asbury Park. On March 15, 1999, Springsteen was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and, as part of the induction festivities at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, he performed four songs with the E Street Band, which were broadcast on VH1 as part of their coverage of the induction ceremony ("1999 Set Lists Part 1: March 15").

The "Reunion Tour" opened In Europe with two concerts in Barcelona, Spain, on April 9 and 11, 1999, and continued through a performance on June 27, 1999, in Oslo, Norway ("1999 Setlists Part 1). The American leg of the tour began with fifteen shows at Continental Airlines Arena in East Rutherford, New Jersey, which ran from July 15 through August 12, 1999, and concluded on November 28-29 with two concerts in at the Target Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota ("1999 Setlists Part 2"). The 2000 part of the tour began with a concert on February 28 at Bryce Jordan Center in State College,

Pennsylvania, and concluded with ten concerts at Madison Square Garden in New York City that took place over a three week stretch from June 12 to July 1 ("2000 Setlists").

The final two nights of the Madison Square Garden performances on June 29 and July 1 were filmed by Home Box Office (HBO) for Springsteen's first television special, which was titled *Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band: Live in New York City* and first broadcast on April 7, 2001. The HBO special, which was directed by Chris Hilson, was nominated for six Emmy Awards and won two for Outstanding Lighting Direction and Outstanding Multi-Camera Picture Editing for a Miniseries, Movie, or Special (Graff 60-61). Prior to the first broadcast of the HBO special, the two-CD set *Live in New York City* was released on April 3, 2001, and contained all of the songs in the television special, as well as six other songs. In November 2001, Springsteen released the HBO special on a two-DVD set also titled *Live in New York City*, which contained the original special and eleven additional songs, including six extra songs on the two-CD set. The DVD also includes a documentary about the tour with an interview by Bob Costas with Springsteen and members of the E Street Band about the tour. Both the video and audio versions of *Live in New York City* are very enjoyable, especially the video version through its Emmy Award-winning camerawork, but in retrospect they are both ultimately lacking through not presenting a "complete" concert from the two concerts that were filmed and recorded.

Although *Tracks* may have inspired the "Reunion Tour," the tour was not at all about performing these unreleased songs, and it was actually an unusual tour for Springsteen in that it was not built around songs from a new album as all his previous

tours had been since the release of his first two albums in 1973. Dolan suggests that "it almost seemed on this tour as if Springsteen was starting to reconsider the possible social value of merely making a joyful noise" (*Promise* 350). Such a "joyful noise" manifested itself on this tour through spirited renditions of Springsteen standards, such as "Born to Run, "Badlands," and "Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out", as well as reinventions of other standards like the acoustic version of "Born in the U.S.A." and an especially mournful version of "The River," which morphed into a virtual duet between Springsteen's vocals and harmonica and Clarence Clemons' saxophone. Springsteen also debuted two new songs on this tour: "Land of Hope and Dreams" and "American Skin (41 Shots)." Performances of both songs are included on included on the video and audio versions of *Live in New York City*.

In writing about the song "Land of Hope and Dreams," Springsteen notes that it was written for the "Reunion Tour" as "Something that would reaffirm our sense of purpose and capture our current ambitions, that would let our fans know once again what we were here for" (*Songs* 296). On the "Reunion Tour" the song was the final song performed at each concert with the exception of the final show on the tour at Madison Square Garden which ended with "Blood Brothers" (1999 Setlists Part 2"; "2000 Setlists"). Although originally written as a statement by Springsteen and the E Street Band about their purpose, "Land of Hope and Dreams" evolved into a musical statement of Springsteen's own ideology that expresses his egalitarian and communal vision of the "American Promise" that is available to every American, which Craig Werner describes as "Calling out to the saints and sinners, the losers and winners, the whores and

gamblers, [as] Springsteen invite[s] anyone in need of redemption—which is to say all of us—to board his train" (351). Given its affirmational message, it should not be surprising that "Land of Hope and Dreams" has become a key song in Springsteen concerts on his tours since the "Reunion Tour," and it also appears at an important point on the *Wrecking Ball* album, which is discussed in Chapter Seven.

The other new song that Springsteen wrote during the "Reunion Tour" is very different from the affirmational message of "Land of Hope and Dreams." Springsteen debuted the song "American Skin (41 Shots)" at the June 4, 2000 concert at Philips Arena in Atlanta, Georgia, and then performed the song each night during the closing ten-concert run as Madison Square Garden. The reference to "41 Shots" in the subtitle of the song is about the shooting of Amadou Diallo, who, as Springsteen notes, was "an innocent African immigrant gunned down in a tragic accident by undercover police detectives outside his apartment in New York City. He'd been shot 41 times" (*Songs* 298). Diallo was stopped by the police and "responded to the officers' shouts as he had been trained to do in Guinea, by reaching into his pocket for his identification cards. One or more of the officers mistook the wallet for a gun, and all four opened fire with their automatic pistols" (Carlin 402). The impact of the song was immediate, and, as Springsteen observes, "By the time we got to New York City, we were the talk of the tabloids. We were attacked in the newspapers, and I received letters from officials asking me not to play the song" (*Songs* 298). Springsteen was also attacked for being anti-police by New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and the NYPD union leader Patrick

Lynch, as well as by Bob Lucente, the leader of the New York City FOP, who "dismissed Bruce as a 'floating fag' and a 'dirtbag' for criticizing the NYPD' (Carlin 404-05).

Of course, in the torrents of all this criticism, the actual meaning of "American Skin (41 Shots)" was lost. The song is not an anti-NYPD rant but rather an indictment of the violence resulting from the racism still present in the American soul. As the narrator says in the song, "You can get killed just for living/In your American skin" (12-13), and this violence affects us all because no one is immune and we are all culpable in some way, since "We're baptized in these waters and each other's blood" (34). In writing about the actual theme of the song, Springsteen explains, "I knew a diatribe would do no good. I just wanted to help people see the other guy's point of view. The idea was here: Here is what systematic racial injustice, fear, and paranoia do to our children, our loved ones, ourselves. Here is the price of blood" (*Songs* 298). Like "Land of Hope and Dreams, "American Skin (41 Shots)" has become a staple in Springsteen's concerts, especially on more recent tours as, unfortunately, the situations and ideas of this song continue to resonate in American public life. A studio version of the song featuring a ferocious guitar solo by Tom Morello is on the *High Hopes* (2014). "American Skin (41 Shots" has received scholarly attention by Renny Christopher in his article "Springsteen, Diallo, and the NYC Police: An Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class" and by Steven Fein in "'American Skin (41 Shots),' 'Galveston Bay,' and the Social Psychology of Prejudice," which is a chapter in *Bruce Springsteen, Cultural Studies, and the Runaway American Dream* and discussed in the Literature Review. Samuele F.S. Pardini offers a

valuable analysis of the song and summary of the controversy in the article "Bruce Springsteen's 'American Skin.'"

