

Introduction

Welcome to the fifth issue of *BOSS: The Biannual Online-Journal of Springsteen Studies*, an open-access journal devoted to the study of Bruce Springsteen's music, performance, and legacy. In this issue, we continue to explore Springsteen's impact on music and culture. 2023 will mark the triumphant return of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band performing live and the 50th anniversary of *Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.* The past two years before these special dates have been busy and prolific.

After the 2020 release of the critically acclaimed album *Letter to You*, Springsteen reformulated *Springsteen on Broadway* and performed for several months in 2021 to celebrate the reopening of Broadway. In 2022, he released *Only the Strong Survive*, a soul covers album that honors the music that inspired his craft and showmanship. These works attest to Springsteen's extraordinary ability to adapt, renew, and engage with popular culture in unique ways. With these special events, *Springsteen Studies* is more relevant than ever.

For half a century, Springsteen's work has drawn connections to countless other artistic and cultural movements: politics, social issues, literature, music, film, and theatre. *BOSS* reveals the relationship between such subjects and Springsteen's canon. The fifth issue features articles from scholars and experts on various topics.

The first piece by Helen Ganiy is entitled "Fierce Loves and Faithless Wars: Bruce, Byron and the Man of Feeling." Ganiy draws connections between two artists from different centuries. She discusses how Springsteen's music connects to the poetry and political activism of Lord Byron. She focuses on Lord Byron's anti-war and anti-nationalist sentiments in his final epic poem, *Don Juan*, and his direct parliamentary involvement as an influence on Springsteen's music. The Byronic Hero, a melancholic character, is also discussed as relating to Springsteen's construction of the "Loner": a socially isolated, margin-dwelling archetype in his music. Both Byron and Springsteen are united in their deployment of paradoxical aesthetic techniques to expose the impossible irony of working-class life in their respective time periods and countries.

“Pullin’ Out of Here to Win’: The Narrative Flexibility of “Thunder Road” by Dana DeVlieger discusses how Bruce Springsteen's performances of his song "Thunder Road" have evolved over time. The author examines three different performances of "Thunder Road" from 1975 and how Springsteen's writing and performance decisions in each recording suggest different personas and narrative trajectories for the protagonist. DeVlieger argues that it is Springsteen's "empathetic imagination" that allows him to understand and convey the struggles and experiences of the working class in his music. The article also discusses the theory of "conceptual blending," which refers to the process of combining elements from two different mental spaces to create a new domain. The article offers a new way of looking at one of Springsteen's most popular, career-defining songs.

Lastly, we have a review of Gavin Cologne-Brookes' book *American Lonesome*. The book examines Springsteen's formative environment and outsider psychology, arguing that the artist's confessed tendency toward a self-reliant isolation creates a tension in his work between lonesomeness and community. Cologne-Brookes' considers Springsteen's portrayals of solitude in relation to classic and contemporary American writers, from Nathaniel Hawthorne and Emily Dickinson to Flannery O'Connor and Joyce Carol Oates. These connections attest to the scope and depth of Springsteen's work.

We hope that this issue will provide a deeper understanding and appreciation for the music and career of Bruce Springsteen. Springsteen has proven himself to be one of the most enduring and respected figures in the music industry, and he continues to build on his legacy each year.

Caroline Madden, Managing Editor