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The Voice and Memory of Land in Woody Guthrie's songs

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Annotation

The work deals with the portrayal of historical events in the songs of Woody Guthrie. It focuses on the period between the 1930s and 1950s. The objects of research are cultural and political references in the songs of Woody Guthrie. The work focuses on the role of the singer as a voice and memory of the nation.

Keywords

traditional folk music, songwriter, song lyrics, folk singer

Název

Hlas a paměť národa v písňové tvorbě Woody Guthrieho

Anotace

Práce je věnována vyobrazení historických událostí v písňové tvorbě Woody Guthrieho. Práce se soustředí na třicátá až padesátá léta 19. Století. Předmětem zkoumání jsou kulturní a politické reference v písních Woody Guthrieho. Práce se zabývá rolí zpěváka jakožto hlas a paměť národa.

Klíčová slova

tradiční folková hudba, skladatel, písňové texty, folkový zpěvák

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on the life, work and achievements of Woody Guthrie, a musician who became known throughout history as the father of folk music in America. The reason for me to choose this topic for my bachelor thesis is that I saw it as an opportunity to learn more about American folk and where it came from and also an opportunity to learn more about Woody Guthrie himself. When I first encountered the name Woody Guthrie I was completely unaware of his existence in American history. However, when I explored who he is I was surprised I did not encounter his name before. His story was very interesting and inspirational.

The aim of this thesis is to determine, whether Woody Guthrie truly acted as a voice of the people and whether his music truly captures the voice and memory of the land.

The first chapter of this thesis will be focused on the Dust Bowl period and the migration of southwestern people to find a better life in the states. I would like to explain what was the Dust Bowl, what caused this event and what impact did it have on the people. Then I will explain the reaction of California and its citizens to these waves of refugees, what was the public image of these so-called “Okies” and why did people see them that way. After, I will look into the challenges and hardships that the migrants had to go through. And lastly, I would like to explain how these migrants and their culture impacted the musical industry in California and later across America.

The second chapter focuses on Woody Guthrie himself and the cultural references in his work. At the beginning of the chapter, I will analyse his most known song “This Land Is Your Land” and explain the reason for its popularity. Afterwards, I am going to analyse songs with cultural topics and explain what Guthrie’s reason to address these topics was. I will continue by describing the possible sources of inspiration for Woody Guthrie.

In the last chapter, I will focus on political references in the songs of Woody Guthrie. At the beginning of the chapter I will briefly describe the political side of Woody Guthrie and how did he become involved in political topics. After, I will analyse several songs with political topics and similarly to the second chapter try to explain his reason to address these topics. I will also try to discuss what might have inspired him to address the problems in the songs.

1. The Dust Bowl

The first part of this thesis focuses on the Dust Bowl which is a period also known as the “Dirty thirties”. The Dust Bowl also became the name of the area where the event happened, however, I will mostly refer to the Dust Bowl as a period then the area itself. It is important to understand the impact that this period had on the life of Woody Guthrie. It started a new chapter of his life and greatly affected his music, especially in his first songs. Without this event, Woody Guthrie might not have become the same person as we know him today.

At the beginning of the first chapter, I will explain what the Dust Bowl is when it began, what might have caused it and most importantly how it impacted the lives of people living in the area of the event. Then I will explain how California and its citizens reacted to this event because a large number of the refugees travelled to California to start a new life. Finally, in the last part of this chapter, I would like to explain the impact that Dust Bowl had on the people, and what challenges the refugees faced and had to overcome.

According to Donald A. Wilhite, The Dust Bowl period is a term used to refer to the period of drought years in the 1930s. It represents a unique era of western settlement history in America. For many parts of the Great Plains, this period is still considered the most severe drought that occurred. The droughts came in the early 1930s and remained until the early 1940s. The drought was most severe between the years 1934 and 1936. This decade-long drought had a shocking impact on the environment as well as the economy and the inhabitants of the area. The impact of the drought was also aggravated by the severe economic depression, in the United States and worldwide. The combination of poor and inappropriate farming methods, drought and economic depression made the Dust Bowl one of the most serious catastrophes experienced in the United States.¹

¹ Donald A. Wilhite, “Dust Bowl,” *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=DU011>

1.1.Cause and impact of the Dust Bowl

Even though the Dust Bowl came relatively suddenly and lasted during most of the 1930s, the initial seeds of the problem were probably sewn around the beginning of the 1920s.

According to Donald A. Wilhite, between the years 1909 and 1929 farmers cultivated about 30 million acres of soil in the Great Plains. Most of these people were recent settlers unfamiliar with the climate of the region. Removal of the native grassland, which protected the soil made it more susceptible to wind erosion. Erosion caused massive dust storms that raged over the area of the Great Plains. The most severely affected regions were Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico. About 300 million tons of soil was swept by the winds from the region in 1934 and spread over large parts of the United States. In the upcoming years additional 850 million tons of soil were lost to the storm and about 162 million acres were damaged by the erosion. In the early and middle 1930s, many families had to leave the area. The Dust Bowl in combination with the Great Depression caused structural changes in agriculture, which resulted in a fall of prices impacting the income of farms. These conditions together with foreclosure forced many people to travel to other states to look for better opportunities. Among these people was also Woody Guthrie who had travelled to California from Oklahoma and his experience could later be seen depicted in his songs.²

²Donald A. Wilhite, "Dust Bowl," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=DU011>

1.2. The reaction of California

The refugees did not receive a warm welcome in California. At the beginning of the migrations, it was not too hard to get to California, however, the living conditions of the refugees were not improving as much as they might have expected. It was difficult to find well-paid jobs and the general public did not welcome them. Entering California also became later much more difficult. The Los Angeles police created a “bum blockade” at the border of the state which was supposed to keep the poor from entering the state. Many refugees were stopped on their journey and forced to turn back. There was also a law that effectively criminalized and banned free travel of citizens of the United States across the lines of the state, which made entering California much more difficult as well. However, despite all these efforts to keep “Okies” and other impoverished people from entering the state a big group of migrants was able to arrive in the San Joaquin Valley of California where they managed to form a community.

In the work of Alexander Toni, it is possible to see how impactful the decisions of California were for “Okies”. Those migrants who arrived in San Joaquin Valley were during their early years in the state denied full citizenship which resulted in their status of so-called “shadow citizens”. Even though the “Okies” owned legal citizenship they often were seen by the public more as foreign immigrants who were generally unwanted in the state.³

Even though the public image of the “Okies” was not particularly positive some of the citizens of California were also trying to help these people, however, those who helped some of these refugees cross the state border could have been convicted of bringing a poor person into the state and for this offence, these people could face several months in prison.

³ Alexander Toni, “Citizenship contested” *Southeastern geographer* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 189.

Based on the “Citizenship Contested” the public opinion of the “Okies” was generally bad and the citizens were concerned about their presence. In the Depression Era “Okies” were publicly branded with a citizenship status that did put them into a position between exclusion and inclusion. The public was concerned that these migrant workers won’t be able to support themselves and therefore will need the support of the state and fail to assimilate into the economy depleting the state’s resources. On the other hand, some were concerned that these people will take their jobs, and cause unemployment or lack of economic opportunities for the citizens of California. These public concerns were followed by proposals on how to deal with the migrant problem. These ideas differed. One of the extreme solutions proposed was even putting the migrants into established “cooperative camps” that would be segregated and the migrants would be registered to do forced labour with a salary of 1 dollar per day. The author of this solution explained that it would save millions of dollars that are lost to theft, vandalism or other criminal behaviour of the migrants. However, this idea was represented only by the minority. Most of the other opinions were that “Okies” failed to assimilate and find their place in the Californian society. That they were too different, lazy and poorly educated to fit in. Most of the public supported the idea of the complete exclusion of Okies from the state. However, “Okies” were also defended and in time they were given a face thanks to newspaper articles and written experiences of those who visited their encampments. In general, these people who defended the migrants explained that they are normal American people that look no different from Californian citizens. Thanks to this the attitude towards “Okies” warmed up a bit. In the end, the local and federal governments started creating social programs to help the migrants with assimilation into local society. This also supported the expansion of programs that included additional funds for migrant medical care, expansion of programs to teach migrants about sanitation, health and democratic governance or program to prevent discrimination and help to spread the understanding of the situation of migrants.⁴

The approach of California was rather strict and unforgiving at the start; however in the upcoming years “Okies” became part of the state and created a community that became a stable part of California in upcoming decades.

⁴ Alexander Toni, “Citizenship contested” *Southeastern geographer* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 201 - 202.

1.3. The impact on the people

Migration in the 1930s was tough for most migrants, and the search for a better life came with many challenges. The most impacted states by this migration were California and Arizona.

Between the years 1935 and 1940 almost 300 000 people from the Southwest arrived in California, with the majority of the group being consisted of the impoverished Oklahomans. Those who decided to travel to the west had a three-day journey before them to reach the promise of a better life. The migrants followed Route 66 and after they reached the Barstow, they stood in front of two options. They could either continue to Los Angeles following Highway 66 or travel north to the central agricultural valleys. Focusing on Los Angeles they were, as was already said, not welcome, however, they managed to blend in with the society relatively quickly. Some with experience found jobs with a decent payment; others stayed with family members or after a year went on relief. The most known story is of the migrants who settled at Saint Joaquin Valley. Between the years 1935 and 1940, about 70 000 people migrated to this area hoping to get their own plot of land to start their new lives. Unfortunately, that did not happen. These people mostly became harvesters of fruit or cotton which effectively pushed out labourers of other ethnic groups that were often taking these jobs. These waves of migrants also lowered the wages, which satisfied their employers, however since most of the migrants arrived already poor, the wages were low, and they didn't move on after the harvest like Hispanic or Filipino labourers their living conditions were often awful. A lot of these people lived in a filthy environment, sleeping in small tents, or living in shantytowns near the watering ditches.⁵

⁵ William H. Mullins, "Okie Migrations," *The Encyclopaedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=OK008>

As a consequence of these living conditions, they were called the “Okies” which generally became equivalent to “poor white trash”. This public image was pinned on these workers no matter where they came from or the events that lead to these conditions, they found themselves in. To respond to the influx of migrants California formed the California Citizens Association, which as the first step extended the waiting period for the California relief to three years instead of one. There were also several clean camps provided by the Federal Farm Security Association which were designed to be governed by their residents and therefore provide a sense of self-respect. Unfortunately, these were mostly made as models for private organizations and the state, which were not keen on building anything for the residents. The life of migrants in Arizona was also harsh. The growers in Arizona started intensive recruitment which lured many of these migrants to enter the state between years 1937 and 1938. They were mostly hired to harvest cotton, but the amount of the workers was almost twice than needed, which led many to a suspicion that it was an attempt to decrease the wages. Then the harvest came to an end and thanks to floods in Saint Joaquin Valley these migrants couldn’t move on. This led to tension among them. The public assistance also required three years of residency so none of the migrants were eligible to ask for it. Fortunately for the harvesters, the Farm Security Association provided relief and the tension disappeared. After this many migrants moved on. In general, “Okies were not welcome in Arizona; however, the antipathy towards them in California was still much stronger.”⁶

⁶ William H. Mullins, “Okie Migrations,” *The Encyclopaedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=OK008>

1.4. The impact of migrants on the music industry in California

Perhaps the biggest impact that the southwestern migrants had on California was their impact on the music industry. When country music emerged in the 1920s its initial markets became the rural Midwest and South. However, this later changed and the country music did spread across California and other states in a relatively fast manner.

