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Orson Welles, Citizen of the World

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Orson Welles was born in 1915 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, but he often told interviewers that he was "conceived" in either Paris or Rio. This essay examines the different aspect of his career, in the USA, Latin America and Europe, focusing on transatlantic and Pan American exchanges.

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Orson Welles was born in 1915 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, but he often told interviewers that he was "conceived" in either Paris or Rio. During his lifetime, he seldom remained long in one place.

The second son of a prosperous, eccentric Midwestern family (his mother was a musician and a prominent suffragette, his father a factory owner, inventor, and alcoholic playboy with a second home in Jamaica), Welles became an uprooted child of divorce. He moved with his mother to Chicago, where she socialized

with the city's musical and artistic celebrities, and when she died three years later, he lived for a time with his father, who took him on a world tour that included China. When the father also died, Welles was placed under the guardianship of family friend Dr. Maurice Bernstein and educated at the elite Todd School for Boys in Woodstock, Illinois, where he painted a huge school mural and designed, directed, and acted in school productions of Shakespeare and Shaw. Not long afterward, Bernstein used part of Welles's inheritance to send him on a trip to Ireland, in hopes that the teenaged prodigy could develop his talent for landscape painting. When Welles arrived in Dublin, however, he put his painting materials aside and went to the Gate Theater, introducing himself as a veteran of the New York Theater Guild. Nobody believed his story, but he was a curious, imposing, somewhat demonic performer, and when he was given a role in an adaptation of Feuchtwanger's *Jew Süss* he created a minor sensation.

Debut in New York

By the mid-1930s Welles was in New York, where his dazzling rise to fame as a performer-director of radio and stage was facilitated by the modern communications industry, the Popular Front, and a partnership with producer John Houseman in the Federal Theater and the Mercury Theater (the latter, although located geographically on Broadway, was far from a mainstream organization). Welles's resonant voice and slightly mid-Atlantic accent were in great demand on radio; he played pulp-hero Lamont Cranston on *The Shadow*, and on the documentary-style *March of Time* he impersonated multiple real-life characters. At the Federal Theater, he staged America's first all-black production of Shakespeare: the "Voodoo" *Macbeth*, which transposed the play's action to the Haitian revolution. Not long after, he created a legendary *success de scandal* with an improvised performance of Marc Blitzstein's "labor opera" *The Cradle Will Rock*, which, because of its politics, had been closed by government censors. In 1937, he opened the Mercury Theater with a celebrated staging of a modern-dress, anti-fascist *Julius Caesar*; and in 1938, his radio version of the Mercury Theater (a non-commercial "workshop" produced by the CBS network), was responsible for the most culturally if not artistically significant radio drama in history---an adaptation of H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*, which created widespread panic because its first half took the form of realistic-sounding radio news announcements of a deadly space-ship attack from Mars.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2K2PeVxiW0

Orson Welles' Production of 'Voodoo' Macbeth, (From 1937 Documentary Film, "We Work Again")

Source: YouTube

An early demonstration the mass media's demagogic potential for "fake news," the Mars broadcast made Welles a household name throughout the world, and might have landed him in prison. When a Quito, Ecuador radio station imitated his broadcast in 1941 and belatedly explained it was fake, an enraged mob set fire to the station, causing the death of a dozen people. Two executives at Radio Quito were indicted and went into hiding or left the country. Welles, on the other hand, avoided jail and received a generous Hollywood contract from RKO Pictures.

Most of the work Welles had done in New York in the 1930s was stylistically and politically unified. His stage productions for the Mercury were Elizabethan dramas or revivals from the theatrical repertory of the nineteenth century, but he designed them in a late-modernist fashion influenced by such 1920s movements as German Expressionism (in the stark, in-depth staging of *Julius Caesar*) and Soviet

Futurism (in his silent movie pastiche intended for the comic farce *Too Much Johnson*). In similar ways, his radio dramas were based on well-known texts such as *Dracula*, *Treasure Island*, or *Heart of Darkness*, but were experimental in form, notably in their emphasis on narration to create a radio-specific style. The original title for the Mercury radio show was "First Person Singular," and it often used first-person narration to distinguish itself from theatrical storytelling. *War of the Worlds* was especially interesting in this regard because of its self-reflexivity; the narrators of the first half of the show were portrayed not as conventional characters but as on-the-spot witnesses of an invasion from Mars who were speaking to the audience through news microphones.