As part of the attention Springsteen received through reuniting with the E Street Band for the "Reunion Tour" and the subsequent broadcast and release of *Live in New York City* in video and audio formats, Springsteen released an updated version of *The Complete Video Anthology 1978-2000*, which compiles assorted videos and concert performances from these years. The original version of this compilation only went through 1988 and was only available on VHS video. Although Springsteen is not considered a great video artist and has even said "I've never been much of a video artist. I was 'pre-video,' and I think I remain pre-video, though maybe I'm 'post-video' now" ("Rock and Read" 256), several of Springsteen's videos to accompany the "hits" from *Born in the U.S.A.* and *Tunnel of Love* included in this collection are worth exploring for how they presented him and his music to a mass audience, particularly the video for "Dancing in the Dark," which literally introduced him to the burgeoning music video world of 1984 and to a mass audience. The collection is also notable for the inclusion of several live performances from various stages in his career, particularly the performances from the *No Nukes* film discussed in the Introduction and a rare solo performance of "Born to Run" from the *Tunnel of Love* tour.

2001-2016

The success of the "Reunion Tour" in 1999-2000 set the stage for Springsteen's first album of new material since the *The Ghost of Tom Joad* album in 1995. *The Rising*

was the first album Springsteen had recorded with the E Street Band since *Born in the U.S.A.* in 1984 and was released on July 30, 2002, with much fanfare as "Bruce led the charge, diving headlong into the highest profile sales campaign he'd ever signed on for . . . " (Carlin 416), including a release day appearance on the *Today* show from Asbury Park, as well as multi-night appearances on *The Late Show with David Letterman* and *Nightline* with Ted Koppel, along with *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Uncut* cover stories and interviews. The media blitz paid off as "First-week sales of *The Rising* rose above a half million copies, propelling it instantly to the top slot on *Billboard's* Top 200 albums list. It stayed there for three weeks, fast on its way to selling better than any of Bruce's albums since *Tunnel of Love* in 1987" (Carlin 416-17). Springsteen was nominated for several Grammy Awards for *The Rising*, including Album of the Year, Song of the Year, Best Rock Album, Best Rock Song, and Best Male Rock Vocal Performance and won the Grammies for Best Rock Album, Best Rock Song, and Best Male Rock Vocal Performance (Graff 167). However, "his defeats by Norah Jones in the prestigious Album of the Year and Song of the Year categories were considered major upsets" (Graff 167). Springsteen also won a Grammy in 2003 for Best Rock Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal for his collaboration with the late Warren Zevon on the song "Disorder in the House" from his *The Wind* album (Graff 167). Thematic aspects of *The Rising* are discussed in Chapter Three.

As with previous albums with the E Street Band, Springsteen and the E Street Band embarked on a lengthy tour supporting the album. *The Rising* tour began on August 7, 2002, in Continental Airlines Arena in East Rutherford, New Jersey, and

concluded on October 4th, 2003, in New York's Shea Stadium ("2002 Setlists"; "2003 Setlists Part 1"; "2003 Setlists Part 2"). To commemorate *The Rising* tour, for the first time in his career Springsteen released a full-length concert *Live in Barcelona* on a two-DVD set in November 2003. Portions of this October 16, 2002 Barcelona concert were originally televised live in Europe by MTV Europe and VH1-UK and then used for a CBS special *Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band*, which aired on February 28, 2003. The CBS special received three 2003 Emmy nominations ("Three Emmy Nods"). Like the *Live in New York City* DVD, *Live in Barcelona* also contains a documentary about *The Rising* tour with interviews with Springsteen and the band about the tour. Performance aspects of *The Rising* tour are discussed in Chapter Three, and Springsteen's comments from the stage during the 2003 portion of tour in which he first expressed his opposition to the Iraq war and the policies of the George W. Bush administration in regard to the war are discussed in Chapter Four.

Also, in November 2003, Springsteen released *The Essential Bruce Springsteen*, which was a two-disc set compiling his key songs through *The Rising*. This set also contained a third CD of unreleased songs, "B-sides," and movie songs, including "Dead Man Walking" from the film *Dead Man Walking,* which garnered Springsteen a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Music, Original Song in 1996. In his liner notes for this compilation, Springsteen acknowledges the difficulties inherent in putting a compilation like together, because the song selection will not always please everyone: "You know . . . 'one man's coffee is another man's tea, one man's whiskey' . . . In any body of work there are obvious high points. The rest depends on who's doing the

listening. Where you were, when it was, who you were with when a particular song or album cut the deepest" (*"The Essential* Liner Notes"). Springsteen also notes that this compilation was a result of the success of *The Rising* tour, since "We saw a lot of new faces on our recent tour and we put this collection together with them in mind . . . The idea was to present a little bit of what each album had to offer" ("*The Essential* Liner Notes"). "Code of Silence," an unreleased live recording which was co-written with Joe Gruschecky and also included on the third disc of rarities, won the 2004 Grammy Award for Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance (Graff 483).

Following the end of *The Rising* tour in November 2003, Springsteen remained relatively quiet until the summer of 2004 when on June 8 he posted a link on his official website to Al Gore's May 27, 2004, speech about the Bush administration to the MoveOn political organization. Then on August 5, Springsteen published an op-ed in *The New York Times*, "Chords for Change," in which he publicly endorsed Democratic candidate John Kerry in the presidential election. Also, on August 5, Springsteen's involvement in the Vote for Change tour was announced. This tour, which in addition to Springsteen, featured such artists as Bonnie Raitt, R.E.M., and the Dave Matthews Band, played concerts in cities in key "swing states" in the 2004 election. Springsteen also appeared with John Kerry at campaign rallies in Madison, Wisconsin, Columbus, Ohio, and Cleveland, Ohio, during the final week of the campaign where he performed songs and made introductory speeches for Kerry. All of this activity is discussed in Chapter Four.

On April 25, 2005, Springsteen released the album *Devils & Dust***,** which "collected a dozen stark, character-driven songs, much like the ones that had filled his acoustic solo projects *Nebraska* and *The Ghost of Tom Joad*" (Carlin 421). However, unlike *The Rising* in 2002, the songs on *Devils & Dust* were recorded without the E Street Band and "didn't represent a new burst of creativity as much as a thoughtful sifting of Bruce's old notebooks and recorded archives" (Carlin 421), since most of the songs, with the notable exception of "Devils & Dust," were written during the 1990s (Carlin 421). Like he did for *The Rising*, Springsteen made several television network appearances for *Devils & Dust* on NBC's *Today* and *Dateline NBC*, CBS' *Sunday Morning*, and a VH1 *Storytellers* performance. Like *The Rising, Devils & Dust* debuted at number one on the album chart and was released on CD, for download, and on vinyl as a double LP (White 274). The CD version also included a DVD with videos of Springsteen performing five of the songs on the album, including "Devils & Dust," as well as brief explanations of these songs. *Devils & Dust* was nominated for two 2006 Grammy Awards: Best Contemporary Folk Album and Best Long Form Music Video, while the song "Devils & Dust" was nominated for Song of the Year, Best Rock Song, and Best Rock Vocal Solo Performance, with a win in the latter category (Margolis). Springsteen performed "Devils & Dust" at the 2006 Grammy Awards show. The *Devils & Dust* album, the song "Devils & Dust," and Springsteen's performance of the song at the Grammy Awards are all discussed in Chapter Five.