According to James N. Gregory the initial interest in country music was small in California the country music was regarded as unsophisticated and only a few singers were heard on the radio before the 1930s. However, the market in California started growing at the same time as the migration reached more significant proportions. There was also a new fascination with singing cowboys that started growing which created a bigger demand for country music as well. The fortunate timing of the new market spread allowed “Okies” to take charge of the medium as audience and also performers at the same time. The majority of country music production in California was dominated by southwestern people and it was for pretty obvious reasons. People from the southwest were already producing music of this style even before it started being popular, which gave them a head start over the other groups starting with this kind of music. In reacting to newly spreading country music, professional musicians started being imported from Southwest by Hollywood. In the early 1940s, there was a list of movie and radio stars with southwestern origins headed by Gene Autry. This list included Bob Wills, Patsy Montana, Jimmy Wakely, Tex Ritter, Tim Spencer and many others. Most of these performers had made themselves a name even before they moved west however; the new popularity of singing cowboys provided an opportunity even for those who initially came to the West with completely different aims. Among these people was for example even Woody Guthrie himself, whose career started when he was invited by his cousin Jack Guthrie to be his singing partner.⁷

⁷ James N. Gregory, “Dust Bowl legacies: The Okie Impact on California, 1939-1989” *California History* 68, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 81.

Similar aspirations started growing even in the Saint Joaquin Valley where the migrants started attracting the attention of radio stations and a lot of musical talent was found among them. As an example, around the time when California started slowly listening to country music, Rose Maddox was starting her career. She sang her first audition in 1937 when she was only eleven years old for the Modesto radio station. She was performing together with her four brothers and since the manager liked their performance, they received a contract in the upcoming years and also a nationwide following. Those south westerners who were not performing the music had other purposes. It became some sort of an enterprise for the group. Initially, these people were the main fans of this style and they were proud that the popularity of country music is spreading. The country music of the 1930s and the 1940s was also filled with many southwestern cultural references and even the name of the performers or bands had usually connections to the Southwest. There were the Texas Playboys, Texas Mavericks, Oklahoma Nightriders, Texas Ranchers or a female group called Oklahoma Sweethearts. Some of these bands even managed to identify themselves with both of these states. These names correspond with the relationship that performers had with their audience. Since most of these musicians aimed at the core audience, which at the time was the Southwesterners, naming themselves this way created a close relationship with the southwestern audience, which on the other hand remained loyal to this medium and its stars. The performers became the pride of “Okies”, a symbol of success and someone to look up to. Among these performers, Bob Wills became a real favourite. Whenever he appeared, big crowds of southwestern people were drawn to him. For many of these people, these appearances had a special significance, especially for the young generation. This way Bob Wills became a hero for the “Okies”.⁸

The music played a big part for the migrants. It helped them to adjust to their experience in California and fit into the society a bit better. More importantly, it helped the citizens of California to understand them a bit better and also helped the “Okies” to keep their cultural identity or not forget the people they left back home.

⁸ James N. Gregory, “Dust Bowl legacies: The Okie Impact on California, 1939-1989” *California History* 68, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 82.

1.5. The origins and characterisation of folk music

Although folk music started being popular among the general public of America in the 1920s, there was already a diverse body of folk music in the 19th century. Folk music was at the time heavily influenced by the British and African music styles often with religious themes. However, due to the geographical, ethnic and racial diversity, there were many variations. Folk music was also greatly influenced by the European immigrants who started arriving in America in greater numbers around the middle of the 19th century. These immigrants brought with them their own music and songs which mixed with the already existing body of folk music. The last groups whose music made a major influence on the folk music genre were the Mexican citizens whose lands were added to the country as well as the music of Native Americans. Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a large amount of different musical styles and forms which would later be classified as folk music. British, Irish and Scottish native songs and ballads were common throughout the United States in the middle of the 19th century. However, in addition to native songs and ballads, there were also other forms of folk songs. Some of these musical forms were for example the numerous fiddle tunes or the “play party songs” which originally were songs not accompanied by musical instruments but only consisted of singing and clapping. The songs were circulating not only by oral means but also in forms of sheet music, songsters or other commonly published forms. The probably most common influence on American folk music was the influence of British folk music. Songs and ballads were either transported into the United States or at least influenced some of the American songs. Some forms of folk songs and ballads also persisted from the 18th century through oral tradition.⁹

⁹ Ronald D. Cohen, *Folk Music: The Basics* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 8 – 9.

The first commercial success of folk music came around the year 1920. However, the genre started slowly changing over the upcoming years. There were two waves of folk revival in the United States. The first wave came around the early 1930s and the second around the early 1960s. In both cases, these revivals meant the transformation and reinterpretation of folk music as a genre. The traditional music was changed by activists to work as a political force. Folk music was interpreted as the storage of experiences and ideas of the people. It provided an alternative of cultural expression opposite to the manufactured and mass-mediated forms. Folk music was perceived as a real authentic and traditional musical style in opposition to mainstream popular music which was seen as unauthentic. Woody Guthrie explained the reasons why folk music was perceived this way in his description of his sources of inspiration. He explained that his words and music come from the people. That music is a force that allows him to express his feelings and that the best music in his eyes is music which comes from personal experience. The activists behind these revivals had different reasons for supporting the revival of folk music. Some saw the revival as an opportunity to attempt to preserve and discover cultural expressions that were slowly disappearing. Others saw the revival as an opportunity to preserve musical instruments and styles that were slowly getting replaced by new and more popular ones. However, many of these activists including Woody Guthrie saw the revival as a form of cultural politics bringing attention to so-called “realistic” American culture. They wanted to preserve a way of cultural expression or a specific way of life. As a result folk music started dividing into different subgenres. Some folk songs were simply meant to bring excitement and were not necessarily focused on political or cultural topics; others were more focused on the musical part showing what sounds were the older instruments able to produce in experienced hands. Woody Guthrie and other musicians involved in political topics on the other hand saw the political themes as a characterisation of the genre. Woody himself explained that he believed that the government was scared of the possibilities of folk music because folk songs were about problems in society and how to fix them. He explained that folk music could be about anything from hunger to unemployment or war. He believed that these songs were made as a response of the people to witnessing the politicians unable to fix problems in the society.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ron Eyerman, Scott Barreta, „From the 30s to the 60s: The Folk Music Revival in the United States“ *Theory and Society* 25, no. 4 (August 1996) 501 - 502.

2. Cultural references in songs of Woody Guthrie

I am going to briefly summarise why Woody Guthrie was such an impactful musician for the genre and society. Afterwards, I will continue by analysing some of his songs referring to the cultural themes and topics. The analysis will divide each song into verses and a chorus if the chorus is included in the song. The verse is a rhythmically repeating section of the song which usually brings forth new ideas and meanings. Chorus on the other hand is a part of a song that carries the main musical motive of the song and repeats the same lyrics. The chorus appears either after every verse of the song or multiple times throughout the song after two or more verses.

The music of Woody Guthrie could be viewed as more of a tool to express ideas and fight for the people of different groups. He used his music to spread ideas and to protest against ideologies that he perceived as wrong or dangerous. It is apparent not only in the lyrics of his songs but by other signals. One of the examples can be the quote “This machine kills fascists” that he painted on his guitar. There are many cultural references in the work of Woody Guthrie. Throughout his life, Woody Guthrie was a member of many groups and because of that, he experienced the life, customs and attitudes of these groups as well as plights and struggles, which can be seen as topics in his songs.

According to Richard A. Reuss, Woody Guthrie was not an important folk musician because of his oral tradition contributions, but because he took a role of a spokesman for the people. He had an important ability to describe attitudes feelings and lives of people and groups of people that he became a member of. He also became known for using their own terms and kinds of communication instead of using the language of elite American society which was also the reason why so many members of these groups started listening to his music. He essentially was not only a common musician but someone these people could look up to. He gave these groups a voice through his music and became their voice in American society. The groups that Woody Guthrie belonged to throughout his life were many. He was born in Okemah, Oklahoma in 1912. The population of Oklahoma mostly consisted of the white settlers who came from the southern states nearby, Indians and Negroes who were all in close contact with each other. With oil being discovered in the area many new workers came to the area which also brought yet another elements to the community in the town. Naturally Woody as a member of this society took in a lot of its traditions and customs. Part of the influence that his society had on him was also due to the involvement of his parents. His mother sang religious songs and old ballads; his father on the other hand performed blues and cowboy songs and dances. He was taught tales, sayings and language that were common to the area. He also started exhibiting a talent for music in his youth learning to use several musical instruments like the guitar or harmonica and performing in the streets or high school assemblies; however, at the time his music was mostly instrumental and not vocal. Later in 1929, he travelled to Texas, where he settled with relatives in Pampa. The culture in Texas was similar to the one in Oklahoma. Here he was first introduced to the commercial hillbilly medium and fully developed his skills of playing the guitar, mandolin, banjo, drums and fiddle. Woody started travelling around the countryside as a member of dance bands and also composed his own songs. He encountered the Dust Bowl in Texas which he later depicted in a detailed way in his songs and autobiography. In 1937 Woody Guthrie travelled to California. At the time he became part of three different cultures, the migratory, hobo and labour-radical. He experienced the “Okie” migration and travelled by himself in the style of a hobo during several journeys before finally arriving in California. In California, his musical career started. He started singing on a Los Angeles KFVD radio station.¹¹

¹¹ Richard A. Reuss, “Woody Guthrie and His Folk Tradition” *The Journal of American Folklore* 83, no. 329 (July - September 1970): 274 – 278.