Orson Welles's radio shows

Another characteristic of the Mercury Theater on stage and in radio was its sympathy with the Popular Front, a coalition of left artists and intellectuals that formed in Europe and the US in response to the rise of fascism. Welles showed a marked tendency to convert what cultural historian Michael Denning [1] has called "middlebrow" literary classics---Hugo, Dickens, Doyle, Chesterton, Conrad, etc.---into "allegories of anti-Fascism." *Julius Caesar* set the pattern by reminding the New York audience of contemporary events in Germany and Italy; Welles said he was attempting to stress "the personal greed, fear and hysteria that surround a dictatorial regime," and his emphasis on a conflict between a strong-man dictator and an occasionally ineffectual liberal would be repeated in his other projects. (The conflict between Caesar and Brutus in *Caesar* is echoed, for example, in the conflict between Kane and Leland in *Citizen Kane* and Quinlan and Vargas in *Touch of Evil*.) His most explicit political allegory was the 1938 adaptation of *Heart of Darkness*, which he broadcast twice on radio and proposed for his first film at RKO. Welles updated the Conrad story so that it began in contemporary New York and moved to an unnamed jungle somewhere in Africa or Latin America, thus transforming it into what he called a "parable of Fascism" and an "attack on the Nazi system." As all his work, he produced a conceptual style of adaptation that foregrounded his talent for stage, radio, or cinematic magic; his productions were aesthetically fascinating and educational in both the literary and political sense.



Orson Welles's radio shows availble here: Wellesnet

Source: Wellesnet

Conquering Hollywood

For most of his early career in New York, Welles was relatively free of mainstream commercial interests, directing government-controlled theater, non-commercial radio, and a theatrical troupe that he subsidized with his earnings as a radio actor. But as a result of the Mars broadcast, everything changed. His radio series acquired a wealthy sponsor and a new title ("The Campbell Playhouse"), plus a large budget to hire movie stars as guest performers. Meanwhile, RKO offered him virtually unheard-of largess: a three-picture deal allowing him to select his own projects, develop his own production unit, and bring the Mercury players and music composer Bernard Herrmann to Hollywood.

These arrangements nevertheless had limitations. RKO regarded Welles's experimental screenplay for *Heart of Darkness*, which proposed a self-reflexive prologue, a completely subjective camera, and the imperceptible welding together of long takes, as too expensive. (It didn't help that the story involved miscegenation and that Welles's wanted to hire many blacks.) The RKO contract eventually resulted in *Citizen Kane*, but Welles's creative freedom would be increasingly inhibited.

Welles's plan for his Mercury stock company in Hollywood was to alternate between ambitious pictures such as *Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* and modestly budgeted, left-wing thrillers such as *Journey into Fear*, which was written in part by Joseph Cotton and directed by Norman Foster. (In 1939, upon arriving in Los Angeles, Welles wrote screenplays for two unproduced thrillers, the first containing a newsreel foreshadowing the one in *Kane*, the second a fake radio news broadcast similar to *War of the Worlds*.) *Kane* was a spectacular debut and a cinematic fulfillment of the aesthetic and political aims of his work in New York. Formally inventive, it offered many of those in its original audience the exhilarating experience of seeing a bright, iconoclastic young artist use the means of production against one of America's wealthiest media moguls, the proto-fascist newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst, who lived in California and was a power in Hollywood.

Because of Hearst's unofficial boycott of *Kane* and the Hollywood establishment's resentment of the young Welles, the film never got the wide theatrical distribution it deserved. Even so, it was enormously influential for foreign cinéastes and intellectuals who saw it in the years after World War II, and for a generation of young US directors in the 1970s. In Argentina, Jorge Luis Borges described it as a "labyrinth without a center," and in France, André Bazin praised it as a major development in the evolution of film language. It was an inspiration for the critic/filmmakers at *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the 1950s and a touchstone for postwar international art cinema. Its gothic atmosphere was compared with Kafka; its manipulations of time, memory, and point of view reminded some viewers of Proust, Conrad, and Fitzgerald; its opening "newsreel" recapitulated the technical history of the motion-picture medium; and its shadowy search for "Rosebud" implicitly critiqued the sensationalism and voyeurism of contemporary mass media. It synthesized major schools of filmmaking—Soviet montage, German expressionism, and the Hollywood biopic—while at the same time developing a style of its own, based on wide-angle photography, extreme depth of field, and long takes.

Kane was also a turning point in Welles's fortunes. It was the only Hollywood film on which he had full creative freedom, and in the decades that followed he had fewer opportunities to make US films at all. A myth developed that *Kane* was a happy accident of the studio system for which Welles wrongly claimed authorship. Pauline Kael's notorious essay on the screenplay [2] gave primary credit to co-writer Herman Mankiewicz, and John Houseman made a similar argument in his memoirs. [3] Although Robert Carringer published a scholarly essay proving that Welles's contribution to the script was "not only substantial but definitive," his subsequent book, *The Making of* Citizen Kane, argued less forcefully about Welles's writing, said little about his work as director or actor, and proposed that *Kane* was essentially a collaborative achievement [4]. Other anti-Welles critics have maintained that his subsequent films were mere adaptations, less significant than the screenplay of *Kane*. They usually claim that Welles had too much ego and never properly adjusted to the genius of the Hollywood system.