In support of *Devils & Dust,* Springsteen embarked on a solo tour during which he played a variety of instruments, including guitar, piano, pump organ, banjo, and even

ukulele, performing songs from the album, as well as many of his classic songs often significantly rearranged for solo performances. The tour began on April 25, 2005, in Detroit, Michigan, and ended on November 22, 2005, in Trenton, New Jersey, and included both American and European performances ("2005 Setlists"). In his original conception of this tour, Springsteen had begun rehearsals with a small group of musicians, including E Street Band guitarist Nils Lofgren, "but "These medium-sized arrangements of his music had somehow not sounded right, however, and for the songs from the new album an eight-or nine-piece band would have been too much" (Dolan, *Promise* 386). On this solo tour, Springsteen performed a total of seventy-three concerts in both the United States and Europe, and, as Dolan argues, "was as radical a reinvention of himself as any pop star of Springsteen's magnitude had ever attempted. It was courageous and risky on a nightly basis" (*Promise* 389). In connection with the tour, Springsteen also co-authored with Cal Fussman a first-person account of performing solo titled "It Happened in Jersey" for a cover story for the August 2005 issue of *Esquire* in which he writes, "That first step onstage is an unusual feeling . . . It also means something's at stake, something that matters. You're taking a risk, which is the essence of all live performance. It's not an entirely comfortable feeling, but it's a necessary one. It happens every time, and it tends to stop the minute I put my hands on any instrument" (95).

As noted above, Springsteen filmed a solo *Storytellers* performance for VH1. This performance was filmed before the tour began on April 4, 2005, at The Two River Theatre in Red Bank, New Jersey, and was first broadcast on April 23, 2005 with an

extended version first broadcast on VH1 Classic on April 26, 2005. Springsteen's *Storytellers* performances are most notable not only for his solo renditions of "Devils & Dust" and "The Rising," but also for his spoken introductions for each song in which he discusses the lyrical and musical ideas that are part of each song. In September 2005, Springsteen's complete *Storytellers* performance was released on DVD as *Bruce Springsteen: VH1 Storytellers* and is a valuable resource for a deeper understanding for both "The Rising" and "Devils & Dust," which are discussed in Chapters Three and Four. Also, in 2015 as part of Springsteen's archival series of concert recordings available through *brucespringsteen.net* in partnership with *nugs.net,* the July 31, 2005 Columbus, Ohio concert on the solo tour was officially released as two-CD set and for download as *Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio 2005.*

On April 25, 2006, almost exactly one year after the release of *Devils & Dust,* Bruce Springsteen released the album *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* on CD, for download, and on vinyl as a double LP (White 275). This album was a unique project in his long career, since it was his first album which featured traditional American folk songs and spirituals associated with other artists, most notably folk singer Pete Seeger. For Springsteen, *The Seeger Sessions* became an evolving musical project resulting in two editions of the album and a critically acclaimed tour featuring what came to be known as "The Sessions Band," which was captured in the 2007 *Live in Dublin* concert album and DVD. Unlike both *The Rising* and *Devils & Dust, The Seeger Sessions* did not debut at number one on the Billboard Album chart, instead settling for number three with "first week sales [that] were only 60 percent of the previous year's initial sales for

Devils & Dust. After the first week, though, sales of *The Seeger Sessions* starting trending much better than other recent Springsteen releases, eventually matching total sales of *Devils & Dust*" (Orel 39). The day after the album's release Springsteen and what became known as the "Sessions Band" performed on ABC's *Good Morning America* from the Convention Hall in Asbury Park. At the 2007 Grammy Awards, *The Seeger Sessions* won the Grammy Award for Best Traditional Folk Album (Margolis).

Other popular artists like Bob Dylan (*Good As I Been to You* and *World Gone Wrong*), Lucinda Williams (*Happy Woman Blues*), and John Mellencamp (the underrated *Trouble No More*) have recorded similar albums during their careers, but what set Springsteen's album apart from these and other similar efforts is that he actually went on an extended American and European tour featuring the "Sessions Band," a large eighteen-member band comprised of most of the musicians who performed on *The Seeger Sessions* and mainly played songs from the album, as well as other traditional American songs, with just a few re-worked Springsteen songs appearing in the set lists. Springsteen's determination to perform these songs in this radically different musical context from his recent successful concert tours with The E Street Band or his 2005 solo tour, allowed him to recast these songs in new ways to show that traditional American songs can still have powerful meanings and connections to American life in the twenty-first century. *The Seeger Sessions* tour began with an emotional performance on April 30, 2006, in New Orleans at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, which is discussed in Chapter Five, and ended on November 21, 2006 in Belfast, Ireland ("2006 Setlists"). The musical success of *The Seeger Sessions* album and tour led to the August

2006 release of an expanded edition of the album with the title *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions—American Land Edition*, which included three new songs: Springsteen's versions of Blind Alfred Reed's "How Can A Man Stand Such Times and Live" about events surrounding Hurricane Katrina and Pete Seeger's famous anti-war song "Bring 'Em Home," as well as a new song called "American Land," which was based on the Pete Seeger song "He Lies in the American Land" (Marsh, "Seeger Sessions Notes"). His versions of "How Can a Man Stand Such Times and Live" and "Bring 'Em Home" are also discussed in Chapter Five.

The genesis of what became *The Seeger Sessions* began in 1997 when Springsteen was asked by Jim Musselman of Appleseed Recordings to contribute a track to the Pete Seeger tribute album *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?,* which was released in 1998. Springsteen agreed to Musselman's request and recorded a version of "We Shall Overcome," along with four other songs in the living room of his New Jersey farmhouse, including both "Jesse James" and "My Oklahoma Home" which became part of *The Seeger Sessions* album, out of a list of fourteen songs that Musselman thought might work for Springsteen (Orel 37). Springsteen admits that "Growing up as a rock n' roll kid I didn't know a lot about Pete's music or the depth of his influence. So I headed to the record store and came back with an armful of Pete Seeger records. Over the next few days of listening, the wealth of songs, their richness and power changed what I thought I knew about 'folk music'" (*Seeger Sessions* liner notes). Springsteen eventually recorded two more of the songs on this original list, "John Henry" and "Mrs. McGrath," on March 19, 2005, when he reconvened most of the musicians who had recorded "We

Shall Overcome" in 1997 for another living room session. During this session, seven other songs that appear on the album were recorded, including "O Mary Don't You Weep," "Pay Me My Money Down," "Old Dan Tucker" (which is the oldest song recorded and dates back to the first half of the nineteenth century), "Froggie Went A-Courtin'," and "Mrs. McGrath." Springsteen video director Thom Zimny was on hand to film the proceedings of this session and the final session held on January 21, 2006, where four more songs which appear on the album were recorded: "Jacob's Ladder," "Eyes on the Prize," "Buffalo Gals," and "How Can I Keep from Singing," with the latter two songs appearing as "bonus tracks" on the album (Orel 38). Of course, these sessions were not Springsteen's first forays into folk music, since *Nebraska* (1982) and *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995), as well as 2005's *Devils & Dust* are at heart folk albums, although all three albums feature only his songs.

