

The Grapes of Wrath

Stills & Comments

Vera 8T



When Tom and Casy go to the Joad house and are surprised to find it dark and abandoned, they meet Muley their former neighbour. He tells Tom that his family was forced to leave like all the others, and in order to survive was going to California hoping to find a decent job in his search of prosperity. Muley's eyes and his voice express anger and rebellion towards those who are throwing him and his 'folks' out of their homes. Also the way the light is diffused in the space of the frame gives to the image a tone of anxiety and hopelessness which is further exaggerated by the many dark shadows that surround the man's features. The contrasting whites and darks give Muley's face the aspect of a ghost. In fact as he says he's 'just an old graveyard ghost' for he is left alone in a territory where he wanders around, haunting the abandoned houses he temporarily occupies. People like the neighbours that haven't yet left are aware of his presence on the land and yet ignore it, since he is half mad and destined to a bleak future. His wide eyes look possessed as he goes through some painful memories of his past, and remembers with flashbacks, how all of his people were treated like animals by an superior, unknown source of power.



This image is taken from the scene of Muley's flashback, it represents the shadows of the rebellious farmers when they first receive the order to abandon their land. I find this shot very dramatic, probably more than it would have been if Ford had chosen to show us the suffering faces of these men instead. This choice is very effective also for the reason that these people who are here shown as shadows then actually become like shadows that haunt that territory, because they have been unjustly thrown out of their homes where they were all born, and suffered, and some of them even died. Now that the land they've worked on for more than fifty years is taken away from them, and their protests are completely ignored, they have no choice left but to obey and hope. The symbol of the shadow can be seen as a metaphor for the fact that that these people's rights have completely been ignored, and their rebellions oppressed. In fact shadows are inconsistent, they can be walked on exactly the same way that that 'unknown source of power' has disrespected them and taken advantage of their poverty.



The Joad family is ready for departure, the truck is loaded, and granpa has been drugged with soothing syrup in order to get him on the truck. In this still the air of general excitement has been captured, where a combination of nervousness and curiosity is noticeable in the expressions of each of the family members. The characters present in this image are many, but they are all sharing more or less the same emotion. They are about to leave when Pa notices that Casy is not going with them. The preacher expresses his desire of going with them, and the family enthusiastically invites him to join them, even though they had just calculated that the truck was dangerously overloaded. Maybe this generosity towards a man who is almost a stranger is the result of so many sacrifices and so much suffering they've been through, which made these people develop a great sense of solidarity towards other people in situations similar to theirs, or worse.