I would argue differently. *Kane* was never a typical Hollywood production, and the credits as they appeared on the screen were reasonably accurate: Welles produced, co-wrote, directed, and played the leading role, while also doing uncredited supervision of the editing, sound, and black-art designs. It was a politically dangerous film, rousing the ire of conservatives, who tried to limit its showings and booed when it was nominated at the Academy-Award ceremony. The Hearst newspapers refused to advertise it, the major-studio theater chains gave it only limited booking, and in April 1941, a month before its premiere, Hearst's good friend J. Edgar Hoover began an FBI investigation of Welles. Over the next decade, the FBI compiled over two hundred pages of reports on him, and in 1945, near the beginning of a Red Scare that led to a Hollywood blacklist, the Bureau designated him a "threat to the internal security of the nation." Meanwhile, the two films he made after *Kane*, which in my view would have rivaled it in importance, were defaced or abandoned by RKO. By the late 1940s, Welles was persona non grata in Hollywood, and for most of the 1950s he became an actor, theater director, and filmmaker who worked independently in Europe.

The second of Welles's films for RKO, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, was an adaptation of a prize-winning 1918 novel by Booth Tarkington that Welles loved and had adapted on radio. Set in the years between 1880 and 1918, it describes the fall of the wealthy Amberson family, squires of a Midwestern town similar to Indianapolis, who are blind to the coming of the industrial age. Much of the action centers on an unrequited love affair between the Amberson's only heir, the arrogant, pampered young George Amberson Minafer, and Lucy Morgan, the daughter of automobile inventor Eugene Morgan, who himself suffers from unrequited love for George's mother. As the years pass, automotive factories proliferate, the pleasant town

becomes a grimy city, immigrant workers swell the population, and the huge Amberson home loses its value. Tarkington fills the novel with an air of nostalgic charm and shows his keen awareness of local color and period manners; he laments the passing of the Amberson grace but is also an old-fashioned popular writer, discreet about sex and discreetly racist, who provides a sentimental, relatively happy ending.

Welles made significant changes. Partly by means of gothic lighting and the indelible performance of Agnes Morehead as George's Aunt Fanny, he emphasized the repressed sexual tensions and neuroses in the Amberson family, explicitly showing George's Oedipal fixation on his beautiful mother and giving strong motivation for the growing tension between George and Eugene. Another of his major changes was to dispense with Tarkington's sentimental ending. He showed George, who has been repeatedly seen riding or driving through the town in princely fashion, reduced to the status of an ordinary worker, taking a long walk through the blighted city and the empty rooms of the now decrepit Amberson mansion. In the last scenes, after George is hospitalized by an automobile accident, Welles showed Eugene Morgan visiting Aunt Fanny in the old Amberson home, now a boarding house for the elderly; the two discussed the past, and when Morgan exited the house we saw his lonely figure against a smoky industrial cityscape.

When Welles's initial cut was prevued by RKO in Los Angeles, several of those who saw it wrote that it was an extraordinary film. But the audience response was mixed. World War II had begun, and the studio was nervous about a period film with an unhappy ending. At this point Welles was in Brazil working on another project, discussed below. RKO had promised to send him the rough assembly of *Ambersons* so that he could make revisions, but they never did. In his absence, editor Robert Wise and Welles assistant Jack Moss shot retakes for *Ambersons* and Wise cut more than forty minutes, slicing into the beautiful long takes in the "long remembered ball" at the beginning of the film and the tracking shots of George's extensive walk at the end. Several scenes were reshot by Freddie Fleck and scored by Roy Webb rather than Bernard Herrmann—among them a banal, sentimental ending, more in keeping with what Tarkington had written.

In its original form, and to some extent in the parts that survived, Welles's version of *Ambersons* was a highly unusual historical drama—leisurely, unsensational, mature. It remains the only Hollywood film (Visconti's *The Leopard* [1963] is a European example) that has the characteristics that Georg Lukács and Fredric Jameson have associated with the best examples of the classic historical novel: narratives with historically representative characters whose lives are changed by large-scale social forces, showing struggles between emergent and once-dominant forms of society, but refusing to pick sides in the conflict in the manner of costume melodrama.