The band that became known as "The Sessions Band" is the largest band with which Springsteen has ever recorded and is completely acoustic with guitars, banjo, fiddles, piano, accordion, horns, and background singers, and it certainly departs from the more traditional stripped-down presentation of folk songs by a singer performing solo on guitar, banjo, or piano or accompanied by just one or two other musicians. According to Jim Musselman, Pete Seeger requested that Springsteen take his name off of the band, since Seeger did not like publicity and calling attention to himself ("Bruce Springsteen's Trip"). Many of the musicians in The Sessions Band had first played at an outdoor "fiesta" held on Springsteen's farm in 1997 and were musical associates of Soozie Tyrell, violinist with the E Street Band and close friend and musical associate with

his wife, Patti Scialfa, in a group known as "The Gotham Playboys" (Orel 37). As for the informality of the recording sessions, Springsteen notes, "I wanted the sound of a bunch of people just sitting around playing . . . . It was a carnival ride, the sound of surprise and the pure joy of playing. Street corner music, parlor music, tavern music, wilderness music, circus music, church music, gutter music. It was all there waiting in those songs . . . " (*Seeger Sessions* Liner Notes). He also points out that using this kind of band for traditional folk songs essentially answered his own question of "how do I make this very, very present? How do I make these characters leap off the record and make them sit, dance, or sing in your living room?" (Marsh and Springsteen 36). This kind of band also allowed him to travel around the nation musically through the use of a variety of different American music, from bluegrass with the banjo and fiddles to New Orleans jazz with the horn section (Marsh and Springsteen 40).

The film from both of these sessions, also titled *The Seeger Sessions,* features the actual recordings of the songs, as well as Springsteen's "arranging" of the songs on the spot and brief interview segments in which he talks about the process and purpose of this album, was included with both CD versions of the album, with the *American Land* edition containing a longer cut of the film. Also, in conjunction with the original release of the album in April 2006, the film was also shown on Country Music Television (CMT).

As noted above, the success of *The Seeger Sessions* album and the 2006 tour led to the release of *Live in Dublin* on June 5, 2007, in both CD and DVD formats. *Live in Dublin* was recorded and filmed during performances on November 17-19, 2006, at The Point Depot in Dublin, Ireland and features several songs from *The Seeger Sessions*

album, as well as a few reworked Springsteen songs, such as "Growin' Up" and "Atlantic City." The DVD contains two songs not on the CD including a performance of "We Shall Overcome."

After the distinct musical detours of the *Devils & Dust* and *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions* albums and tours in 2005 and 2006, Springsteen returned to recording new songs with the E Street Band in February through May 2007 (White 218). The resulting album titled *Magic* was released on October 1, 2007, on CD, for download, and on vinyl LP (White 275). *Magic* also debuted at number one on the album chart the week of its release, like both *The Rising* and *Devils & Dust*, and then remain[ed] "in the Top 10 for the next few weeks, and would sell steadily about five thousand copies a week well into 2008. That wasn't bad for a fifty-eight-year-old recording artist . . ." (Dolan, *Promise* 412). As with his previous albums since *The Rising*, Springsteen did the requisite media appearances, including another performance on NBC's *Today* show and an interview on CBS's *60 Minutes.* Also, in keeping with Springsteen's recent string of wins at the Grammy Awards, at the 2008 awards *Magic* was nominated for Best Rock Album and the song "Radio Nowhere" was nominated and won the Grammy Awards for Best Rock Song and Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance (Margolis). Interestingly, Springsteen also won another Grammy Award in 2008 for Best Rock Instrumental Performance for his version of "Once Upon a Time in the West," which was his contribution to the to the tribute album *We All Love Ennio Morricone* for the celebrated film composer (Margolis). Another song from *Magic,* "Girls in Their Summer Clothes" was nominated for the 2009 Grammy Awards for Best Rock Song and Best Solo Rock

Vocal Performance and won the Grammy Award in the former category (Margolis). Although *Magic* mainly functions as a searing indictment of the Bush administration's conduct of the Iraq war, the final song on *Magic* is the gentle "Terry's Song," which is Springsteen's solo tribute to Terry Magovern, who was the "gentle behemoth who had served as his longtime assistant, bodyguard, and buffer against and connection to the real world" (Carlin 432). Magovern died suddenly in his sleep in 2007 after recording for *Magic* had been completed, and "Terry's Song" was a last minute addition to *Magic* to honor Magovern. The *Magic* album is discussed in Chapter Six.

As with his previous albums in the decade and for the third year in a row, Springsteen hit the road for the *Magic* tour with the E Street Band. The tour opened on October 2, 2007, in Hartford, Connecticut and ended on August 30, 2008, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin ("2007 Setlists"; "2008 Setlists"). Unfortunately, during the spring leg of the *Magic* tour in 2008, E Street Band keyboardist Danny Federici passed away due to melanoma on April 12, 2008. In November 2007, as his condition grew worse, he left the tour and was replaced by Charles Giordano, who played keyboads in the Sessions Band on *The Seeger Sessions* Tour (Carlin 430). Federici's final performance was at the Indianapolis concert on March 20, 2008, when, athough very ill, he performed a handful of songs with Springsteen. One of these songs was "4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)," which Federici had requested Springsteen to perform. In introducing the song that night, Springsteen said,

> "He wanted to strap on the accordion and revisit the boardwalk of our youth during the summer nights when we'd walk along the boards with

> all the time in the world . . . He wanted to play once more the song that is of course about the end of something wonderful and the beginning of something unknown and new." (qtd. in Carlin 431)

This performance is available on the four-song downloadable EP *Highlights from the Magic Tour*, which also features performances with Roger McGuinn of The Byrds, Tom Morello, and Alejandro Escovedo.

The 2008 portion of the *Magic* tour overlapped with the very competitive campaign between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination. On April 16, 2008, Springsteen formally endorsed Obama with a statement on his official website, and then in the fall campaign made several appearances at Vote for Change rallies, including a rally with Obama and his family in Cleveland two days before the election. At President Obama's inaugural concert at the Lincoln Memorial in on January 19, 2009, Springsteen performed "The Rising" backed by a gospel choir and the finale "This Land Is Your Land" with Pete Seeger. Springsteen's endorsement of Obama, his campaign appearances for and with Obama, and other Springsteen-Obama connections are all discussed in Chapter Six.

Springsteen's performance of "The Rising" at President Barack Obama's inaugural concert was not the only highlight of the new year for Springsteen. On January 11, 2009, prior to the "We Are One" concert, Springsteen was awarded his second Golden Globe for Best Original Song from a Motion Picture for "The Wrestler" from the 2008 film *The Wrestler*, which was directed by Darren Aronofsky and starred Mickey Rourke as a professional wrestler nearing retirement, who still longs for the

spotlight and struggles to adjust to a normal life "through the same crumbling East Coast towns Bruce had always known, . . . "(Carlin 435). Notably, Rourke also won the 2009 Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture—Drama for his performance in *The Wrestler*. Dolan relates that Springsteen and Rourke had become friends in the late 1980s, and that "In May 2008, when the movie was in postproduction, Rourke contacted Springsteen on tour in Dublin told him about the part and what playing it meant to him. The way Rourke told it, '(a) while later I got a call in the middle of the night; Bruce said he'd written a little song, for nothing'" (*Promise* 428). This "little song" obviously fit the film perfectly as the wrestler tells us "These things that have comforted me I drive away . . ./This place that is my home I cannot stay . . ./My only faith is in the broken bones and bruises I display" (lines 19-21). Both Carlin and Dolan note that there are autobiographical elements in "The Wrestler" for Springsteen with Carlin suggesting that