His audience mostly consisted of the “Okies”. He started travelling the California which deepened his contacts with the refugees and allowed him to connect with them. Woody belonged to these two groups several times, but he spent more time with the hoboes, bums and tramps over the years. In his work however he is giving much more attention to the “Okies” as can be seen in his “Dust Bowl ballads”, or songs like “Hard Traveling” and “This Land Is Your Land”. He reflects his connection to the hobo world in his ballad “East Texas Red” or in his autobiography “Bound For Glory”,¹²

¹² Richard A. Reuss, “Woody Guthrie and His Folk Tradition” *The Journal of American Folklore* 83, no. 329 (July - September 1970): 278.

2.1. “This Land Is Your Land”

The song “This Land Is Your Land,” is considered the most known song written by Woody Guthrie among the people of America. It went through a lot of development and there were several versions of the song as some verses were omitted and later brought back throughout the 20th century.

The song seems to describe America through the eyes of Woody with both its beauty and its harshness. In the first verse, Woody starts by describing the outline of the land: “From California to New York Island, From the redwood forest to the Gulf stream waters”.

Then he continues by describing the beauty of the land singing about the endless skyway, the golden state, the sparkling desert sand shining like diamonds in the sun and fields of wheat waving in the wind. The first three verses almost seem as if he was thinking back on his travels and describing the natural beauty he could see and experience along the way.

In the fourth verse, he brings an image of “dust clouds rolling” which seems like a reminder of the Dust Bowl that he experienced in Texas and sings about in more detail in some of his other songs as it impacted his life quite significantly.

The following verse brings much more depressing scenery as he continues by criticizing ownership of private properties by bringing forth an image of a “No trespassing” sign.

The sixth verse is also bringing another depressing image of hungry people standing in front of a relief office ending the verse with a gloomy question “Is this land made for you and me?” contrary to the patriotic “This land was made for you and me” that he uses towards the end of the remaining verses.

The last verse seems to express his eagerness to change the things that he criticizes. It almost seems like a statement that he won’t stop protesting and talking about things he sees as wrong. It also looks like an encouragement for people to talk about these issues and to contribute to changing them to bring a better future for everyone as the verse ends yet again with “This land was made for you and me”.

The song “This Land Is Your Land” went through a lot of development and today is one of the most popular folk songs in America. The next part of this subchapter will focus on the development of this song, what made Woody Guthrie write the song and investigate the reasons behind the changes in the song and how did these changes influence its popularity.

According to Mark Allan Jackson, the purpose of the song was to express protest against the song “God Bless America” which is also the reason why Woody Guthrie uses almost idyllic references to the beauties of America in the first three verses, while in the last three; he describes the aspects of society that he found disturbing at the time. The initial intention behind this song was to produce a critical musical response. The reason for criticizing the song “God Bless America” was the nature of the song. The song was created in 1917 as a patriotic war song; however, the author Irving Berlin decided to put it aside and not perform it. Later in 1938, he was asked to create a song to broadcast on the Armistice Day radio that would bring forth the patriotism in the people. Irving decided to take the original song and rework it to match the situation in 1938. The song shifted from being a war song to a more nationalistic version and was first broadcasted on November 11, 1938. The song had tremendous success and could soon be heard on multiple radio stations, becoming so popular that by many it was recognized as a second national anthem at the time. However, not everyone thought so highly of Berlin’s song. Woody Guthrie heard the song many times during his travels in 1940 and did not agree with its nature. “God Bless America” celebrated the country, however, Woody based on his personal experience felt that the song is omitting important aspects of the country and based on what he witnessed he knew that not everyone had a reason to see the country in such a positive manner. Considering the experiences of Woody Guthrie, it is not very surprising. He experienced first-hand the struggles of Dust Bowl refugees seeing their living conditions and hearing them talk about their struggles. He also saw the ills of cities, the unemployment and the struggles of the poor to find their place in society. Guthrie felt that the song failed to address the pain of the people by only celebrating the country without paying any attention to those who suffered and struggled to find their place while living in poverty. Guthrie believed that understanding the bad side of the country was equally important as emphasizing the beautiful. That is why he created his own version of the song where he used his abilities to express the country with both its good and its bad sides. Woody Guthrie started working on this song around the time he settled near the hotel Hanover House close to Times Square.¹³

¹³ Mark Allan Jackson, “Is This Song Your Song Anymore?: Revisioning Woody Guthrie’s ‘This Land Is Your Land’” *American Music* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 249 - 255.

Here he wrote the first version of the song on February 23, 1940. The original name of the song was “God Blessed America.” It was composed of six verses which ended with “God blessed America for me.” After finishing the song Woody lost interest in it for a while and performed it only occasionally. He was first recorded singing the song by Moses Asch in 1944. By this time, he decided to change the name of the song to “This Land Is My Land” and changed the end of the last verse to “This land was made for you and me.” Additionally, he decided to use the first verse as a chorus and kept only one of the protest verses criticising only private property. However, he created another version of the song not long after the first recording session. He then used this newest version as a theme song for his show on the WNEW radio station. He also included this song in his songbook “Ten Twenty-Five Cent Songs by Woody Guthrie.” Similarly, to the version recorded for Moses Asch, he kept the first verse as a chorus and then used variants of the second, third and fifth verses while excluding the original two protest verses. He also added a new verse which became the sixth verse in the final version of the song. This verse however was not recognized as part of the song for decades. These two original versions of the song had only a little impact. The version that became known as the standard came later. This version was recorded in 1947 when Woody Guthrie returned to New York City from a trip. It was composed only of the first three verses and the chorus. This version of the song first appeared on the album “This Land Is Your Land” in 1951. The popular version of the song could be also heard on thirteen other CDs and albums. Although this version became the most popular and became a sort of a landmark in the work of Woody Guthrie, he continued to change the song in the upcoming years. Another version of the song was recorded in 1952. This version kept the same chorus as well, however, changed one of the three verses which appeared in the previous version to a new one. Unfortunately, by the time this version of the song was recorded, Woody already started showing symptoms of Huntington’s chorea which started affecting his performance.¹⁴

¹⁴ Mark Allan Jackson, “Is This Song Your Song Anymore?: Revisioning Woody Guthrie’s ‘This Land Is Your Land’” *American Music* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 249 -259.

Consequently, this version of the song was not broadcasted and appeared much later in 1996 in a set of songs called “Songs for Political Action.” There are no apparent reasons why Woody kept changing the song; however, the reasons might be relatively simple. Woody Guthrie probably excluded some verses and added others simply because the song was no longer addressing the current problems he witnessed in America, therefore he had to adjust the song to address new problems and excluded old verses that were no longer relevant. It was also stated in interviews with Guthrie’s close friends and colleagues that he would often just change words or forget them, therefor the songs sometimes changed. The last reason for these changes was probably the way that Woody approached the music. In his eyes, no version of a single song had any superiority over the other. Folk songs were supposed to change over time, either from singer to singer or simply because they had to address a new topic at the time. This approach to the music probably comes from the folk tradition that he came from, which also expected songs to change and did not claim one version to be the right one. Around the year 1951, the standard version of the song that became so well-known started entering the consciousness of American citizens through several different sources. The protest verses by this time were almost forgotten, which was at odds with the wishes of Woody Guthrie. Arlo Guthrie, Woody’s son explained that his father feared that these verses would be forgotten so much that he taught him the original protest verses of the song as well as the last verse, because he did not want them to be forgotten, and his son started performing these verses soon after. Pete Seeger, a close friend of Woody Guthrie, explains that this event is likely evidence of dissatisfaction of Woody with the song and what it became. The song was widely sung by children in schools, but the protest verses were completely omitted in the song. The song found its way into schools between years 1945 and 1955, when several private schools began using “This Land Is Your Land” as a part of the music curriculum. Many of these young people remembered the song even after they finished their studies, and it became well known in some circles of society. Later on, the song also reached the public schools, and its influence spread even more.¹⁵

¹⁵ Mark Allan Jackson, “Is This Song Your Song Anymore?: Revisioning Woody Guthrie’s ‘This Land Is Your Land’” *American Music* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 259 - 260.

In 1951 Woody recorded hundreds of his songs for Howie Richmond. One of these tapes was a version of “This Land Is Your Land,” which Richmond later after realizing the potential of the song offered to a few songbook publishers for free to make it a national standard. Richmond’s actions allowed the song to get even higher status in school and became known as an alternative anthem. This version of the song was also used as an opening song for Music in Our Schools Day in 1975. At this time the song was known by most children. The protest verses were omitted as it was the same version that became the popular standard in most American schools. With the support of the song in schools also came the commercial publications of the song. In the upcoming years came printed versions of the song in several forms. All of these versions followed the same lyrics as the one sung in 1951 on the Folkways album. The publishers of Woody Guthrie decided to copyright the song in 1956 and started putting out the sheet music version of the song. The shortened version appeared almost exclusively until the late 1960s. The popular, shortened version of the song remained the standard until the end of the 1960s. The original protest verses resurfaced not long after Woody Guthrie died on October 3, 1967. They started appearing in a few publications, recordings and performances, thanks to the folk community members. Later in the 1960s, few folk singers together including Arlo Guthrie and Pete Seeger started including the protest verses in their performances of the song as an important part of the song once more. This complete version of the song also appears in the album “A Tribute to Woody Guthrie,” which was recorded in 1972. Around the same time, some folk singers also started adding their own verses to the song, trying to bring forth the, at the time, current problems in America. This original version published in 1972 remains unchanged till today. “This Land Is Your Land” despite its success among the people, did not reach significant commercial success. Yet even without commercial success, many consider the song as well as most of the work of Woody Guthrie a national heirloom. The song reached similar recognition as songs like “The Star-Spangled Banner,” or “America the Beautiful” and became together with the work of Woody Guthrie an important part of American cultural heritage and history.¹⁶

¹⁶ Mark Allan Jackson, “Is This Song Your Song Anymore?: Revisioning Woody Guthrie’s ‘This Land Is Your Land’” *American Music* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 261 -270.

2.2. References to the “Okie” community and the Dust Bowl migrants

In this subchapter of the thesis, I am going to introduce and analyse three songs made by Woody Guthrie, focused on the “Okie” community and the crisis of the Dust Bowl.

The first song that I am going to analyse is the song “Do Re Mi.” Woody Guthrie recorded this song in 1940 for the R.P. Weatherland producer. It was also later included in the album “Dust Bowl Ballads.” The song was covered in 1971 by Ry Cooder and referenced in a song of Andrew Jackson Jihad. The song deals with the experiences of the Dust Bowl migrants after their arrival to California and also seems like an advice for other southwesterners who might have been considering travelling to California as well. There are two guitar parts in the song, which were both recorded by Woody Guthrie.

