

FIL 1001, SPRING 2003 TERM
Introduction to Understanding Film
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The Memorable Scene
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There are so many great movies in the American Cinema heritage, with even more memorable scenes, that it was almost too difficult to choose a few. I ended up choosing two movies: a classic (*Gone with the Wind*) and a contemporary one (*Vanilla Sky*).

Gone with the Wind is one of my favorite movies of all times. The characters are complex, even when they seem common and transparent, and the plot unfolds slowly but not always as expected. Although there are many great characters portrayed in this movie, we cannot help to fall in love with Tara (Vivien Leigh), the trouble-maker who always gets what she wants. Her strong character is obvious from the beginning of the movie, when she acts unconventional and impulsive. Rhett (Clark Gable) witnesses one of her uncontrollable outbursts, when she throws a vase at a wall. When Rhett seems rather amused, Scarlett tries to insult him: "Sir, you are no gentleman." Unfortunately for her, this time she found her match, as Rhett is not shy to reply: "And you, miss, are no lady...Don't think that I hold that against you. Ladies have never held any charm for me." This is one of the first scenes where we can witness how strong these two characters are. Although Tara's personality will be shaped by events and her interaction with different people, one crucial moment will define her character. During the war between the North and the South she will endure poverty and witness the death of friends and family. One day, she is so hungry and exhausted that she tries to eat a radish root straight from the ground. Instead, she ends up sick to her stomach and falls to the ground. Suddenly, she finds the strength to slowly rise; and as she cries looking up to the

sky, her clenched fists show her determination to stand good by her promise: “As God is my witness...I'm going to live through this; and when it's all over, I'll never be hungry again, no!-nor any of my folks! If I have to lie, steal, cheat, or kill, as God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again!” The red background only supports the character's true suffering and makes it authentic and believable. In the shot, Tara becomes smaller and smaller, as the camera pulls back slowly, allowing the viewers to digest this powerful scene. This scene is very effective because, from now on, it won't be easy to hate her. Everything she does seems justifiable and rational. It's more than just a game of love or pure flirtation; it's about the survival of her family, her heritage, and finally her own self.

The second movie which comes to mind is *Vanilla Sky*. Although it's not a memorable movie, there are two characters who are the reason for that particular scene becoming memorable. Although David is the main protagonist, he is just a lost soul who didn't gain my interest, until the end of the movie when he finally understands what life is all about and tries to make up for all of his mistakes. On the other hand, his friend, Brian, a writer who dates Sophia, proves that he is not only a good friend, but also a great person. When he realizes that the irresistible David is interested in Sofia, he decides to step back, in the eventuality that Sofia decides to respond to David's attentions. “You will never know, the exquisite pain of the guy who goes home alone,” he tells David, “because without the bitter, baby, the sweet ain't a sweet.” The fluctuations of his voice, add to the drama of the scene. He told David this line so many times before; but this time he meant it. For the first time he truly understands its meaning, because Sofia was the girl of his dreams. Unfortunately, David disregards his remarks with sarcasm. This scene is important because it draws attention to Sofia's character, not only as a beautiful person, but as someone with special qualities.

The other person is Sofia, a complex character who struggles for greatness. She feels sad for one of David's admirers, Julie Gianni—first, for chasing after him; second, for drowning her sorrow in drinks. There's a split second when Sofia's face mirrors the pain she sees on the other's women's face. Her pain is enhanced by the sadness she feels for Julie's inability to cope rationally with her feelings and to see that there's more to life than her obsession for David: "She's really staring at you...and she seems to be growing less happy. I think she's the saddest girl to ever hold a Martini." David misunderstands Sofia's remark as pure sarcasm, rather than a blow to his credibility as her admirer. This scene is important because, for the first time, the viewers sense her remarkable personality.

Later, in the movie, Sofia's innocence and aspirations are revealed by her conversations with David: "Everyone said, 'Don't go to New York!' But I just think good things will happen if you are a good person with good attitude. Don't you see? ...You think I'm naïve!" The innocence and profoundness of her character start David's transformation, as he begins to "see" for the first time. Sofia's influence is his salvation, and in the end she becomes his idol and guide through the events that will follow. Because of her influence, he will have another chance at living a fulfilling life: "Open your eyes! ... David, I'm not going a lie to you! I liked the way you looked. But, you have to pull it together; because, if not, I will forget about the other guy. Remember the other guy, you?" "I'm still that guy! I'm still that guy!" David replies unconvincingly. "You are coming inside. But if it turns out to be a big mistake, I do have the ability to fall out of love with you...like that!" (Sofia snaps her fingers). Even if Sofia never said these words, as they are a mere glimpse of reality in David's "lucid dream," they are characteristic of her. Sofia becomes more than just a character. She represents our inner strength and all of our untapped resources that are hidden inside us. Anything is possible when we get to know her/us.

These are the memorable scenes that I had to mention. In these scenes, the viewers witness the remarkable abilities of some individuals, who can recognize and control the destructive feelings that we all possess (*Vanilla Sky*), or they are introduced to characters who possess inner strength and determination (*Gone with the Wind*). Some movies are meant to be watched once; some—like “Gone with the Wind” and “Vanilla Sky”—are meant to inspire. These types of movies are the ones that I hope for every time I watch a new movie.