

The Grapes of Wrath

Stills Analysis

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Scene 1-Tom and the bus driver

By way of introduction , I decided to comment on one of the first scenes in the movie: as we see Tom Joad walking down the highway hitchhiking for a short ride. This scene is very important because it reveals many things about the main character. Finally he gets a ride and as soon as Tom Joad enters the truck there is a moment of silence and suspense. The driver notices while observing Tom that he is wearing “prison shoes”. This aspect of the scene is very important to the audience - as we know that Tom has been in prison and was searching for his family once again. Initially, my opinion of Tom was negative. I saw him as a delinquent who was forced into jail against his own will. However, I later discovered, from the discussion between Tom and the truck-driver that he had been condemned for having killed a man and was only given 7 years of jail because he killed the man in self-defence. After noticing Tom’s shoes the truck driver tries to casually discuss his past, thinking Tom will not be able to understand his intent - Tom instead, very astutely understands

his intentions and reacts furiously. He evidently has had enough of prison and does not want to speak about it. He begins staring at the truck driver demanding that he should mind his own business. We learn more about Tom's personality - he is very astute and smart. The bus driver tries to disguise his intent - telling Tom he didn't mean what he was saying and was only asking some general questions. However, Tom is very nervous and makes the bus driver stop getting out of the truck. The main setting of this scene is the highway. The director drifts the camera for a few moments to a diner where the bus driver is standing. He is depicted as a tall, big man who looks rather hard and is chewing a toothpick while telling Tom Joad in a direct tone that the bus is not for drivers. Finally, the third setting of the scene is the truck, where the many discussions between the two characters take place.

Scene 2- Casy and Tom meet Muley



In a second scene I have decided to comment on another very significant moment of the film. We all know that after Tom has left the bus driver he meets the old preacher Casy - who had known him since his baptism. Tom and Casy enter a discussion about preaching and being gifted by the Holy Spirit. Casy who has been a preacher all of his life says he is no longer able to preach benevolently to all people and that therefore he has "lost the spirit". This doesn't mean that Casy has lost faith and doesn't believe in God anymore but that he is not "guided" by the Holy spirit to preach to all people. While talking Casy and Tom move towards Tom's family's house the first vision of the house alarms Tom. The house looks very old and abandoned as if no one lived there. When they enter the house, Tom looks around and finds some random objects belonging to his family. These objects are particularly meaningful to him. At first he picks up an old shoe which once belonged to his mother. Subsequently he finds his grandfather's old hat which had



been his in the previous years. This moment of the scene is high in emotions. Tom wonders where his family has gone. Are they dead, have they disappeared? He has done all he could to see them once again and now the only thing he has is doubts about their death or their disappearance. Tom is struck by this moment and desperately looks around himself. Suddenly he sees a little man resting motionless behind the back door. As he moves forward towards him he recognizes him - Muley, whom he had known his whole life time. After a very short presentation of the two characters and the introduction of Casy to Muley - Tom finally asks Muley what he really was concerned about, "Where's my family?" Muley had an expression of great sadness and remained silent for a few moments. After a short while he began explaining what had happened. Tom listens closely and leans over to hear every single detail in Muley's words. Muley tells Tom that his family had left a couple of weeks before for Uncle John's cabin because their area was no longer habitable. Some constructions and new buildings were going to replace the old area. However, they couldn't stay at Uncle John's either and were considering travelling to California. This is also very important - the director makes a very evident connection to the 1930's in America where California was seen as a thriving and wonderful place. It represented the ideal of the "American dream". We have proof of this in Woody Guthrie's song "Do Re Mi" where he describes California as a Garden of Eden. We

now know the position of the American people in the 1930's and what their feeling for California was. Tom is surprised when hearing Muley's words. He can't understand that all of this happened only two weeks before his arrival. He is worried he will never see them again and proposes to go to Uncle John's cabin, hoping they are still there. Muley says he is the only one left and he will never leave because that was the land where he was born and will be the land where he will die. We understand the strong bond which existed between families and their land. The main setting of this scene is inside Tom's family house, which looks very old and abandoned only after two weeks the rest of the family has left. The principal characters in this scene are Tom and Muley even though Casy is present and listens carefully to their discussions. The atmosphere is initially very hard and oppressive with a sentiment of sadness shared by all the characters. In the course of the scene however it becomes slightly better when Tom knows all of the information about his family and is slightly calmer.