In the opening verse of the song, Woody explains that many people from his homeland are leaving their homes, packing their belongings, and travelling to California. He continues by bringing the image of people trying to get out of the “old dust bowl” thinking that they will arrive in a so-called “sugar bowl,” however they find out that they are just some of many others that already arrived when the police on the borders of California tells them that they are the fourteenth thousandth to arrive that day. He is referring to the Dust Bowl refugees. The first image that comes to mind is an image of desperate people who are leaving their homes to find a better place to live. The reference “old dust bowl” that Woody uses brings forth an image of a poor country with limited opportunities for its citizens. These refugees are trying to get to the so-called “sugar bowl.” The “sugar bowl” is a reference to the California, which the people see as a promised land where they could find a better life and more job opportunities, however, the end of the verse suggests that large numbers of people are crossing the borders of the state every day, which might mean that there are too many of them and these opportunities they hope for might not be available for everyone in the end. There is also the presence of police on the borders that counts the refugees. Woody might be referring to the “bum blockade” which was formed to limit the flow of refugees to the state and only those who had money were allowed to enter.

The following part of the song is the chorus. Here Woody explains that California is a paradise, but only for those who have money. He uses the “do re mi” which is originally a system to learn music as slang for money, with the “do” having the same pronunciation as “dough”. This verse is a warning for would-be migrants that if they do not have money they should stay in Oklahoma or Texas because without it they will not find what they are looking for in California.

In the second verse, Woody once again says that California is not so much better as people think. Again, trying to advise people that even if they want to buy a farm or just leave their home for only a while, they are better where they already are. Woody is trying to explain that the “grass is not always greener” as it might seem, he even uses an equivalent of this saying “don’t swap your old cow for a car” which has the same meaning.

In the third verse, Woody says that he reads the ads in newspapers every day, however, the headline always says, that poor people should stay home. The messages in third and fourth verses overlap. The end of the third verse might have a few different meanings. Considering that Woody mentions the “want ads,” he probably means the advertisement in newspapers. This kind of advertisement is usually used to sell different things or animals among the citizens. Woody might be referring to the prices of these things as a part of the message of the third verse. That even the prices in newspapers are very different from those he would expect back home. The second meaning connected to the headline that says people without money should return home might be that Woody wanted to explain the attitude of the public to the migrants. The fourth verse is the same as the second verse without any additional words or connotations.

The whole theme of this song seems like a warning to the southwestern people. It seems as if Woody wanted to send a message to the potential future “Okies” that there are already too many of them in California and if they travel there, they will not find better conditions or happiness. He also suggests that the golden state is heaven, however only for those who have money, not for the poor.

The second song that I am going to analyse is the song “Rambling Round”. This song deals with the obstacles and challenges that the “Okie” migrants faced in California. Woody explains the problems with finding employment, the inability to earn enough money for even basic needs and the hardships of finding a place that “Okies” had to overcome.

The first verse of the song starts with Woody singing about travelling around a city and not seeing a single friendly face around. I believe that he is explaining the way that “Okies” felt when they arrived in a city in California, he suggests they were alienated and looked down upon by the citizens of California and they had no contacts, no one who they could ask for help or advice. I believe he might be referring to his own travels since he travelled a lot before arriving in California and around it as well. He also could see many “Okie” migrants in different scenarios, which he also describes in the other verses. The end of the verse could also mean that “Okies” had to travel around a lot to find at least some opportunities to work and somehow sustain themselves and their families who might have travelled with them.

In the second verse, Woody sings about leaving behind his family, leaving his home to do his best out in the world. He is referring to himself in this verse; however, his situation is not the only example. There were likely many “Okie” migrants like him who left their families back home and travelled to other states in pursuit of job opportunities to support their families in the hard times connected to the Great Depression and Dust Bowl events. They were hoping to either find a good job and send the money home to ensure prosperity and financial stability for their families or to establish a place for themselves in California to be able to later move their families to live with them when everything is prepared, however many found their original plan to be much harder to execute and it took them years to achieve what they wanted. Some also returned home when they realized that they will not be able to find what they expected in other states.

In the third verse, Woody sings about the working conditions that many “Okies” had to face to survive. A lot of the migrants were hired for gathering where they spend a whole day working just to earn a single dollar. This kind of work was the easiest to get, however, the payment was extremely low and when the gathering season ended, they were left without work and any means to earn their living. Many of the owners of fruit plantations also exploited “Okies” because there were too many of them so the salaries could be easily lowered resulting in a much cheaper workforce. Some even tried to specifically lure the migrants to work for them promising a job opportunity. These attempts were very successful in Arizona where many

migrants arrived to work as gatherers, which resulted in the payments getting much lower than they were before. The influx of “Okies” also pushed out most of the other minorities that were usually taking these jobs, however, these minorities were travelling specifically to work as gatherers until the end of the season and then moved on to find some other job when the season was over. “Okies” on the other hand stayed where they are, unemployed and struggling to sustain themselves, making their situation even direr.

In the fourth verse, Woody expresses how difficult the life of “Okies” working as gatherers was. He explains that the migrants had a hard time even affording food and many resulted into eating rotten or fallen fruit from the tree to survive.

In the fifth verse, Woody addresses the problems of those who arrived by themselves, looking to find a new life marry and find a place for themselves. He explains that many of them could not settle down and start a family, because of their financial instability and no way out of it. That these people were hoping to save up some money and settle down, however, due to lack of employment and extremely low payments they were not able to save up anything in the end.

In the last verse, it seems that Woody is once again referring to himself; however, this verse could be once again applied to other migrants as well. He sings about his mother hoping for him to be a man of renown yet in the end he is just a hobo travelling around looking for work, without any career. I believe he referred to the situation he was in when he arrived in California; however, this situation likely happened to many of the “Okie” migrants.

This song is a very valuable insight into the situation the “Okies” found themselves in. It is hard to imagine how difficult life was for them, however, thanks to Woody Guthrie it was possible to understand at least partially what the migrants had to go through.

The third and last song that I am going to analyse in this subchapter is the song “Hard Travelin’”. It is a song about the hard travels of the working people. The theme of this song refers mainly to the hobo subculture; however, it also partially refers to the “Okies”, because they were taking every job offer they could to survive. Woody sings about taking different means of transport and different types of employment options that travelling workers had at the time.

In the first verse, Woody sings only about having a hard travelling. He is using the term “hard” because for most of the travelling labourers it wasn’t easy to transport themselves across the states, but in many cases, they had no other option since travelling was crucial for them to earn money. The job opportunities were scarce and many of them were only for a certain season. The best example is the harvesting of fruit or wheat where it was easy to find work during the harvesting season, however, when the harvest ended most of the labourers moved on to travel to a different region to find a new job and earn some living. Most of the travelling labourers did not have a car or money to pay to get transported to a different region; therefore they had to come up with different ways to transport themselves. The easiest option was to walk on foot; however, it was very slow and exhausting.

The second verse of the song describes the means of transport that the travelling labourers had. Woody mentions several hobo terms in this verse, he mentions the “flat wheeler” which is a car that is shaking and bouncing as if its wheels were flat, he mentions the “blind passenger” which is a term used for people travelling in the boxcars of freight trains. These carts have no windows and the only way of seeing the outside is by having the large sliding door of the cart open. Travelling as a blind passenger can be an example seen in the movie about Woody Guthrie “Bound for glory.” The downside of travelling as a blind passenger is that the railroad guards were often checking for people trying to use the freight trains for free, which is also depicted in the movie. Woody also mentions the term “dead-ender” in this verse which is a term used for people without any prospects of a future, basically social dropouts who are travelling around with no aim or ambition that they would try to accomplish.

In the third verse, Woody describes working as a miner. He is referring to the labourers who chose to work as miners, which was one of the more stable sources of income as it was not limited by seasons as much as other employment options, however, it was a dangerous and physically demanding work which was not suitable for everyone. He sings about using different tools like pressure drills, hammers, or air-hose.

The fourth verse describes working as a harvester. Woody sings about harvesting the wheat for a dollar per day which was also mentioned in the previous song “Ramblin Round.” As I already described in the previous song it was a difficult job, the payment for this kind of work was small and it was a very limited employment option.

The fifth verse of the song describes working as a smith. Woody sings about the labourers working as smiths, he mentions the Pittsburgh steel. Pittsburgh is a city with many steel-producing companies. It was a good employment option for the travelling labourers as it was stable, and the payment was higher than in other employment options. It was hard work with a constant risk of sustaining an injury similarly to mining. Woody describes some of the smiting chores like pouring melted iron or firing the furnaces.

In the sixth verse, Woody describes being imprisoned for vagrancy. This is something Woody experience himself as it was common especially in California for people who were unemployed travelling around cities or as blind passengers to be imprisoned for vagrancy for several months.

In the last verse, Woody sings about travelling the highway. He describes the struggle of most of the working labourers as well as many of the “Okies” who travelled to different states with the ambition of having a fresh start. He describes travelling encumbered worried about the future and having difficulty finding a partner and settling down. It is a theme that appears in some of his other songs as well. It was also mentioned in the previous song “Ramblin Round.”

The song “Hard Travelin” once again provides an intriguing insight into the life of hobo tramps and “Okies.” It is difficult to imagine their lives and the difficulty of constantly travelling around looking for employment. It is also difficult to imagine the psychological impact that this kind of lifestyle must have had on these people.

2.3. References to the “Great Depression”

In this subchapter, I am going to analyse two songs made by Woody Guthrie to explore references to the “Great Depression” in his work. Woody Guthrie experiences many of the ills of this era by himself and depicted many of the struggles connected to the “Great Depression” in his work.

The first song that I am going to analyse is “The Jolly Banker.” This song was recorded by Alan Lomax in 1940 for the Library of Congress. Woody addresses the financial crisis of people and criticizes the financiers who instead of trying to help exploited the hardships of others.

The first verse of the song starts by introducing the narrator of the song. Woody created this song in a way that makes us as the listener perceive the situation through the eyes of the banker Tom Cranker who figures as a narrator in the song. There is a sense of dark humour in this verse as the banker proceeds to claim that he is a safeguard for people in a dire situation, however throughout the rest of the song he only adds to their misfortune. In the upcoming phrases, the narrator describes all of the steps he makes to ensure his prosperity while putting his clients in dire situations.

In the second verse, Woody starts by describing the difficulty of the time he and his clients are facing. This also adds to the general feeling of him taking the advantage of his clients. He knows that they are facing a hard situation to deal with yet he proceeds in the phrase by adding “I check up your shortage and bring down your mortgage” which results in making them even more desperate.