Latin American Experiments

The partial loss of what Welles had conceived was tragic, and another tragedy followed. Prior to *Ambersons*, he had begun plans for an ambitious anthology film about different regions of North America, a mixture of documentary and staged versions of "true life," entitled *It's All True*. When World War II began, he was given the opportunity to transform this project into a film about Latin America, jointly sponsored by RKO and the US government's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA). The latter organization, headed by Nelson Rockefeller, was the chief cultural arm of the US "Good Neighbor" policy—a soft-power diplomatic initiative designed to prevent Latin American nations from becoming allies with the Axis powers. Rockefeller, the youthful heir of the fabulously wealthy John D. Rockefeller (whom Welles caricatured in *Citizen Kane*, naming him Walter Parks Thatcher), had large business interests in Latin American oil. He was chair of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, a major

shareholder in RKO, and a connoisseur of Latin American art. In 1932, he commissioned Diego Rivera to paint a mural for Rockefeller Center in New York, but when the mural praised Lenin and revolution, he had it pick-axed off the wall and removed from the site.

In 1942, at the suggestion of Brazilian propaganda minister Lourival Fontes, an admirer of *Citizen Kane*, Rockefeller personally invited Welles to serve as an OCIAA "goodwill ambassador." Under this arrangement, Welles would broadcast his weekly CBS radio show from Latin America, and, in association with RKO, direct *It's All True*. The estimated budget for the film was between $800,000 and $1,000,000. OCIAA agreed to indemnify it for $300,000 in the event of commercial loss by RKO.

Work on *It's All True* required extensive research and four separate film crews in Mexico and Brazil; a complex mixture of documentary, reenactment, and fiction, it involved both black-and-white and Technicolor photography and subject matter ranging from popular culture (bullfighting, samba, Carnival) to urban modernity and labor conflicts. Welles was deeply engaged in the project, but it was never completed. The full story of the aborted production reveals that support for Welles was weak from the beginning, because after *Kane* and *Ambersons* RKO wanted to be rid of him. In 1942, the studio declared its intention of ending the relationship; once Latin-American production began, it claimed falsely that Welles was going over budget and described the unedited footage as chaotic and uncommercial. Lynn Shores, the studio production manager, grumbled that Welles was too preoccupied with "the Negro and low-class element in and around Rio." An unnamed RKO executive complained that the film's "indiscriminate mixing" of races would be bad for box office "south of the Mason-Dixon line."

The OCIAA was probably concerned about the same things. As Darlene J. Sadlier [5] has shown, one way of promoting US solidarity with the Brazilian government of Getúlio Vargas was to show an idealized image of modern, mostly white, middle-class culture. Welles was more interested in the daily life of the favelas and the laboring conditions in the northeast of the country, which were issues that both the US government and Vargas preferred to ignore.

Welles was in Brazil and other Latin American locations for roughly eight months, remaining after RKO had abandoned him and shooting in Rio, Fortaleza, Recife, and Salvador. Shortly before the 1942 release of *Ambersons*, the staff of Mercury Productions was ousted from their offices at RKO. Of the over 200,000 feet of 35mm nitrate negative and 50,000 feet of 35mm sound negative shot for *It's All True* and submitted to RKO, almost none was properly preserved and stored. Welles was unable to secure rights to the material, and only fragments have been unearthed and exhibited: *Four Men on a Raft*, a short "trailer" assembled by associate producer Richard Wilson, uses footage from the "Jangadeiros" episode, reenacting a heroic boat journey to Rio by Fortaleza fishermen in protest of their working conditions (to everyone's dismay, the leader of this journey, Jacaré, drowned during the reenactment and was eaten by sharks); an eight-minute Technicolor sequence of the Rio Carnival, part of which was used in a Walt Disney film later produced by RKO; and *It's All True: Based on an Unfinished Film by Orson Welles*, co-directed by Wilson, Myron Meisel, and Bill Krohn, which attempts a "reconstruction" of parts of the footage from Fortaleza, Rio, and Mexico.



Orson Welles in Fortaleza, Brazil, 1942

Source: Wellesnet

In a recent essay, Catherine Benamou [6] has convincingly argued that Welles's experience with *It's All True* involved him in a process of "transculturation" with Brazilian and Mexican artists, and helped prepare for his later career as a peripatetic, often improvisatory European *auteur*. I disagree when she suggests that Welles anticipated Italian neorealism and the Brazilian *cinema novo*. The footage he shot in Fortaleza, which shows what he could do with scant resources, looks to me more like Eisenstein. Whatever the case, he remained in the US for several more years, working as an actor in film and radio, mounting one of the most elaborate stage productions of his career, and directing three films for other studios.

Back to Hollywood

Welles also became more visibly active in politics, appearing in campaign rallies for Franklin Roosevelt, using his radio program to inveigh against southern racists who blinded US Army veteran Isaac Woodward, and publicly defending a group of young Los Angeles Chicanos who were wrongly convicted of murder in the notorious "Sleepy Lagoon" case. During most of 1945, he wrote a syndicated newspaper column and often editorialized about US foreign policy. He reported on the opening of the United Nations in San Francisco and the Pan American War and Peace conference in Mexico City. The latter meeting, sponsored by his old patron Nelson Rockefeller, provoked him to observe that US "State Department millionaires" were making deals with so-called revolutionary Latin heads of state, who were also millionaires. The US claim to moral leadership was hollow: "We have armed dictators, strengthened unnecessarily the political hand of high churchmen, and everywhere underrated the democratic aspirations of the people." With the death of Roosevelt and the dropping of the Atomic bomb, the US was drifting rightward. "The phony fear of Communism," Welles wrote, "is smoke-screening the real menace of renascent Fascism."

