Jacob Alspaw

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A Poor Attempt at Propaganda

*The Artful Propaganda of Ford’s The Grapes of Wrath* provides an insightful argument that depicts the film as propaganda, yet the condemnation of Bourgeosie actions could have been emphasized to greater effect to realistically portray the poor living conditions and unfair treatment of the working class. The author, Leslie Gossage, makes it exceptionally clear that the film has been “belittled by critics since the emergence of scholarly interest in American film in the 1960’s,” yet at the time of the film’s release, it was critically acclaimed (101). I, being too young to be a part of either the 1940’s audience or the 1960’s audience, cannot speak to these eras’ opinions. However, as a millennial, I can offer a voice for this generation; *Grapes of Wrath* offers very little as a propaganda piece to the 21st century. As compared to the 1940’s, society has become amazingly desensitized, and this film does not emphasize pathos to a degree that would cause much, if any, change. The film heavily downplays the living conditions of the working class to almost a mockery of what every history class or academic article has conveyed. In part, we may be able to contribute this to the Motion Picture Production Code disallowing the use of any “heavier” elements deemed unsuitable for viewing. In my opinion and within the bounds of my memory, the film has one well-done propaganda scene, the starving children. But even then, the campsite seemed to be decently taken care of for the supposed amount of money that the inhabitants had. There is no doubt that the Joad’s acknowledgment of their low pay and hunger is also heart wrenching, but Ford and perhaps even Steinbeck thought it alright to almost immediately have Ma Joad mention there would be enough tomorrow. One could argue that such actions partially negate any feelings of pity the audience derived from Tom’s hunger. If this film were to be remade, then I would absolutely enjoy creating a brief analysis of the change in depiction of worker conditions.