Scene 3- First meeting between Tom and his mother and the rest of the family



The meeting between Tom and his mother is very interesting as well. As soon as Ma sees Tom she sighs and with a smile looks up at the sky and thanks God she finally can see her son once again. When she sees him she runs towards him and holds him tight by his arms, hugging him. She is delighted when she finally sees her son once again and immediately starts asking him questions about the past years and how he had gotten out of jail. We see the evidence of a mother's love towards her own child.

Seeing her son once again is the greatest gift God could ever give her and she is simply overwhelmed with joy and serenity. I found this scene very touching as it really evoked strong feelings in me. Seeing a mother find her son once again was a scene I could relate to my own situation. I imagine what a joy it would be for my mother to see me again after such a long time. At this point a discussion begins between Ma and Tom. Here are some of the things mother is interested in:

MA (softly--her eyes
closed)
Thank God. Oh thank God.
(In sudden terror as
he approaches)
Tommy, you didn't *bust* out, didya?
You ain't got to hide, have you?

TOM
No, Ma. I'm paroled. I got my papers.

With a sigh and a smile, and her eyes full of wonder, she feels his arm. Her fingers touch his cheek, as if she were blind. Swelling with emotion, Tom bites his lip to control himself.

MA
I was so scared we was goin' away
without you--and we'd never see each
other again.

TOM
I'd a found you, Ma.

CASY, with great politeness, turns his back to the scene and keeps well away from it.

TOM now looks around at the dusty furniture piled around the yard.

TOM
Muley tol' me what happened, Ma. Are
we goin' to California true?

MA
We *got* to, Tommy. But that's gonna

be awright. I seen the han'bills,
about how much work they is, an'
high wages, too. But I gotta fin'
out somepin' else first, Tommy.

(Breathlessly)

Did they hurt you, son? Did they
hurt you an' make you mean-mad?

TOM

(puzzled)

Mad, Ma?

MA

Sometimes they do.

TOM

(gently)

No, Ma I was at first--but not no
more.

MA

(not yet quite
convinced)

Sometimes they do somethin' to you,
Tommy. They hurt you--and you get
mad--and then you get mean--and they
hurt you again--and you get meaner,
and meaner--till you ain't no boy or
no man any more, but just a walkin'
chunk a mean-mad. Did they hurt you
like that, Tommy?

TOM

(grinning)

No, Ma. You don't have to worry about
that.

MA

Thank God. I--I don't want no mean
son

(She loves him with her eyes)

This discussion is rather normal, meaning I would imagine these questions

being asked by a mother and therefore I don't find anything special in them. Ma explains to Tommy the situation once again and why they really have to go to California. The last section of this discussion is particularly appealing. I admire the director's choice of the look on Ma's face. When looking at her son she does not say a word but transmits a sentiment of love which only the most attentive observers can notice. In other words I might say that she loves him with her eyes.

Now I would like to describe the rest of the family's general response to Tom's arrival. Inside Uncle John's cabin all but Granma are staring toward the door. Then everyone suddenly heads towards the door. They all stare out of the door and notice that it is Tom. Grandpa starts shouting with joy, "It's Tommy!" Tom is back and with pride as the "chief" (being the eldest) of the family. He says with pride they could never keep a Joad in jail. The children are also very excited about Tom's arrival and they cheer happily and run towards him with excitement. We can say that the scene mainly consists in John meeting all of his family members once again, who will basically ask him the same questions as Ma. The main setting of this scene is Uncle John's cabin where all of the action takes place. It is quite difficult to distinguish between two or more main characters because I would say that everyone is involved in this scene. I would then say that everyone (Tom, Ma and the other family members) plays a rather significant role in this scene. I also want to make clear that I have to comment on this scene, not because there is plenty to write but because I was really impressed by the high level of acting and sentiment put into the the meeting between Ma and Tom.