> the film played in his [Springsteen's] eyes as a kind of nightmare vision of who he might have become if the anger had consumed him and left him alone and fuming in barely rented mobile home, broke and deaf, the Telecaster long lost to the pawn shop. That wasn't Bruce's fate. But he knew what might have led him there, and how easy it would have been to slam that aluminum door and feel right at home. (435)

"The Wrestler" was included as a bonus track on Springsteen's new album *Working on a Dream*, which was released on January 27, 2009, the week after President Obama's first inauguration. The album, which was recorded with the E Street Band, is

dedicated to Danny Federici, and the final song on the album "The Last Carnival" is Springsteen's tribute to him with its evocations of the E Street Band as a carnival train:

> 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.
>
> (21-25)

The liner notes for the album include excerpts from Springsteen's eulogy for Federici, which he gave at Federici's memorial service on April 21, 2008. In his eulogy, Springsteen emphasized the emotional bonds of being in a rock band, particularly the E Street Band:

> And every night at 8 p.m., we walk out on stage together and that, my friends, is a place where miracles occur . . . old and new miracles. And those you are with, in the presence of miracles, you never forget. Life does not separate you. Time does not separate you. Animosities do not separate you. Death does not separate you. Those you are with who create miracles for you, like Danny did for me every night, you are honored to be amongst. (*Working On a Dream "*Liner Notes")

Federici did record parts for some of the songs on *Working on a Dream* and is appropriately listed as a member of the E Street Band in the album credits. In addition to being released on CD, for download, and on vinyl as a double LP, *Working on a Dream*

was also released in a Deluxe Version CD, which included a DVD titled *Working on a Dream: The Sessions*. Directed by Thom Zimny, the DVD contains studio footage of the recording of several songs on the album, as well as the video for "Night with the Jersey Devil," which was previously only available through Springsteen's official website. The DVD is not essential, but the "Night with the Jersey Devil" video is very interesting, since Springsteen actually does a bit of acting in it. *Working on a Dream* continued Springsteen's streak of albums in the 2000s debuting at number one on the album chart (White 275).

Unlike *The Rising, Magic*, and specific songs from *Devils & Dust* and *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions: American Land Edition*, *Working on a Dream* was essentially a non-political album. As Springsteen told David Fricke in a *Rolling Stone* interview, "This record is a little different, . . . It's text is not on top, as in *The Rising* or *Magic*, where you can immediately connect to the events of the day" ("Bringing It All Back"45). Although Springsteen performed the song "Working on a Dream" at Barack Obama's rally in Cleveland, Ohio, just two days before the 2008 election, the dream the narrator is working on in the song is not necessarily political but just more of the kind of personal dream that Springsteen has written about throughout his career:

> I'm working on a dream
>
> Though it can feels so far away
>
> I'm working on a dream
>
> And our love will make it real someday. (lines 18-21)

Working in musical contexts grounded in 1960s pop music similar to the ones on *Magic*, many of the songs on *Working on a Dream* are love songs, such as "My Lucky Day," "What Love Can Do," and "Kingdom of Days." Yet the theme of the album as a whole does arguably have larger political overtones, as Peter Watts observes, in that "It was packed with the sort of buoyant optimism that epitomized a typical Springsteen gig, capturing what the election of Obama promised for Bruce's blue half of America" (116). Springsteen's jeremiad, which, as we will see, reached a fevered sense of a national and political "crisis" on the *Magic* album was temporarily tempered on *Working on a Dream* to the point that the global economic crisis that hit in the fall of 2008 and helped propel Obama to victory was ignored on the album, and, as Watts also argues, "there was nothing on *Working On a Dream* that even hinted at the tidal wave of repossessions and redundancies that were about to overwhelm Springsteen's traditional constituency" (119).

Just a few days after the official release of *Working on a Dream*, Springsteen and the E Street Band performed at halftime of Super Bowl XLIII (43) between the Pittsburgh Steelers and Arizona Cardinals at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida, on February 1, 2009. The twelve-minute performance featured truncated versions of "10th Avenue Freeze-Out," "Born to Run," "Glory Days," and "Working on a Dream." Such a brief performance was certainly a challenge to Springsteen, since his regular concert performances are usually at least three hours in length. To address the inherent challenges involved in this Super Bowl performance, Springsteen wrote and published on his official website his "Super Bowl Journal," in which he relates his experience

performing for such a huge worldwide audience and how important it was to be and remain "in the moment":

> That's what you get paid for, TO BE HERE NOW! The power, potential and volume of your present-ness is a basic rock and roll promise. It's the essential element that holds the attention of your audience, that gives force, shape and authority to the evening's events. And however you get there on any given night, that's the road you take. "IS THERE ANYBODY ALIVE IN HERE?!" . . . there better be. ("Super Bowl Journal")

Overall, for Springsteen the Super Bowl performance "wasn't what I expected, . . . I wasn't sure I expected it to mean something. But it had a little strange sacrament to it. For weeks afterward, everybody came up and told me what they thought . . . . It was quite wonderful and meant quite a bit to all of us" (qtd. in Carlin 438). With the publication of Springsteen's autobiography *Born to Run* in 2016, he has noted that his "Super Bowl Journal" was the first step in writing his autobiography and "led him to discover a 'pretty good voice to write in'" (Kamp 195). In *Born to Run*, Springsteen's "Super Bowl Journal" appears in a revised version in Chapter 70.

Springsteen also waded into controversy when an exclusive Wal-Mart budget-priced *Greatest Hits* compilation was released in January 2009 to coincide with Springsteen's Super Bowl halftime performance. Given Wal-Mart's notoriously anti-worker policies and its being "accused of anti-union practices by Human Rights Watch, among others, and [having] paid large fines for violating labor laws, . . ." (Pareles, "Rock Laurete"), there was a sense among Springsteen fans of how Springsteen, who has spent

his career focusing on the problems of the American working class, could actually join forces with Wal-Mart to sell a CD? Springsteen did admit, "given its [Wal-Mart's] labor history, it was something that if we'd thought about it a little longer, we'd have done something different . . . . It was a mistake . . ."(qtd. in Pareles, "Rock Laurete"). Subsequently, this *Greatest Hits* compilation is no longer available for sale at Wal-Mart.

Following the Super Bowl performance, as with *The Rising* and *Magic*, Springsteen embarked on yet another tour of the United States and Europe with the E Street Band, which began on April 1, 2009, in San Jose, California and ended on November 22, 2009, in Buffalo ("2009 Setlists Part 1"; "2009 Setlists Part 2"]). For this tour, Charles Giordano formally replaced Danny Federici on organ and accordion and backup singers Curtis King and Cindy Mizelle also joined the band onstage. During the tour, Springsteen regularly performed Stephen Foster's song "Hard Times (Come Again No More)," which, as Dolan notes, "was intended less as a Sessions-style reworking of a prerock standard than as an explicit acknowledgement of the current recession" (*Promise* 432). This tour was also notable in that during the fall portion of the tour Springsteen and the E Street Band for the first time performed six of his classic albums during various concerts with the songs on the albums being played in their running order on the albums. *Born to Run* was the most played, *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and *Born in the U.S.A.* were both played multiple times, while *Greetings from Asbury Park, NJ, The Wild, the Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle,* and *The River* were performed once each (" 2009 Setlists Part 2").