The next verse continues similarly. He describes giving loans to people who need money to feed their families. This act will bring them even more struggle later on.

Continuing in the fourth verse he describes giving more money to the people just to come to get twice as much later.

In the fifth verse, he describes coming to them with a foreclosure taking their car and even clothes. He is putting forth that he will take everything they have left as they have no more money to pay for his loans.

In the sixth verse, he describes the ills of farmers, losing their crops either to insects or rotting. He starts by offering help by saying, “I’ll come down and help you” just to continue by “I’ll rake you and scalp you” which once again adds to the nature of his so-called “help.” He suggests he is helping throughout the song however in the end we find out everything he is doing is only to bring him more profit, as well as, receiving the opportunity to take everything his clients have left.

The last verse speaks about the abuse of the landlords misusing their accommodated clients, yet he instead of helping only alerts the police in case they would want to make any trouble in their dire situation.

The whole song seems like a satiric take on the work of bankers. Woody is trying to look through the eyes of the banker yet does so in a cheerful way, which is the complete opposite of the depressing theme of the song. He is trying to imagine the perspective of the lenders compared to the perspective of the borrowers. Woody Guthrie himself experienced the effect that the actions of these people had. His father who was a successful owner of multiple farms had the foreclosure take them all away. Woody mentioned this fact himself in one of his interviews that his father was most likely the only man in the world who lost one farm per day due to foreclosure for thirty days straight. This gives us a better perspective on his motivation to describe his problem with the actions of bankers and foreclosures they enforced on their clients. As partially he wanted to address this problem due to its impact on the lives of many of American citizens, however also addressed it due to the impact it had on his family.

He partially blamed the loss of the home and investments of the family for his mother’s degrading mental health and knew very well what effect foreclosures had on the lives of the people. The nature of the song “Jolly Banker” is satiric and uses quite a bit of dark humour, however, Woody addressed this topic during the same recording session once again in a second song in which he used a more tragic approach.

The second song that I am going to analyse is the song “Dust Can’t Kill Me.” Although, this song could be viewed as a reference to the Dust Bowl refugees its nature can be applied to the Great Depression as well. The song is simply written. It has twelve very short verses with different variations only in the first line of each verse. Woody describes the ills of people who were living in the areas influenced by the dust storms in the Dust Bowl event. The reason why this song can be applied to the general Great Depression is its message. Woody explains that no matter how hard the time is people need to stay strong and keep moving in their lives. To try looking at the better side of things and not give up.

In the first verse of the song, Woody sings about losing a child to the dust storm. While Woody himself did not lose children due to the dust storms, many people did, which is most likely why he sings about it in the song. It also seems that the dust storm might not be mentioned literally, but as a metaphor for any situation that might end up taking a life of a child in the family. An example might be hunger caused by not having a sufficient amount of money for food. It is a traumatic accident which leaves a big mark on anyone who had to go through such a situation.

The second verse continues by mentioning the loss of family members once again mentioning the dust storms as a cause. Once again this was a tragedy that many faced during the depression leaving a serious mark on their lives.

In the third verse, Woody sings about the landlord owning his homestead, which in this case might be a reference with multiple meanings. The first meaning might be that he was renting the homestead and due to a difficult financial situation could not pay the rent anymore, losing it to the landlord. The second meaning might be that again due to lack of money he had to sell the homestead and now it is rented to someone else. This is once again a situation that many people had to face in the thirties as a lot of them lost their farms and homes or had to sell them.

In the fourth verse, Woody mentions a “dry spell” killing his crops. In this case, he is referring to the draught killing the crops of many farmers forcing them to either sell their farms or close their farming businesses.

The fifth verse mentions the tractor having his home. In this case, it might mean that the house functions as collateral for the tractor because the owner of the tractor had to borrow money to afford it. Again, Woody mentions a difficult choice that many had to make. If they couldn't afford money to buy necessary equipment for the business they had to use some other property to serve as collateral in case they could not pay off the debt, however, in the end, they might have lost their home because their financial situation got even worse than before.

In the sixth verse, Woody mentions the tractor destroying his house, which is referring to losing the house due to narrator's inability to return the borrowed money and his house, therefore, being taken to pay for the tractor.

In the seventh verse, Woody mentions the pawnshop having his furniture once again addressing the difficult situation of many who had to sell furniture and other valuables to be able to sustain themselves.

The eighth verse mentions having to endure multiple storms. In this verse, it once again seems like a metaphor for the struggles that a lot of Americans faced during the depression.

The ninth verse mentions losing another property to the dust storm, adding yet another tragedy as by now it seems that he as the protagonist of the song lost everything he had.

In the tenth verse, Woody mentions all his relatives being taken by the highway, which is a reference to the "Okie" exodus to California and Arizona. This verse is taken from the perspective of people who were left home alone, losing everything in the events of the Dust Bowl and Great Depression.

In the eleventh verse, Woody mentions the dust storm blowing the whole world down. This seems like an abstract image of seemingly never-ending storm destroying everything, or a never-ending spree of tragic events that keeps making life more and more difficult.

In the last verse, he once again mentions losing a child to end the song the same way as it started.

Throughout the song, the dust storms seem used not only in the literal meaning, but also as an equivalent of tragedy. He ends every verse of the song by singing “But it can’t kill me, Lord, And it can’t kill me” sometimes adding a variation “It can’t blow me down” or “It can’t get me.” It does not seem as a message only to other “Okies” but to everyone who suffers due to the negative event in their lives. Woody is trying to motivate people to keep on living, and to move on. He is bringing forth an image of continuous misfortune yet constantly emphasizes that he is strong and will not succumb to it. He is encouraging everyone to keep strong, to keep on fighting, which is a reason why this song is not referring only to the Dust Bowl refugees but to everyone suffering in the Great Depression.

3. Political references in songs of Woody Guthrie

This chapter is going to focus on political topics and references in the songs of Woody Guthrie. The beginning of the chapter will describe how did Woody start being involved in political matters, what made him a political activist and how was he seen by the public.

The last important subculture that Woody Guthrie was a member of and acted as a spokesman for is the labour-radical movement. This group was different from the others because of its ideology. It came to existence because of the rise of The Congress of Industrial Organizations and of the communist movement that both came in the 1930s during the depression. Its impact on the national scale during the 1930s was well known, however, it was relatively isolated from the general American culture. Woody's radio broadcasts that originally brought him fame among the hobos and "Okies" during his stay in California later brought him the attention of the political radicals. He was introduced to the left-wing audience by Ed Robbin in 1939. Many intellectuals saw him as a symbol of the battle against social issues which they had either in an abstract or literal way fought themselves. Woody also emerged on the scene in the best possible circumstances at the time. "The Grapes of Wrath" were just published by John Steinbeck and unfair labour practices against migratory workers started being investigated by La Follette Committee. The situation of "Okies" became known to the public as well around the time. Because of these circumstances the appearance of Woody Guthrie as a socially conscious and articulate spokesman who was not afraid to verbalize the issues in the "folk" kind of language that everyone could understand made a significant impact on those whose political views were steering towards the left. Although not all left-wingers saw Woody as such a symbol there were enough of them that Woody started being known as a so-called "Noble Savage." Woody's image was idealized into an image of folk "Homer", and he became known as the best folk ballad composer known among the people. He was being seen as a symbol by the enlightened white democratic people. His leftish romantic vision was also supported by the communist press in those years.¹⁷

¹⁷ Richard A. Reuss, "Woody Guthrie and His Folk Tradition" *The Journal of American Folklore* 83, no. 329 (July - September 1970): 278 - 280.

This simple kind of characterization that portrayed Woody as a bard or a minstrel of the people was, however, an illusion. Close friends and associates of Woody knew well that he was a much more complex person than how he was seen by the public. Between the years 1939 and 1941 Woody's life changed. He slowly became directing his music more and more towards the left-wing environment, in which he then stayed until the end of his career. He was continuously drifting between the milieu of hobo and the Dust Bowl during these years, however, a significant separation from his former environments came in 1940. During this year he made his first trip to New York where he stayed for a longer time. Although he made several other trips during the upcoming years he mostly focused his talent and attention on the concepts, political topics, and events that had no connection to the previous groups, which he represented during his years in California.¹⁸

¹⁸ Richard A. Reuss, "Woody Guthrie and His Folk Tradition" *The Journal of American Folklore* 83, no. 329 (July - September 1970): 208 - 281.

3.1. The radicalism in Woody Guthrie's songs

In this subchapter, I would like to explore songs that were focused on topics of homelessness poverty or difficult work-life as Woody Guthrie was trying to use his music to change these things. He was aspiring to address problems in society and help to spread awareness about them. Woody believed that talking about difficult topics and problems was the first step towards finding a solution. The songs that I am going to analyse in this subchapter are “I Ain’t Got No Home,” “Ludlow Massacre,” and “Jesus Christ.”

The first song that I am going to analyse is the song “I Ain’t Got No Home.” This song was recorded in 1940 and released on Victor Records along with several other songs in the album “Dust Bowl Ballads.” Similarly to the song “This Land Is Your Land” Woody created “I Ain’t Got No Home” as a musical response to another song which he did not agree with. It is the song “Can’t Feel At Home.” It is a gospel song that was sung in migrant camps and made famous in 1931. Woody did not agree with the message in the song that said that people should endure their misfortune and suffering, because they will be rewarded in the afterlife when they enter heaven. Woody did not agree with the concept of suffering on earth and then enjoying existence in heaven. Therefore he decided to create “I Ain’t Got No Home” to address the problems that people currently faced.

In the first verse, Woody sings about being a travelling worker. He sings about having no home and wandering between different towns to search for a job. He continues by explaining that the police are making these travels difficult wherever he arrives and finishes the verse by saying he does not have a home in the world anymore. Woody is referring to the struggles of working labourers in this verse; he addresses their difficult life full of constant travelling to earn some money to survive. He brings forth the image of people without a home wandering through the land. He also refers to difficulties brought by the involvement of the police. He is most likely referring to vagrancy arrests that were commonly happening at the time.

The second verse focuses on “Okies” and losing property. He starts by bringing the image of people stranded on the road. He refers to them as “brothers and sisters” which inclines that he is talking about the Dust Bowl migrants as he was one of them as well. Many of the “Okie” migrants who wanted to travel to California to find a better life were not able to get through the borders and were asked by the police to turn back and return home. This might be the reason why Woody says that they are stranded. In many cases, these people were already

poor before starting their journey and used most of their remaining money and resources during their travel. Therefore when asked to turn back they don't have enough to be able to make the journey home and become stranded on the road. Woody continues singing "rich man took my home and drove me from my door" in this part he is referring to foreclosure. Many of the American citizens living during the depression lost their homes. They were trying to solve their problems by borrowing money and hoping that their situation would get better, however in many of these cases this decision resulted in their property being taken to pay off the debt losing their farms or homes in the process.