Orson Welles Commentaries (1945). Fifteen-minute radio editorials, news, and political commentary. Sponsored by Lear Radios. ABC.

Hello Americans (1942). This program sought to foster understanding between North America and Central and South America, another part of Welles's war efforts. Sponsored by the U. S. Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. Fifteen-minute episodes.

These issues influenced Welles's next two projects in Hollywood, which were classic examples of film noir. *The Stranger* (1946), produced by Sam Spiegel's International Pictures and distributed by RKO, centers on a Nazi war criminal who changes his identity and becomes a history teacher in a New England boy's school. A generically conventional film (the studio cut thirty minutes of Welles's most powerful atmospheric touches), it nevertheless offers a subtle critique of instrumental rationality and post-war US complacency, and was the first commercial motion picture to show audiences newsreel footage of the Nazi death camps. In contrast, *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948) is Welles's most radically stylized picture. It was made possible chiefly because he was married to Rita Hayworth, Columbia Pictures' biggest star. The marriage was nearing an end, but Hayworth agreed to play a femme fatale so that she could help rescue Welles from the financial disaster of his multi-media stage extravaganza, *Around the World in 80 Days*, which featured music by Cole Porter and an array of spectacular magic effects. That show had won high praise from Bertolt Brecht, but it opened in New York during an August heat wave and never found a large audience. Welles approached Columbia with a proposal to make a modest, low-budget thriller shot in the streets of New York; Hayworth's involvement, however, made it imperative for the studio to protect its star with a big budget and location shooting in New York, Acapulco, and San Francisco.

Welles achieved publicity for the picture by cutting Hayworth's famous red hair short and dying it blond. Studio chief Harry Cohen may or may not have liked this idea, but when he saw a rough edit of the film he was apoplectic, claiming its deliberately serpentine plot was impossible to follow. The picture was cut by almost an hour, off-screen narration was added, Welles's ideas for music were ignored, and gauzy closeups of the stars were shot. Despite Columbia's revisions, however, *The Lady from Shanghai* can be viewed alongside *Kane* and *Ambersons* as a worthy conclusion to a trilogy of Welles films about US plutocracy. A masterpiece of surrealistic eroticism and satire, it contains such bravura moments as the giant fish that float past a conversation between Welles and Hayworth in a San Francisco aquarium, and a delirious "Crazy House" gunfight in a hall of mirrors. Unlike most examples of US film noir in the 1940s, it never uses its Latin-American scenes as a romantic background, full of charming peasants and glittering resorts or nightclubs; on the contrary, Welles depicts Acapulco as a "bright, guilty world" of rich and vulgar tourists.

The film also comments indirectly and bitterly on Welles's career in Hollywood, especially on his experience with *It's All True*. Most of his US films contain autobiographical elements that the public wasn't expected to recognize; *Ambersons* is closest to his family history, but even *The Stranger* includes sly references to his student days at Todd School. *The Lady from Shanghai*, however, is more like a covert allegory of his adventures in movies: he plays a character who has come to New York from Ireland (as Welles had done), who accepts a job working for rich men and a beautiful woman (as Welles had done), and who journeys to Mexico and San Francisco (as Welles had done when writing his newspaper column). While in Acapulco, he makes a speech telling his drunken employers that they remind him of the frenzied sharks he once saw off the coast of Fortaleza in Brazil. One of the employers is a grotesque character named Grisby who plans to buy an island where he can be safe from the atomic bomb; Welles later explained that he modelled this character on Nelson Rockefeller, who, like Grisby, repeatedly said "Hiya, fella!"

Welles's last US film of the period was *Macbeth* (1948), an expressionist adaptation of Shakespeare based on a stage production he had recently mounted at a Utah Shakespeare festival. A powerful combination of theatrical performance and cinematic effects, it was shot on the soundstages of Republic Pictures, a low-budget studio that specialized in Roy Rogers westerns. The pre-release version, discovered at UCLA and now available on DVD, uses Scottish accents and contains the first ten-minute take (the maximum amount of film cameras could hold) in Hollywood history. Welles had constructed an earlier ten-minute take for *The Magnificent Ambersons*, but it never survived the studio's edit.