On June 22, 2010, Springsteen released *London Calling: Live in Hyde Park* on DVD. The two-DVD set contains the full performance filmed on June 28, 2009, from the *Working on a Dream* tour at London's Hyde Park Festival and also contains two songs filmed at the 2009 Glastonbury Festival. The Hyde Park performance is notable both for the large crowd's enthusiasm and the rather varied set list, which includes a cover of The Clash's "London Calling" to open the show, "Hard Times (Come Again No More)," "Seeds," "Youngstown," and a powerful "Racing in the Street," along with the usual Springsteen concert staples.

In April 2009, a special exhibit titled*"From Asbury Park to the Promised Land: The Life and Music of Bruce Springsteen* opened at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, Ohio. This exhibit contained a wide variety of artifacts from throughout Springsteen's career, such family scrapbooks, lyric notebooks, clothing, guitars, unreleased audio and video performances, as well as the actual audition tapes for John Hammond, the Tascam tape machine on which he recorded the songs on *Nebraska*, his writing table, and even the 1960 Corvette he bought in 1975 (Exhibition Catalog). The exhibit ran through February 2011. In 2012, the exhibit was on display at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia from February 17-September 3. In an interview with Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum curator Jim Henke that was published in the Summer 2010 issue of *Backstreets* about the exhibit, Springsteen acknowledges the appeal of seeing "things" associated with him in the exhibit:

> They're talismans of the connection between the emotional world—the world of people's dreams, hopes, fears, desires, ambitions—and the real

> physical world, the one that we live in and we drive through in a very mundane way on a daily basis. There's something about the physicalness of things that a) it's fun to see, but b) it also brings it into the realm of the real for your fan. ("The Magician's Tools" 37)

John Soeder's article "Treasures of the Pyramids: Exploring From Asbury Park to the Promised Land at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum," which was also published in the *Backstreets* Summer 2010 issue, provides a useful "tour" and summary of the highlights of the exhibit.

In December 2009, Springsteen was named a Kennedy Center Honoree, along with Dave Brubeck, Mel Brooks, Grace Bumbry, and Robert DeNiro. At the White House reception for the honorees, President Barack Obama said, "in the life of our country only a handful of people have tapped the full power of music to tell the real American story—with honesty; from the heart; and one of those people is Bruce Springsteen" ("Remarks by the President"). Obama also noted that through Springsteen's music and concerts we can see "There's a place for everybody—the sense that no matter who you are or what you do, everyone deserves their shot at the American Dream; everybody deserves a little bit of dignity; everybody deserves to be heard" ("Remarks by the President"). At the Honors Gala at the Kennedy Center with Springsteen seated next to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, Springsteen was saluted by comedian Jon Stewart, who pointed out that "Bob Dylan and James Brown had a baby, and that baby was Bruce" (qtd, in "Springsteen Gets His Rainbow Ribbon") and with musical performances of his songs by Melissa Etheridge, Ben Harper, John Mellencamp, Jennifer

Nettles, Sting, and Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam. The Honors Gala was broadcast on CBS on December 29, 2009.

On March 6, 2012, Springsteen released *Wrecking Ball* on CD, for download, and on vinyl as a double LP (White 276). *Wrecking Ball* was also released on CD in a Deluxe Edition with two additional songs, including a new version of "American Land," which originally appeared on *We Shall Overcome—The Seeger Sessions: American Land Edition.* Like *Magic* in 2007, the focus of the album was political in nature through exploring the causes and effects of the 2008 economic crisis and is discussed in Chapter Seven. Unlike *The Rising, Magic,* and *Working on a Dream*, *Wrecking Ball* was not recorded solely with the E Street Band but with a variety of additional musicians, including guitarist Tom Morello and hip-hop artist Michelle Moore. To promote *Wrecking Ball*, Springsteen opened the Grammy Awards telecast with a performance of "We Take Care of Our Own" from the album and also appeared on NBC's *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon* performing songs from the album. *Wrecking Ball* continued Springsteen's streak of number one albums, although Springsteen notes in *Born to Run* that the album "was received with a lot less fanfare than I thought it would be" (White 276; 469). His comment was seemingly borne out at the 2013 Grammy Awards, when *Wrecking Ball* was nominated for Best Rock Album, and the song "We Take of Our Own" was nominated for Best Rock Song and Best Rock Performance but both the album and song were shut out (Margolis).

Unfortunately, one important E Street Band musician was not part of the recording sessions for *Wrecking Ball.* Clarence Clemons—"The Big Man"—E Street Band

saxophonist and Springsteen's main foil onstage since the early days of the band in the early 1970s, died on June 18, 2011, from complications following a stroke. In the *Wrecking Ball* liner notes, Springsteen includes a portion of his eulogy for Clemons, which he gave at his memorial service on June 21, 2008. In his eulogy, Springsteen said of his long-time friend and band member:

> Clarence was big and he made me feel, think, love, and dream big. How big was the big man? *Too fucking big to die*. You can put it on his gravestone, you can tattoo it over your heart.
>
> Clarence doesn't leave the E Street Band when *he* dies. He leaves when *we* die. ("Eulogy" 382)

Springsteen's complete eulogy is included in the anthology *Springsteen on Springsteen: Interviews, Speeches, and Encounters.*

The loss of both Clarence Clemons and Danny Federici to the E Street Band was acknowledged during concert performances on the lengthy *Wrecking Ball* tour, which began on March 18 2012, in Philips Arena in Atlanta, Georgia, and ended on September 21, 2013, with a performance at the "Rock in Rio" festival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil ("2012 Setlists Part 1"; "2013 Setlists"). The *Wrecking Ball* tour included concerts not only in the United States but also in Europe, Mexico, Australia, and South America. For this tour, the E Street Band became something of a big band replacing Clemons with a five-piece horn section with Jake Clemons, Clarence's nephew, taking over the tenor sax spotlight, and Curtis King and Cindy Mizelle returning as backup singers with occasional appearances by Michelle Moore. During the Australian leg of the tour from March 14-

March 31, 2013, guitarist Tom Morello temporarily replaced Steve Van Zandt in the E Street Band, since Van Zandt was filming episodes for his *Lilyhammer* television show at this time ("2013 Selists").

Prior to the official opening concert of the tour in Atlanta, Springsteen and the E Street Band performed at a special concert at the famous Apollo Theater in New York City on March 9, 2009, which was broadcast on the "E Street Radio" channel on Sirius XM radio. In 2014, this concert released on CD and for download with the title *Apollo Theater 03/09/12* as the first official archival release in the series of Springsteen's live concert recordings available through *brucespringsteen.net* in collaboration with *nugs.net.* During the Apollo Theater performance and subsequent concerts in the United States and Europe during the 2012 leg of the tour, Springsteen once again turned to his song "My City of Ruins" as a way to address the losses of Clemons and Federici to his concert audiences. As Ryan Leas observes, in this performance of the song, "'My City of Ruins' gets recontextualized once more, from an elegy for a depressed Asbury Park to an elegy for 9/11 to an elegy for the fallen members of the E Street Band" ("His Land"), as Springsteen paused in the middle of the song and said repeatedly that it almost became a chant, "If you're here, and we're here, then they're here" (qtd. in White 254). Through this remembrance, Springsteen was essentially telling his audience that although we have all suffered losses in our families and friends, we will always carry those we loved and cared for with us, as they become part of us, and we continue to meet the challenges in our lives. In its August 15, 2013 issue with Springsteen on the cover, *Rolling Stone* magazine named Springsteen the number one "Greatest Live Act

Right Now" with David Fricke noting in the accompanying article that "Springsteen—one of rock's greatest, reliably thrilling live acts for more than four decades—has taken the level of risk and search for communion in his performances to dramatic new peaks during his yearlong *Wrecking Ball* tour" ("50 Greatest" 42).

