

Images from The Grapes Of Wrath – John Steinbeck

Silvia ST



This still is from the scene in The Grapes Of Wrath when Tom and Casy speak with Muley.

This image is taken from what I consider one of the most important scenes of the movie. It explains very well what was happening during the 1930s. John Ford, through the fictional character 'Muley', talks about the lives of farmers and families, who were thrown onto the road with nowhere to go. Muley represents the farmers that were determined to remain in their own homes. These kinds of people were too scared and proud and confused to leave their only secure ground. Muley, like many others, isn't ready to leave all of possessions and known land behind. In a way, in fact, these people were leaving a part of themselves behind, and they knew too well that they were never going to recuperate it. For them, and everybody else, the rest of the world was an unsafe place. The rest of the world was a mystery that only the bravest ones were able to solve.

I chose this image because it is one full of meaning and undertones. The scene was shot in a very dark and gloomy environment, but in this still Muley's face is illuminated, giving importance to his expression. As I look at this still my attention is focused on his eyes. His eyes, in fact, are like a book that I can clearly read. This

book is about fear and terror. It is about confusion and disappointment. It's a book of loneliness. Through Muley's eyes, I can also see his deep and true anger. The problem is that he isn't sure at whom to direct it because everything seems to be part of the tragedy occurring in his life. Muley, in fact, isn't sure about many things, just like Casy.

Many people were left without hope and their dreams were ripped away from them. Most of them, in fact, were left answerless: they didn't know where they would end up the next day, or even if they were going to get through the day or not. I believe Muley is the character Steinbeck uses to represent all of these people.



Another still I chose to analyze is this one of the overloaded truck.

This is a peculiar, funny and interesting still. When I first saw this scene in the movie it was very funny and amusing. It made me smile and laugh a little, thinking of all those people and luggage crammed into that one, beaten up car. And, I am almost certain, that was one of the intentions of John Ford.

As I thought about it more and more, though, I began to find additional meanings and aspects. First of all I realized that this car represented, for the Joads, like many other families during the 1930s, their way to the 'big and new world'; California. These farmers and workers dreamed about the green valleys and beautiful views, not knowing what really awaited them. Something else I

understood is that their car, including all of the bags stuffed into it, was everything these people had. They weren't setting off on a new adventure, but into a new world, and a new life.

I believe that Ford was very clever to show the car as it slowly rides along the highway. That scene showed the path to 'Eden', what everyone had always dreamed of. It emphasizes the importance of this transaction to a new environment. It also makes us better understand the distance between their old homes and their new ones, allowing us to see them crossing the imaginary boundary that separated them from California.

As I thought about this still I also began to reflect on the concept of illusion. All throughout the movie these people are brought to believe that California is a heavenly place, where they can live and work happily. Unfortunately, this is only a reality for the fewest number of people, while for the rest this is out of their reach. The trip the Joads have to take symbolizes what they are leaving behind and where and to what they are heading. But, by analyzing the reality, we realize that they have absolutely no idea of where and to what they are heading because it has been an illusion.



As my last still I chose the closing shot in the movie.

The movie ends with Tom leaving his family, with the goal of helping and making a stand in the world. As he is saying goodbye to his mother he gives a very strong and sentimental speech that leaves us viewers with our mouths open. John Ford ends this movie in a way that we can imagine for ourselves what will happen next, leaving space for our own thoughts and ideas. That is an excellent strategy because it allows the reader to reflect on the movie and the meaning of Tom's words.

After we have seen him speak to his mother, the next scene shows him with his only possessions on his back as he walks across these hills. This is a beautiful and wonderfully shot scene. It shows Tom Joad as a tiny figure crossing these huge hills. I believe, shooting the scene in this particular way John Ford wanted to show how small Tom Joad is in respect to the world (aka the hills). Never the less, it transmits the strong feeling of hope because Tom doesn't back down, but he keeps on going and even if he doesn't get to far he knows he will have tried.

After seeing *The Grapes Of Wrath*, I thought about the contrasting events of the 1930s and today. This movie made me reflect about how important it is to make a stand and to speak our minds. After having viewed this movie, in fact, I completely understood the importance of the figure of Tom Joad both in the 1930s, but also today. The still I have chosen, as a matter of fact, completely symbolizes the conclusion I have come to make. This is why I have chosen this particular still.