In the third verse Woody describes farming on a share, and the difficult life it brought for those who ended up in such an arrangement. He explains that even though farmers who farmed on share had still a stable job they remained poor and were barely able to make enough money to pay for their basic needs. He continues by explaining that large amounts of crops were going into the hands of the landowners leaving the farmer with little to sell and make living. Towards the end of the verse, Woody brings forth an image of losing a loved one due to the harsh times.

In the following verse, Woody addresses once again the problems of the working class. He sings about spending a whole life working in different environments. He stresses how difficult it was for the workers who spent their whole lives working in hopes of making their lives better and earning money for their needs yet finding themselves facing more and more difficult situations.

In the last verse, Woody expresses his disbelief about the state of the society of the time. He says that the world is a great and funny place to live in. He sings about the working people being poor while those gambling are rich and finishes the song by singing "And I ain't got no home in this world anymore." It seems that Woody is once again trying to express the difficulty for the working class to find their place in society during the period. That people who work their whole lives cannot get out of poverty while those who are rich are using their money to make sure they get even richer.

Throughout the song, Woody is trying to address the struggles and problems of the working class. This theme is occurring throughout multiple of Woody Guthrie's songs. He is trying to spread the word about these problems because he believes that is one of the steps to change them. Woody experienced some of the struggles of the working people himself during the "Okie" exodus and spent a significant part of his life trying to fight the problems the working class faced. The other theme that Woody touches upon in this song is the struggle to find a place in the changing society. Woody might have likely experience this struggle himself as the society, economy and industry was changing and those who did not manage to keep up ended up confused and unsure of their place and future.

The second song in this chapter that I am going to analyse is the song Ludlow Massacre. In 1913 several thousand miners went on strike to protest low payment and extreme conditions in the coalfield of Colorado. As a result, they were evicted from the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company towns and had to build tent colonies to accommodate themselves. The largest colony was in Ludlow. There was high tension between the miners and detectives hired by the company. Later on, the National Guard was deployed to reduce violence and the number of conflicts between the detectives and the miners. The National Guard however favoured the company and the detectives overlooking their actions. There was a campaign to bring more attention to the events led by labour activist Mary Jones. In 1914 the presence of the National Guard was reduced due to the costs needed to maintain the troops which resulted in increased violence. On April 19, 1914, the National Guard encircled the camp in Ludlow and attacked the miners. The battle lasted for a whole day; however, the miners started running low on bullets and had to retreat to the surrounding countryside. Several women and children were hiding in cellars dug underneath the tents. The troops of the National Guard burned down the tents in the evening which resulted in the deaths of eleven children and two women. The miners in retaliation attacked the town officials and mines taking control of a large area. After these events, the federal troops were sent to restore the order. The strike ended on December 10, 1914.

The song depicts the events of the Ludlow Massacre from the first-person view. Woody describes the events in detail as if he was there to witness everything that happened. Woody decided to write this song after he read the work of Ella Reeves Bloor. She witnessed the events first-hand and later on described everything in her work "We Are Many." The depiction of the events left a significant impact on Woody and he decided to write the song because he felt the need to show people that the Ludlow Massacre or any similar event should not ever happen again. He wanted to express that forcing people to work for cheap wages is wrong and results only in unnecessary violence losing the lives of women and children in the process.

Woody sings the song as if he was among the striking miners and describes the events based on his imagination. He begins the first verse of the song by describing how he and his fellow miners are being driven out of the company-owned accommodation and moving to a tent colony at Ludlow.

In the second verse, Woody describes worrying about his children and being shot at by the guards of the railroad bridge. Woody tried to imagine what the experience of the striking miners must have been like and therefore is trying to depict the events as if he experienced them himself.

In the third verse of the song, Woody brings forth an image of miners digging a cave to hide the children and pregnant women to protect them from being killed. This is most likely a reference to the cellars that were dug up under some of the tents and later used as a hiding place for the women and children during the attack of the National Guard.

He continues by describing the attack on the Ludlow camp in the fourth verse. He sings about soldiers waiting for the night to come and attacking the camp when the miners were asleep. He describes the soldiers surrounding the camp and soaking the tents in kerosene to set them on fire. This part of the song shows the first differences between the song and the real events. It inclines that Woody describes the events in the same way that he imagined them when he was reading the work of Ella Reeves Bloor.

The following verse is focused on the beginning of the attack on the camp. Woody sings about the trigger of a Gatling gun being pulled, tents being set on fire and him running towards the children. He describes being stopped by fire and thirteen children dying to the gunfire of the National Guard.

The next verse describes the escape of the miners out of the camp. He sings about watching the fire until it died down and then helping people carry their belonging while others were dying everywhere around them. This is a reference to the escape of miners who started losing the fight at Ludlow due to lack of a munition. Without any other way to defend themselves, they had to retreat and escape to the forests and countryside leaving the encampment and some of their belongings behind.

The sixth verse follows by depicting the burial of those who died during the attack. Woody sings about never forgetting the faces of the dead and continues by describing preaching funerals of those who fell and laying them to rest with the help of other survivors.

In the seventh verse, Woody continues by describing the events that came after the fight. He describes asking the governor of Colorado to tell the president to call off his National Guard

but then explains that the National Guard was under the governor's command and therefore he ignored their requests.

The eighth verse focuses on the depiction of women travelling to the city of Walsenburg to sell potatoes and buy guns for the earned money. After their return, everyone receives a weapon.

The ninth verse depicts soldiers attacking the miners not expecting them to be armed. The soldiers realizing their mistake too late are forced to retreat as the miners start winning the encounter. This part might be referencing the retaliation of the miners after the massacre at Ludlow. The miners attacked several important positions of the strikebreakers, National Guard and company's detectives and took control of fifty miles long area.

The final verse of the song depicts Woody together with the miners sealing off the area where the children died. After finishing the work Woody says "God bless the Mine Workers' Union," and then depicts himself crying. This might be Woody's interpretation of the feelings of the miners after the conflict ended. There were no benefits for the miners after the conflict; however, the United Mine Workers of America association received many new members and supporters.

This song seems like an unusual example of the work of Woody Guthrie. The reason is that in most of his songs Woody takes a situation in the society that was at the time bothering him and makes a song about it in hopes of spreading information about the problem or making people realize that the problem is not receiving enough attention and should be resolved. In this case, however, Woody takes an event that happened in the past and decides to make a song about it. His original reason for writing the song was to make sure that people will not forget about the Ludlow Massacre and to emphasize that similar event should never happen again. However, after close inspection of the year the song was released it becomes clear why Woody decided to write it. The song was released in 1944 and at the time there were many strikes and lockouts that were happening all over America. There were thousands of strikes during the year and over two million workers were involved. These events are likely why Woody decided to bring back the events that happened in 1914 because he was afraid that similar events might happen during the year 1944. He wanted to warn the Companies and their workers to not let the disagreements between them escalate to prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

The last song that I am going to analyse in this subchapter is the song “Jesus Christ.” Woody performed this song at a concert in New Jersey in 1949. The concert was recorded using wire which is a technique that was used between the 40s and 50s. The Woody Guthrie Archives were able to restore these recordings and later released them as the album “The Live Wire: Woody Guthrie in Performance 1949.” These recordings are the only known recordings of a live performance of Woody Guthrie. The song “Jesus Christ” is an example of Woody’s talent for turning historical events into a thought-provoking song. The theme of the song is Jesus Christ and his fight for the poor and oppressed. Throughout the song, Woody also comments on how would the rich and powerful in modern society react to the deeds of Jesus.

In the first verse of the song, Woody opens by singing about Jesus Christ being a hard-working brave man who travelled around the land. He was trying to encourage the rich to give their money to the poor to improve their lives. The rich however worried about their wealth and instead decided to kill Jesus and lay him in a grave. The death of Jesus for his deeds occurs in every verse of the song. Woody begins right away by describing Jesus as a simple man, a hard worker who stood up for the poor people. It seems that Woody felt a connection between himself and Jesus Christ especially the first part of the song supports this idea because Jesus is effectively trying to achieve the same things as Woody himself. Jesus is also described quite similarly to Woody in the opening of the song as Woody loved travelling around America and as a result, a lot of inspiration came from what he witnessed during his travels. Another similarity between the character of Jesus in the song and Woody Guthrie is their similar social status. Woody himself was not coming from a rich family and had to work hard throughout his life to earn living. He often travelled by foot or cheap means of transport and had to find work opportunities along his journey to afford food and basic needs.

The next part of the song is the chorus, in which Woody describes Jesus as a simple carpenter who became followed by many brave and loyal people. However, he was betrayed by Judas and laid in his grave.

Woody follows in the second verse by describing some of the deeds of Jesus. He sings about Jesus going to the preacher and then to the sheriff telling them once again that they should sell their jewellery and use the money to help those in need. However once again he was instead laid in his grave. Interestingly, Woody is using at the time modern public figures as the oppressors of Jesus. The reason might be that Woody wanted everyone to be able to understand the message of the song and did not want people who are not familiar with the bible to miss the

message he is trying to express. Woody knew that his songs are popular among many people from different social structures of the society and therefore described the events in his song in a way that could be understood by everyone. It is even more apparent in the following verses of the song where he uses the characters of bankers, landlords and soldiers.

The next verse expresses how Jesus gained his followers and once again describes his death. Woody describes people being drawn to Jesus when he arrived in a town. The people believed in his words which created problems for the rich and therefore the bankers and preachers decided to nail him to the cross.

In the fourth verse, Woody describes people being surprised about his death and wondering why did he die. He continues by saying that the big landlord and his soldiers are responsible. He says they nailed him in the sky.

In the final verse of the song, Woody refers to modern times. He says that the song was written in New York City of a rich man, a preacher and a slave. He continues by explaining that if Jesus said the same things today he would be crucified and buried the same way as he was in the past.

The song focuses on the conflict between the rich and powerful and those who address problems and brings thought-provoking themes to the eyes of the public. Woody saw the actions of Jesus Christ as very similar to what he and other radical people were trying to achieve. There are two different interpretations of the song. The first interpretation could be that Woody was trying to voice his concern that people like himself might be facing the same fate as Jesus even in modern society. The second interpretation might be Woody trying to point out that even though the society changed and developed Jesus would suffer the same fate even though now when he is gone he is seen as a hero who stood up for those in need. He might have been trying to encourage the public to support those who are trying to help the poor and oppressed to prevent them from suffering the same fate.