Orson Welles in *Macbeth* (1948)

Source: Orson Welles's Shakespeare

European Years

Soon after, Welles travelled to Europe and worked there for the next decade, becoming a pioneer of independently produced art cinema. The years in which he had become a filmmaker were marked by an exodus to Hollywood of talented European directors who were fleeing Hitler, among them Jean Renoir, Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Edgar Ulmer, Fred Zinneman, and Max Ophuls. In an ironic reversal, the 1950s decade in which he went to Europe was marked by an exodus of such US directors as Joseph Losey and Jules Dassin, who were escaping the McCarthy-era blacklist.

Welles's success in the role of Harry Lime in Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949) enabled him to star in two British radio series, *The Lives of Harry Lime* and *Black Museum*, and he also acted in Hollywood costume pictures that were shot in Europe. The next film he directed, *Othello* (1951-52), was shot at a studio in Rome and on various locations in Italy and Morocco. The film took three years to complete, with Welles periodically halting production while he took acting jobs to raise enough money to continue. The original producer was an Italian entrepreneur who declared bankruptcy on the first day of shooting. When *Othello* won the grand prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1952, there was confusion about what national flag should be raised to indicate its country of origin. Welles chose the Moroccan flag.

Filmmakers and critics in Italy often reacted negatively to Welles, just as Hollywood producers had done. As Alberto Anile has shown, Welles had the misfortune of arriving in Italy at a moment when the country's cinephiles were inclined to be skeptical of his flamboyant style and interest in powerful or kingly

characters: left-wing critics championed neorealism, and right-wing Catholics admired the 1950s films of Roberto Rossellini. Fortunately, Welles's close friend Louis Dolivet came to his recue. A charming, charismatic figure, Dolivet was a French citizen and a left activist who immigrated to the US during the war, worked to build support for the French underground, and established the International Free World Association, an anti-fascist foundation committed to postwar pacifism. He and Welles met in 1943, and Dolivet became a kind of mentor for Welles's intense political activity in the immediate postwar period. In 1953, when Welles was at a low point, Dolivet formed the Filmorsa production company to support his European films.

Only one film was produced: *Mr. Arkadin*, shot in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany in 1954. It tells the story of a frenetic, dangerous, darkly comic search around the world for the secrets of a rich man's past. Mixing ideas from *Kane*, *The Lady from Shanghai*, and *The Third Man*, it features an array of cameo performances by well-known character actors and could be described as a hallucinatory fable about international gypsies living in the ruins of the postwar world. The vexed history of the production, which ended with the dissolution of the partnership between Welles and Dolivet, has been well described by French scholar François Thomas [7]: Welles had only limited authority over editing; as a result, there were several versions and three premieres, one in Spain with different actors (1955), one in London under the title *Confidential Report* (1955), and one in New York with a flashback structure (1962).

Welles was now on the move almost as much as the leading character in *Arkadin*. In London in 1955, with the help of producer Wolf Mankowitz, he created "Orson Welles's Sketch Book," a successful series of short TV programs for the BBC, and had great stage success with *Moby Dick Rehearsed*, his play about an acting company rehearsing an adaptation of Melville's novel. For British commercial TV, he developed a travelogue-style TV series, "Around the World with Orson Welles," with episodes in Spain, Vienna, and Paris. In late 1955, he was in New York to prepare *King Lear* for the stage. For a month in 1956 he was in Las Vegas for a stage show, and soon afterward he returned to Hollywood, making appearances on TV and acting in film. His last opportunity to direct at a Hollywood studio came when Universal Pictures signed him to act the villain in a thriller starring Charlton Heston. Heston suggested that Welles should also direct, and the studio, almost as an afterthought, agreed; Welles re-wrote the script (originally called *Borderline* because the action takes place around the US border with Mexico), transforming it into *Touch of Evil* (1958).

As usual, the studio recut Welles's work, barred him from post-production, and shot a few additional scenes. The film had no great box office success, but won first prize at the 1958 Brussels World Fair. Today, it is widely regarded as one of Welles's finest pictures. Three versions exist: the Universal release, a preview edit later discovered at UCLA, and a "reconstruction" based on a memo Welles sent to the studio in defense of his ideas for the final cut. All three retain Welles's vision of corruption, sleaze, and racial tension along the US-Mexican border, and all retain a clear statement of his thesis, which is voiced by Heston: "a policeman's job is only easy in a police state."