During the *Wrecking Ball* tour, Springsteen was honored on February 8, 2013 as the 2013 "MusiCares Person of the Year" by the MusiCares Foundation, "which is the Recording Academy's philanthropic arm that provides assistance to members of the Music Industry"(Quinn). This annual award has become a "key event during Grammy week, the annual Music Awards black-tie gala has become, since its inception in 1989. one of the premier music-industry gatherings for stars and suits alike" (Diehl). At the gala, Springsteen made an acceptance speech in which he humorously admitted that "I am here tonight under totally false pretenses, . . . Any philanthropy I've done involves me playing the guitar . . . and I would have been playing the guitar anyway" (qtd. in Quinn). The gala also featured numerous artists performing Springsteen's songs, such as Alabama Shakes, Kenny Chesney, Emmylou Harris, Elton John, Patti Smith, Neil Young with Springsteen performing five songs, including a group finale performance of "Glory Days" (Quinn). In 2014, this event was released on DVD as *A MusiCares Tribute to Bruce Springsteen.*

During the *Wrecking Ball* tour, Springsteen performed two songs on the Australian leg of the tour—"High Hopes" and "Just Like Fire Would"—that he also recorded in Sydney during this part of the tour. According to Springsteen, guitarist Tom Morello was the impetus for performing and recording both of these songs, and then

"Tom and his guitar became my muse, pushing the rest of this project to another level" (*High Hopes* Liner Notes). This project resulted in the album *High Hopes*, which was released in January 2014 on CD, for download, and on vinyl as a double LP and continued Springsteen's streak of albums debuting at number one on the album chart (White 277. Springsteen describes this album as "a record of some of our best unreleased material from the past decade" (*High Hopes* Liner Notes) and "music I always felt needed to be released" (*High Hopes* Liner Notes). What is interesting about the album is that the two songs recorded in Sydney are actually written by other songwriters, not Springsteen; "High Hopes" was written by Tim Scott McConnell and "Just Like Fire Would" was written by the Australian band The Saints. As noted above, Springsteen previously recorded "High Hopes" in 1995 with the E Street Band during the *Greatest Hits* recording sessions with that version appearing on the *Blood Brothers* EP.

Also appearing on *High Hopes* are "new" versions of "The Ghost of Tom Joad" and "American Skin (41 Shots)" with Tom Morello on guitar, as well as studio versions of "Dream Baby Dream," which was written by Alan Vega of Suicide and was the closing song for most of the solo concerts on the *Devils & Dust* tour in 2005, and "The Wall," which is a song Springsteen wrote about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Interestingly, for these new versions of familiar songs, Springsteen notes that "I like to have a formal studio recording because I believe that something being officially released on a studio record gives it a certain authority that it doesn't quite have if it comes out on a live album or is just a part of your show, . . . (qtd. in Powers, "A Long Road").

Springsteen also explains that for *High Hopes* "if there was a common thread in this music it would be that most of it had been recorded over the past 10 years and it had, for one reason or another, not gotten on *The Rising* or *Magic* or *Working on a Dream*" (Greene). One of the outtakes from *The Rising* that appears on *High Hopes* is "Down in the Hole," which is discussed as part of *The Rising* in Chapter Three. Also, in conjunction with the *High Hopes* album, Springsteen collaborated with Thom Zimny on a short dramatic film built around the song "Hunter of Invisible Game" that is available online at *youtube.com*. While not necessarily a significant Springsteen album as compared to his previous albums released in the 2000s, with the exception of *Working on a Dream*, *High Hopes* is still an enjoyable album, with the title song being quite infectious and Tom Morello's contributions completely recasting both "The Ghost of Tom Joad" and "American Skin (41 Shots)" with highly relevant ferocity.

To support *High Hopes*, Springsteen and the E Street Band once again went out on the road on a relatively short tour which began on January 26, 2014, at Bellville Velodrome in Cape Town, South Africa, with his version of the song "Free Nelson Mandela" to open the first concert of his career in South Africa. The tour then travelled to Australia and New Zealand and then back to selected cities in the United States concluding with two concerts on May 17-18, 2014, at Mohegan Sun Arena in Uncasville, Connecticut ("2014 Jan-Mar Setlists"; "2014 Apr-Dec Setlists"). For the American concerts, Tom Morello once again substituted for Steve Van Zandt, who was off filming *Lillyhammer* episodes, although Van Zandt did return for the final two shows in Uncasville. This tour once again featured the E Street Band "big band" that performed

on the *Wrecking Ball* tour in 2012-2013. One of the features of the tour was that Springsteen opened several concerts, especially on the international leg, with covers of songs by native artists, such as the above mentioned "Free Nelson Mandela," the Bee Gees's "Stayin' Alive," AC/DC's "Highway to Hell" in Australia, and Lordes' "Royals" in New Zealand ("2014 Jan-Mar Setlists"). All of the concerts on the *High Hopes* tour are available on CD or for download through *brucespringsteen.net* in connection with *nugs.net.*

During the *High Hopes* tour, Springsteen released *American Beauty,* a special four-song vinyl EP for Record Store Day on April 19, 2014 (*American Beauty* is also available for download). Record Store Day is an annual event that began in 2008 "as a way to celebrate and spread the word about the unique culture surrounding nearly 1400 independently owned record stores in the US and thousands of similar stores internationally" ("Record Store Day"). Record Store Day features a variety of artists releasing special twelve-inch LPs, ten-inch EPs, and seven-inch "45s" on vinyl only. Springsteen has been a regular participant in Record Store Day in recent years with various releases. We can view *American Beauty* as being an "addendum" to *High Hopes,* since in his liner notes for *American Beauty*, Springsteen writes, "*American Beauty* is a collection of songs I cut at home. Upon revisiting them for *High Hopes* I recognized their potential and Ron Aniello [the producer of *High Hopes]* and I worked on them until we'd turned them into the music before you" (*American Beauty* Liner Notes). The powerful and disturbing song "Hey Blue Eyes" on *American Beauty* is discussed as part of the *Magic* album in Chapter Six.

In connection with the release of *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection* in November 2015, Springsteen and the E Street Band hit the road yet again for what was billed as *The River* tour. As Springsteen explains, this tour was rather unplanned and emerged only when "the box set came out, and we started to fool around with the idea of playing maybe a show . . . then, well, maybe two shows . . . and that turned into a short leg that we have going here in the States" ("Many Rivers to Cross"). Originally, the tour was only going to include selected cities in the United States that Springsteen alludes, but then it evolved into including the usual summer tour dates in Europe with a few selected return dates in the United States in August and September, including a few stadium shows.