Conclusion

The aim of my thesis was to discover if the songs of Woody Guthrie truly were the voice and memory of the people of America. Through analysis of lyrics of the songs of Woody Guthrie, I discovered that the themes and topics of the songs I analysed resonated with the events in the society and historical period in which Woody Guthrie lived. The analysis also allowed me to discover that folk music was perceived by Woody as a tool to address problems in society and suggest ways to improve them.

While working on my bachelor thesis I searched for information about the Dust Bowl events in the article, “Dust Bowl” written by Donald A. Wilhite, about the reaction of California to the migration in the journal article, “Citizenship Contested” by Alexander Toni, about the struggles of Okie migrants in the journal article “Okie Migrations” by William H. Mullins, and about the influence that Okie migrants had on the music industry in California in the journal article, “Dust Bowl legacies: The Okie Impact on California, 1939-1989” by James N. Gregory. Continuing I have searched for information about the origins of folk music in the journal articles, “Folk Music: The Basics” by Ronald D. Cohen and “From the 30s to the 60s: The Folk Music Revival in the United States” written by Ron Eyerman and Scott Baretta. I have also searched for information about the life of Woody Guthrie in the journal, “Woody Guthrie and His Folk Tradition” written by Richard A. Reuss, and about the Woody Guthrie’s song “This Land is Your Land” and its development in the journal article, “Is This Song Your Song Anymore?: Revisioning Woody Guthrie’s ‘This Land Is Your Land’” by Mark Allan Jackson. The official website of Woody Guthrie, Inc. served me as a secondary source.

While studying my materials about the Dust Bowl, I learned how significant catastrophe the Dust Bowl was for the citizens of the affected area. I have learned that many people lost their employment and property because of the events of the Dust Bowl, together with the influence of the Great Depression and I have also learned that many of the inhabitants of the affected area decided to migrate to other states in search of a better life.

During my reading of materials regarding the experiences of the migrants and the reaction of the states receiving them I have learned that the migrants were not welcome and often treated as intruders. I have also learned that these people were often facing terrible working conditions to survive and discrimination along with struggles of hunger, absence of

home and poverty. I have found out that the migrants over the years managed to fit into their new environment and influenced greatly the music industry.

I became familiar with the origins and characteristics of American folk music. I discovered that folk music has served as an important medium for many communities and allowed musicians to address cultural and political problems. I was also surprised by the number of collectors of folk music who travelled all around the United States in search of the traditional heirloom of different communities.

Reading about the life of Woody Guthrie made me realize how impressive a person he was and surprised about his way of life and experiences.

Listening to the music of Woody Guthrie allowed me to better understand the structure of the songs, and their atmosphere and also became very helpful for my analysis of the different lyrics.

I have discovered that Woody Guthrie truly was the voice and memory of the American people. Throughout his whole life, Woody dedicated his music to addressing the struggles of people and problems in society. His lyrics were based on his personal experiences and events witnessed during his journeys. He also did not give his songs a final form but changed or added different parts of songs throughout his life to make sure they are relevant and addressing the most current topics at the time. Woody Guthrie acted as a spokesman for different groups without their own voices and through his music kept spreading awareness about the struggles of the common people. After his death, many of these songs could be viewed as a window into the past and a reminder for upcoming generations, while problems and topics addressed in others are still relevant even in modern society.

Resumé

Práce se věnuje písňové tvorbě Woody Guthrieho a zkoumá především jeho roli jakožto hlas a paměť národa. Text je rozdělen do tří kapitol. První kapitola se soustředí na události Dust Bowl a s ní spojenou migrací Amerických občanů z oblastí zasažených touto pohromou do okolních států, především Kalifornie. Dále pak pojednává o těžkostech, které tito migranti museli podstoupit, aby dokázali přežít v neznámém a opresivním prostředí. V následující části poté pojednává o jejich začlenění do nové společnosti a o vlivu, který tito migranti měli na rozvíjející se hudební průmysl.

Cílem této části práce je přiblížit prostředí, ze kterého Woody Guthrie pocházel a odkud pocházela inspirace pro mnoho z jeho písní. Woody Guthrie věnoval svým krajanům, se kterými přicestoval do Kalifornie, mnoho prostoru ve své písňové tvorbě za účelem rozšíření povědomí o těžkostech, kterými si tito lidé museli procházet. Konec této kapitoly se věnuje původu folkové hudby v Americe a její charakteristice. Cílem této části je zjistit, jakým způsobem vznikla folková hudba ve Spojených Státech, co ji dělá výjimečnou oproti ostatním žánrům hudby a z jakého důvodu se stala tak oblíbeným a výjimečným žánrem hudby v americké společnosti.

Druhá kapitola práce se zaměřuje především na kulturní reference v hudební tvorbě Woody Guthrieho a dobový kontext textů těchto písní. Začátek této kapitoly se soustředí na důvody, kvůli kterým se Woody Guthrie stal tak známým a výjimečným hudebníkem folkové scény. Pojednává o způsobu, jakým se zasloužil o uznání americké veřejnosti a způsobu jakým vystupoval. Woody Guthrie se setkal na svých četných cestách se spoustou životních příběhů a na vlastní oči viděl problémy sužující běžný lid. Během svého působení na hudební scéně pak pro několik skupin fungoval téměř jako mluvčí a snažil se upozorňovat na problémy ve společnosti s nadějí, že se o těchto problémech rozšíří povědomí a díky tomu budou rychleji podniknuty kroky k jejich vyřešení.

Tato kapitola se dále soustředí na vývoj Woodyho nejznámější písně „This Land Is Your Land“ a její rozbor. Cílem této části je pochopit z jakého důvodu je Woody Guthrie považován za jednoho z nejvýznamnějších amerických folkových hudebníků ze všech. Dále je také cílem pochopit z jakého důvodu je „This Land Is Your Land“ nejznámější a nejoblíbenější z jeho písní. Následující část této kapitoly se zaměřuje na analýzu tří písní zabývajících událostmi spojenými s Dust Bowl. Woody Guthrie v těchto písních popisuje těžkosti svých krajanů, kteří

před prachovými bouřemi utekli do sousedních států. Cílem těchto písní je poukázat na problémy, se kterými se migranti v Kalifornii a Arizoně potýkali. Snaží se vysvětlit, že by se na tyto uprchlíky společnost neměla dívat s nechutí, ale spíše by se měla pokusit jejich situaci pochopit a pomoci jim. Předmětem analýzy jsou písně „Do Re Mi“, „Ramblin Round“ a „Hard Travelin“. Další část této kapitoly se věnuje dvěma písním, které se zabývají tématy spojenými s velkou hospodářskou krizí a jejími dopady na obyvatelstvo Spojených Států. Předmětem analýzy jsou písně „The Jolly Banker“ a „Dust Can't Kill Me“. V první písni Woody satiricky popisuje nemorální jednání některých bankéřů během krize, kteří využívali neštěstí Amerických občanů ke svému zbohatnutí. Ve druhé písni popisuje Woody odhodlání muže pokračovat ve snaze dále žít, navzdory tomu, že o vše přišel.

Třetí a poslední kapitola se věnuje politickým referencím v písních Woody Guthrieho. Začátek této kapitoly se zaměřuje na stručný popis Woodyho působení v politickém spektru. Woody Guthrie se v druhé polovině svého hudebního působení dostal do pozice mluvčího pro hnutí dělnického radikalismu, a stal se brzy velmi oblíbeným pro své postoje a názory, o které se prostřednictvím své hudby nebál veřejně podělit. Velmi brzy tak byl idealizován do pozice folkového Homéra, a přestože se zdaleka nedá považovat za komunistu, byl pro své levicové názory často zmiňován v komunisticky zaměřeném tisku. Třetí kapitola je nadále věnována analýze tří písní s politickými tématy. Tyto písně jsou „I Ain't Got No Home“, „Ludlow Massacre“, a „Jesus Christ“. V první písni Woody popisuje pocity lidí, kteří se nedokázali zorientovat a adaptovat ve vyvíjející se společnosti. Popisuje zápas, kterým si musela spousta občanů Spojených Států v době krize projít, ve snaze najít si ve společnosti své místo. Následující píseň pojednává o událostech, spojených s masakrem u Ludlow. Tato událost se stala začátkem dvacátého století v době stávek, kdy došlo k několika krvavým konfliktům mezi stávkujícími dělníky a najatými zaměstnanci společností, kteří měli tyto dělníky přinutit vrátit se do práce. Woody se tuto píseň rozhodl napsat v době, kdy se napříč celými Spojenými Státy běžně konaly dělnické stávky. Důvod k napsání této skladby bylo připomenout, že konflikt nevede k ničemu dobrému, a proto by se měla najít jiná cesta k zamezení opakování chyb minulých. Poslední píseň je kritikou mocných členů společnosti a jejich ignorací problémů chudých. Woody v této písni popisuje činy Ježíše Krista a snaží se poukázat, že kdyby Ježíš podobné činy dělal v dnešní době, pravděpodobně by dopadl velmi podobně, jako je psáno v bibli. Za své činy by byl mocnými členy společnosti potrestán a umlčen.

Woody Guthrie figuroval jako mluvčí lidu. Neúnavně ve svých písních popisoval nejružnější problémy ve společnosti, se kterými se setkal. Nadále také upozorňoval na ideologie či názory, se kterými z různých důvodů nesouhlasil a snažil se upozorňovat na případné hrozby, které by tyto názory mohli přinést. Woody Guthrie napříč své působení na hudební scéně také mnoho písní postupně upravoval, aby byly aktuální a pojednávaly o moderních problémech. Proto má mnoho z jeho písní více různých verzí. Jako příklad lze uvést píseň „This Land Is Your Land“, která byla změněna několikrát během jeho života. Woody Guthrie také podporoval, aby se jeho písně dále vyvíjely i po jeho smrti prostřednictvím tvorby dalších folkových zpěváků. U písně „This Land Is Your Land“ se tak i stalo a po jeho smrti k této písni bylo přidáno a zase odebráno několik různých slok ostatními folkovými zpěváky. Mnoho témat, kterými se Woody Guthrie ve své tvorbě zabýval, je stále aktuálních i v dnešní moderní době. Hudba Woody Guthrieho také funguje velmi dobře jako okno do minulosti, zejména texty popisující Dust Bowl a zážitky oklahomských a texaských uprchlíků. Woody Guthrie v době svého působení opravdu figuroval jakožto hlas a paměť národa.