Touch of Evil was made at the height of the US civil-rights movement, and although it never mentions black/white relations, it evokes the proto-fascist violence of that era. Shot on location largely around Venice, California, it blends naturalistic lighting with bravura long takes, spectacular crane shots, and brilliant sound editing. It serves as a reminder of what Welles could do when he had the use of Hollywood's machinery and technicians. The greatest irony of his career is that he brought so much commitment and imagination to bear on a relatively inert studio system, but was regarded as too political,

too unorthodox, and too unprofitable by the managers of that system. Except for the 25-minute "The Fountain of Youth" (1958), a charming, experimental TV pilot, *Touch of Evil* was the last of his films to be subsidized by the US culture industry. In 1973, he told a Spanish interviewer,

> *"During the twenty years I worked in or was associated with Hollywood, only eight times did they permit me to utilize the tools of my trade. Only once was my own final cut of a film the one that premiered, and except for the Shakespearian experiment only twice was I allowed to give my opinion in the selection of my subject matter."*

After 1958, Welles returned to Europe for another decade. The RKO campaign against him in 1942-3 had left the false impression that he was unreliable and extravagant; the subsequent FBI investigation jeopardized his career; none of his films had been box-office hits; and by the late 1950s television and the growing leisure economy had changed Hollywood, leading to wide-screen epics rather than the smaller films at which Welles might have succeeded. His move to Europe, however, was good for him in many respects. He was idolized by the young cineastes at *Cahiers du Cinéma*, his European producers were less inclined to meddle, and, as Andrew Sarris once remarked, he had always "imposed a European temperament on the American cinema." But there were also disadvantages. Welles lost contact with the social and cultural environment he had known since birth. His European films after 1958 are free adaptations of canonical literature, lacking the shock of recognition, the sense of contemporaneity, and the immediate political relevance of the Hollywood pictures. Their most interesting aspect, besides the customary pleasures of Welles's command of the film medium, are the ways in which they highlight a theme always present in his work but not often emphasized: he was a critic of modernity who looked back at the past with a degree of nostalgia, and was attracted to stories about the passing of a pre-modern world.

Before embarking for Europe and while *Touch of Evil* was being edited, Welles went to Mexico and began filming a television version of *Don Quixote*, a never completed project that he expanded into a feature film and continued working at intermittently for the next fifteen years. Most of the film was shot in Spain, an old-world country that Welles loved and where he lived in most of his later life, even while General Franco was still in charge. The most unusual aspect of the surviving footage is Welles's decision to place Cervantes' early seventeenth-century characters in contemporary society. He argued, correctly, that the original Quixote and Sancho Panza were anachronistic figures, relics of a medieval world who were confronted by modernity. The film therefore shows Panza giving Quixote a bath on a rooftop while in in the distance we see a billboard advertising "Don Quixote Cerveza." It also contains a sequence in which the baffled Quixote attends a movie and attacks the monstrous images on the screen.

Elsewhere, *Don Quixote* provides breathtakingly beautiful wide-angle, black-and-white images of pre-modern Spanish landscape. Francisco Reiguera and Akim Tamiroff give impressive performances as Quixote and Panza (their voices dubbed by Welles, using an upper-class British accent for Quixote and a cockney accent for Sancho), but the film is largely narrated off-screen by Welles, who sometimes dubs his narrating voice over the characters' lip movements, creating a cinematic form of indirect speech (as counterpoint, he also allows the characters to speak directly to the narrator, addressing the camera in a fashion similar to the opening scenes in *The Magnificent Ambersons*). Brazilian scholar Adalberto Müller, who has done extensive research on all the surviving elements of the film, persuasively argues that the

negatives in Rome ought to be digitized and made freely available to scholars, and that what he calls the "Mexican *Quixote*" ought to be assembled in rough-cut form and viewed as part of Welles's Pan-American legacy.

Welles's European adaptation of Kafka's *The Trial* (1962) was financed by Michael and Alexander Salkind, who gave him a free hand. When the Salkinds encountered financial problems, Welles conceived a way of shooting most of the film cheaply in an empty rail station across from his Paris hotel. In addition to writing, directing, and acting, he worked as second camera operator, editor, and dubber, completing everything a week ahead of schedule and under budget. The first film since *Kane* that was edited as he wanted, *The Trial* has great cinematic intelligence and Kafkaesque terror, but seems divided against itself, as if it were quarreling with the novel. The liberties Welles takes with Kafka—a baroque style, a contemporary setting, a rebellious Joseph K., and a new ending—were motivated by his politics and position in history. "To me [the novel] is a 'ballet' written by a Jewish intellectual before the advent of Hitler," he explained to *Cahiers du Cinéma*. After the Holocaust, he argued, Kafka wouldn't have ended it as he did: "It all seems very much pre-Auschwitz to me. I don't mean that my ending was a particularly good one, but it was the only possible solution."

Returning to Spain, Welles made *Chimes at Midnight* (1966), the finest of his Shakespeare adaptations and arguably the best of all his films. (He told an interviewer that if he were required to show one of his pictures to God as a way of gaining admission to heaven, he would pick *Chimes*). The idea for the project had dated back to *Five Kings,* an overly ambitious and failed 1939 Mercury stage production that condensed Shakespeare's history plays about the British Wars of the Roses into two lengthy nights of drama. *Chimes* is a more focused and coherent weaving together of Shakespeare's plays, concentrating chiefly on *Henry IV, Parts one and two*, which deal with the last years of Henry IV and the transformation of his wastrel son, Prince Hal, into the heroic Henry V.