The first American leg of the tour began on January 16, 2016, at CONSOL Energy Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and concluded with two shows at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. All of these shows featured full performances of *The River* album in sequence ("2016 Jan-Apr Setlists"). Also notable on this leg of the tour were Springsteen's tributes to Glenn Frey of the Eagles and Prince, who both died during this part of the tour. In honor of Frey, Springsteen performed "Take It Easy" as the Chicago concert on January 19, 2016 ("Setlist-January 19"), and in honor Prince, he performed "Purple Rain" as the opening song of the April 23 show in Brooklyn and as part of the encore at the April 25 show ("Setlist-April 23"; "Setlist-April 25"). The European part of the tour began with a performance on May 14, 2016, at Camp Nou, Barcelona, Spain and concluded on July 31 at Stadion Letzigrund, Zurich, Switzerland ("2016 May-Jul Setlists"). For this part of the tour, Springsteen moved away from performing *The River*

album in full with only one performance of the album at the second show at AccorHotels Arena in Paris, France, on July 13, 2016 ("Setlist-July 13"). At the first show at Ullevi Stadium in Gothenberg, Sweden, on June 25, 2016, Springsteen and the E Street Band performed for almost four hours ("Setlist-June 25").

The final brief American leg of the tour began with three concerts at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on August 23, 2016, with two of these performances actually hitting the four-hour mark as the August 30 show set the record for Springsteen's longest American concert of his entire career ("Setlist-August 30"). In addition to these shows, Springsteen also played stadiums in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. and for the final performance of the tour in Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts. The first Philadelphia concert on September 7 eclipsed the August 30 show as Springsteen's longest American concert in his entire performing career "clocking in at over four hours and four minutes, . . . " surpassing the length of the August 30 MetLife Stadium show ("2016-09-07-Citizens Bank Park"). Springsteen opened several of these final concerts with a version of his early song "New York City Serenade" from his 1973 album *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle* accompanied by a small string section ("2016 Aug-Sep Setlists"). All of *The River* tour concerts are available on CD and for download through *brucespringsteen.net* in conjunction with *nugs.net*. *The River* tour was honored as the "Top Tour" of 2016 at the 2016 *Billboard* Touring Awards ceremony on November 9, 2016 (Angermiller).

During the first American leg of *The River* tour, Springsteen's distinct political voice was heard once again when he cancelled his scheduled concert for April 10, 2016,

in Greensboro, North Carolina, over the recent passage of HB2—the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act by the North Carolina General Assembly that was signed into law by Governor Pat McCrory. HB2 "imposes strict and rigid limits on what bathrooms transgender people are able to use. It also betrays its euphemistic name by expressly stating that workplace protections against employment discrimination do not extend to gay citizens" (Masciotra, "Dear Straight Springsteen Fans"). On April 8, 2016, Springsteen issued a statement on his official website informing fans of the cancellation of the Greensboro concert over his opposition to HB2, which he views as "an attempt by people who cannot stand the progress our country has made in recognizing the human rights of all of our citizens to overturn that progress." In his statement, Springsteen also notes in justifying his decision to cancel this concert, "Some things are more important than a rock show and this fight against prejudice and bigotry—which is happening as I write—is one of them. It is the strongest means I have for raising my voice in opposition to those who continue to push us backwards instead of forward" ("A Statement").

Other musical artists, such as Pearl Jam, Bryan Adams, and Ringo Starr followed Springsteen and cancelled their scheduled North Carolina concerts (Kasperkevic). Ramifications over HB2 were also felt in the sports world. In July 2016, the National Basketball Association (NBA) announced that they were moving the 2017 NBA All-Star Game from Charlotte, North Carolina to New Orleans, Louisiana, and in September 2016, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) announced that they were moving seven NCAA championship competitions scheduled for North Carolina in 2016 and 2017, including the 2016 Division I women's soccer championship, the 2017 Division

I women's golf championships, and 2017 men's basketball tournament games with both the NBA and NCAA expressing concerns over the impact of HB2 (Gleeson). As David Gardner observes, these negative ramifications of HB2 could come with a hefty price tag for North Carolina, since "the act could be responsible for $5 billion loss per year" (16). As noted above in the discussion of Springsteen's song "Streets of Philadelphia," his very public opposition to North Carolina's HB2 law continues to show that Springsteen's support for gay Americans is unwavering in his continuing quest to ensure that the American Promise is truly open and achievable for all Americans.

Following the end of *The River* tour, Springsteen published his autobiography *Born to Run,* which is discussed in the Literature Review, and released a companion album titled *Chapter and Verse* on CD, for download, and on vinyl as a double LP. *Chapter and Verse* contains five unreleased songs by Springsteen's early bands, which are mentioned above in the "1965-1972" section, along with familiar standards like "Growin' Up," "Born to Run," "The River," "Born in the U.S.A.," and "The Rising." To promote *Born to Run*, Springsteen appeared on the CBS television shows *Sunday Morning* and *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and was featured in cover stories about the book for *Rolling Stone* and *Vanity Fair* magazines.

Unlike the presidential elections in 2004, 2008, and 2012 when he publicly endorsed John Kerry and Barack Obama and campaigned for and with both candidates in those election years, it appeared that Springsteen was not going to be actively involved in the 2016 presidential election between Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton and Republican nominee Donald Trump as the campaign entered final few weeks. In a

Rolling Stone interview with Brian Hiatt in conjunction with the release of *Born to Run*, Springsteen was rather explicit in stating his opposition to Donald Trump and his campaign by saying, "the republic is under siege by a moron, basically. The whole thing is tragic. Without overstating it, it's a tragedy for our democracy. When you start talking about elections being rigged, you're pushing people beyond democratic governance" ("True Bruce" 37). In this interview, Springsteen also expressed his support for Clinton by stating, "I like Hillary. I think she would be a very, very good president" ("True Bruce" 54).

Springsteen then appeared at an election eve rally on November 7, 2016, with Hillary and Bill Clinton and Barack and Michelle Obama held at the Independence Mall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. With Independence Hall in the background, Springsteen performed three songs: "Thunder Road," "Long Walk Home," and "Dancing in the Dark." He also delivered a short speech supporting Clinton noting

> The choice tomorrow couldn't be any clearer. Hillary's candidacy is based on intelligence, experience, preparation, and on an actual vision of an America where everyone counts: men and women, white and black, Hispanic and Native, where folks of all faiths and backgrounds can come together to address our problems in a reasonable and thoughtful way.
>
> That vision of America is essential to sustain, no matter how difficult its realization. ("Bruce in Philly")

Although Springsteen's election eve speech for Clinton may not have been as poetic or as direct in expressing his own specific ideology as in his previous campaign speeches for

Kerry and Obama, it still reveals his continuing overall concern expressed throughout his career of ensuring that every American has an opportunity to fully achieve the American Promise.

To honor Springsteen and his long career, President Barack Obama awarded Springsteen the Presidential Medal of Freedom during a White House ceremony on November 22, 2016. Springsteen, along with twenty other notable Americans, including Robert De Niro, Ellen DeGeneres, Bill and Melinda Gates, Tom Hanks, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Michael Jordan, Robert Redford, and Diana Ross, received the "highest civilian honor in the United States, given to 'individuals who have made especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors'" ("Freedom, No Compromise"). In his comments at the ceremony about Springsteen, Obama noted that Springsteen throughout his career has written songs about "All of us, with all our faults and our failings, every color, and class, and creed, bound together by one defiant, restless train rolling toward 'The Land of Hope and Dreams.' These are anthems of our America; the reality of who we are, and the reverie of who we want to be" (White House).