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Appendix A “This Land Is Your Land” by Woody Guthrie

“This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York island,
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;
This land was made for you and me.”

“As I was walking that ribbon of highway
I saw above me that endless skyway;
I saw below me that golden valley;
This land was made for you and me.”

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

“When the sun came shining, and I was strolling,
And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling,
As the fog was lifting a voice was chanting:
This land was made for you and me.”

“As I went walking I saw a sign there,
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."
But on the other side it didn't say nothing.
That side was made for you and me.”

“In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,
By the relief office I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?”

“Nobody living can ever stop me,
As I go walking that freedom highway;
Nobody living can ever make me turn back
This land was made for you and me.”

Appendix B “Do Re Mi” by Woody Guthrie

“Lots of folks back East, they say, is leavin' home every day,
Beatin' the hot old dusty way to the California line.
'Cross the desert sands they roll, gettin' out of that old dust bowl,
They think they're goin' to a sugar bowl, but here's what they find
Now, the police at the port of entry say,
"You're number fourteen thousand for today.”

“Oh, if you ain't got the do re mi, folks, you ain't got the do re mi,
Why, you better go back to beautiful Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Georgia, Tennessee.
California is a garden of Eden, a paradise to live in or see;
But believe it or not, you won't find it so hot
If you ain't got the do re mi.”

“You want to buy you a home or a farm, that can't deal nobody harm,
Or take your vacation by the mountains or sea.
Don't swap your old cow for a car, you better stay right where you are,
Better take this little tip from me.
'Cause I look through the want ads every day
But the headlines on the papers always say:”

“If you ain't got the do re mi, boys, you ain't got the do re mi,
Why, you better go back to beautiful Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Georgia, Tennessee.
California is a garden of Eden, a paradise to live in or see;
But believe it or not, you won't find it so hot
If you ain't got the do re mi.”

Appendix C “Rambling Round” by Woody Guthrie.

“Ramblin' around your city,
Ramblin' around your town,
I never see a friend I know
As I go ramblin' 'round boys,
As I go ramblin' 'round.”

“My sweetheart and my parents
I left in my old hometown
I'm out to do the best I can
As I go ramblin' round”

“The peach trees they are loaded,
The limbs are bending down,
I pick 'em all day for a dollar,
As I go a ramblin' 'round boys,
As I go a ramblin' 'round.”

“Sometimes the fruit gets rotten
And falls upon the ground,
There's a hungry mouth for every peach
As I go a ramblin' 'round boys,
As I go a ramblin' 'round.”

“I wish that I could marry,
So I could settle down,
But I caint save a penny
As I go a ramblin' 'round boys,
As I go a ramblin' 'round.”

“My mother prayed that I would be
A man of some renown,
But I'm just a railroad bum
As I go a ramblin' 'round boys,
As I go a ramblin' 'round.”

Appendix D “Hard Travelin” by Woody Guthrie

“I've been havin' some hard travelin', I thought you knowed
I've been havin' some hard travelin', way down the road
I've been havin' some hard travelin', hard ramblin', hard gamblin'
I've been havin' some hard travelin', lord”

“I've been ridin' them fast rattlers, I thought you knowed
I've been ridin' them flat wheelers, way down the road
I've been ridin' them blind passengers, dead-enders, kickin' up cinders
I've been havin' some hard travelin', lord”

“I've been hittin' some hard-rock minin', I thought you knowed
I've been leanin' on a pressure drill, way down the road
Hammer flyin', air-hose suckin', six foot of mud and I shore been a muckin'
And I've been hittin' some hard travelin', lord”

“I've been hittin' some hard harvestin', I thought you knowed
North Dakota to Kansas City, way down the road
Cuttin' that wheat, stackin' that hay, and I'm tryin' make about a dollar a day
And I've been havin' some hard travelin', lord”

“I've been working that Pittsburgh steel, I thought you knowed
I've been a dumpin' that red-hot slag, way down the road
I've been a blasting, I've been a firin', I've been a pourin' red-hot iron
I've been hittin' some hard travelin', lord”

“I've been layin' in a hard-rock jail, I thought you knowed
I've been a laying out 90 days, way down the road
Damned old judge, he said to me, "It's 90 days for vagrancy."
And I've been hittin' some hard travelin', lord”

“I've been walking that Lincoln highway, I thought you knowed,
I've been hittin' that 66, way down the road
Heavy load and a worried mind, lookin' for a woman that's hard to find,
I've been hittin' some hard travelin', lord”

Appendix E “The Jolly Banker” by Woody Guthrie

“My name is Tom Cranker and I'm a jolly banker,
I'm a jolly banker, jolly banker am I.
I safeguard the farmers and widows and orphans,
Singin' I'm a jolly banker, jolly banker am I.”

“When dust storms are sailing, and crops they are failing,
I'm a jolly banker, jolly banker am I.
I check up your shortage and bring down your mortgage,
Singin' I'm a jolly banker, jolly banker am I.”

“When money you're needing, and mouths you are feeding,
I'm a jolly banker, jolly banker am I.
I'll plaster your home with a furniture loan,
Singin' I'm a jolly banker, jolly banker am I.”

“If you show me you need it, I'll let you have credit,
I'm a jolly banker, jolly banker am I.
Just bring me back two for the one I lend you,
Singin' I'm jolly banker, jolly banker am I.”

“When your car you're losin', and sadly your cruisin',
I'm a jolly banker, jolly banker am I.
I'll come and forclose, get your car and your clothes,
Singin' I'm jolly banker, jolly banker am I.”

“When the bugs get your cotton, the times they are rotten,
I'm jolly banker, jolly banker am I.
I'll come down and help you, I'll rake you and scalp you,
Singin' I'm jolly banker, jolly banker am I.”

“When the landlords abuse you, or sadly misuse you,
I'm jolly banker, jolly banker am I.
I'll send down the police chief to keep you from mischief,
Singin' I'm jolly banker, jolly banker am I.”

Appendix F “Dust Can’t Kill Me” by Woody Guthrie

“That old dust storm killed my baby,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.”

“That old dust storm killed my family,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.”

“That old landlord got my homestead,
But he can't get me, Lord,
And he can't get me.”

“That old dry spell killed my crop, boys,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.”

“That old tractor got my home, boys,
But it can't get me, Lord
And it can't get me.”

“That old tractor run my house down,
But it can't get me down,
And it can't get me.”

“That old pawn shop got my furniture,
But it can't get me, Lord,
And it can't get me.”

“That old highway's got my relatives,
But it can't get me, Lord,
And it can't get me.”

“That old dust might kill my wheat, boys,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.”

“I have weathered a-many a dust storm,
But it can't get me, boys,
And it can't kill me.”

“That old dust storm, well, it blowed my barn down,
But it can't blow me down,
And it can't blow me down.”

“That old wind might blow this world down,
But it can't blow me down,
It can't kill me.”

“That old dust storm's killed my baby,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.”

Appendix G “I Ain’t Got No Home” by Woody Guthrie

“I ain't got no home, I'm just a-roamin' 'round,
Just a wandrin' worker, I go from town to town.
And the police make it hard wherever I may go
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.”

“My brothers and my sisters are stranded on this road,
A hot and dusty road that a million feet have trod;
Rich man took my home and drove me from my door
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.”

“Was a-farmin' on the shares, and always I was poor;
My crops I lay into the banker's store.
My wife took down and died upon the cabin floor,
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.”

“I mined in your mines and I gathered in your corn
I been working, mister, since the day I was born
Now I worry all the time like I never did before
'Cause I ain't got no home in this world anymore”

“Now as I look around, it's mighty plain to see
This world is such a great and a funny place to be;
Oh, the gamblin' man is rich an' the workin' man is poor,
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.”

Appendix H “Ludlow Massacre” by Woody Guthrie

“It was early springtime when the strike was on,
They drove us miners out of doors,
Out from the houses that the Company owned,
We moved into tents up at old Ludlow.”

“I was worried bad about my children,
Soldiers guarding the railroad bridge,
Every once in a while a bullet would fly,
Kick up gravel under my feet.”

“We were so afraid you would kill our children,
We dug us a cave that was seven foot deep,
Carried our young ones and pregnant women
Down inside the cave to sleep.”

“That very night your soldiers waited,
Until all us miners were asleep,
You snuck around our little tent town,
Soaked our tents with your kerosene.”

“You struck a match and in the blaze that started,
You pulled the triggers of your gatling guns,
I made a run for the children but the fire wall stopped me.
Thirteen children died from your guns.”

“I carried my blanket to a wire fence corner,
Watched the fire till the blaze died down,
I helped some people drag their belongings,
While your bullets killed us all around.”

“I never will forget the look on the faces
Of the men and women that awful day,
When we stood around to preach their funerals,
And lay the corpses of the dead away.”

“We told the Colorado Governor to call the President,
Tell him to call off his National Guard,
But the National Guard belonged to the Governor,
So he didn't try so very hard.”

“Our women from Trinidad they hauled some potatoes,
Up to Walsenburg in a little cart,
They sold their potatoes and brought some guns back,
And they put a gun in every hand.”

“The state soldiers jumped us in a wire fence corners,
They did not know we had these guns,
And the Red-neck Miners mowed down these troopers,
You should have seen those poor boys run.”

“We took some cement and walled that cave up,
Where you killed these thirteen children inside,
I said, "God bless the Mine Workers' Union,"
And then I hung my head and cried.”

Appendix I "Jesus Christ" by Woody Guthrie

"Jesus Christ was a man who traveled through the land
A hard-working man and brave
He said to the rich, "Give your money to the poor,"
But they laid Jesus Christ in His grave"

CHORUS:

"Jesus was a man, a carpenter by hand
His followers true and brave
One dirty little coward called Judas Iscariot
Has laid Jesus Christ in His Grave"

"He went to the preacher, He went to the sheriff
He told them all the same
"Sell all of your jewelry and give it to the poor,"
And they laid Jesus Christ in His grave."

CHORUS

"When Jesus come to town, all the working folks around
Believed what he did say
But the bankers and the preachers, they nailed Him on the cross,
And they laid Jesus Christ in his grave."

CHORUS

"And the people held their breath when they heard about his death
Everybody wondered why
It was the big landlord and the soldiers that they hired
To nail Jesus Christ in the sky"

CHORUS

"This song was written in New York City
Of rich man, preacher, and slave
If Jesus was to preach what He preached in Galilee,
They would lay poor Jesus in His grave."