The youthful Hal's companion in dissolute behavior is Shakespeare's most popular comic creation, the fat, aging Sir John Falstaff. Welles regarded Falstaff as a fundamentally good man whose faults are small in comparison with those of Henry and his court; as a character type, he derives from the Vice figure in the Medieval morality plays, but as Welles shows, his carnivalesque behavior has a critical effect when he is brought forward into the early-modern world of power politics and Machiavellian strategy. Welles's portrayal of Falstaff is by common agreement his finest performance, effectively supported by Keith Baxter as Hal and a large cast of celebrated British and European actors. *Chimes* is also distinguished by one of the most powerful battle scenes in the history of cinema—the Battle of Shrewsbury, a triumph of visual and sound editing, reminiscent of John Ford and Akira Kurosawa but owing chiefly to Welles, who accomplished it with remarkably small resources.

The last three of Welles's films released in his lifetime were modest in scale and unified by the theme of art. First was *The Immortal Story* (1968), a color adaptation of Isak Dinesen produced for French TV, which was shot in Paris and Madrid but set in 19^th^-century Macao. It tells of a greedy, gout-ridden old American merchant, symbolically named Clay, who hires a handsome young sailor and a local prostitute to act out the "immortal story" of erotic love in Bernardin de St. Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*. Clay tries to prove that he can take control of the story by turning it into reality; when acted, however, it controls both him and the players, leading to a death scene reminiscent of *Citizen Kane*. Next was *F for Fake* (1973), financed by Films l'Astrophore of France and Iran and Janus Film of Munich. A key example of what has come to be known as the "essay film," *F for Fake* could also be described as a mixture of documentary, fiction, autobiography, and magic trick. It appropriates footage from a François Reichenbach documentary about

art forger Elmyr de Hory and fraudulent biographer Clifford Irving, and combines it with material shot by Welles, becoming a thought-provoking commentary on authorship, fakery, the commodification of art, and the deceptive nature of cinema. The final film in the series was the West-German television broadcast of *Filming "Othello"* (1978), Welles's intriguing account of his adventures and struggles in the making of his 1952 adaptation of Shakespeare.

During the last phase of his career, Welles worked on more than a dozen films or screenplays and made two virtually complete pictures that were never released: *The Deep*, a color adaptation of a Charles Williams thriller, shot in Yugoslavia in 1967-69; and *The Merchant of Venice*, a forty-minute color condensation of Shakespeare, shot in Italy and Yugoslavia in 1969. By far the most interesting and artistically ambitious of these projects was *The Other Side of the Wind*, written in collaboration with his late-life partner Oja Kodar, which involved a return to Hollywood.

Begun in 1970, shot in Los Angeles, Arizona, and for a couple of sequences in Spanish and French locations disguised as Los Angeles, *The Other Side of the Wind* was initially financed by Films L'Astrophore, which had supported *F for Fake*. The Iranian revolution ended that production company and Welles spent the rest of his life trying to raise funds to rescue the footage from a Paris vault. In 2014, almost a decade after his death, Royal Road Films managed to overcome complicated legal problems and liberate the entire 1,083 feet of film, which they brought to Los Angeles. Peter Bogdanovich, who had acted in *The Other Side of the Wind*, was an adviser, along with Joseph McBride (also one of the actors) and Jonathan Rosenbaum. The film was released by Netflix in 2018.

The Other Side of the Wind had its origins in one of Welles's unproduced screenplays, *The Sacred Beasts*, which dealt with Spanish bullfighting and involved a character loosely based on Ernest Hemingway. In 1937, the young Welles had spoken narration written by Hemingway and John Dos Passos for Joris Iven's Spanish Civil-War documentary, *The Spanish Earth*. When Hemingway accused Welles of sounding like a homosexual, the two came to blows in the projection room. (In later prints of *the Spanish Earth*, Welles's voice was replaced by Hemingway's.) Welles would eventually become as intense a bullfighting aficionado as Hemingway had been, but *The Sacred Beasts* was less concerned with the ritual of death in the afternoon than with what Welles called an "attack on macho-ism," centered on a Hemingway type who is revealed to be a latent homosexual.

The Other Side of the Wind transposes this theme to the world of Hollywood moviemaking, centering its plot on aging, tough-guy film director Jake Hannaford, played by Welles's friend John Huston. At every level, it's a *film à clef*, a satire not only of Hollywood but also of the 1970s cinephilia that made Welles a sacred beast for the young filmmakers and critics. Hannaford resembles Hemingway, but also very much resembles Welles ("Jake" was an affectionate name that another of Welles's friends, Frank Sinatra, had bestowed on him). Like Welles, Hannaford has returned to the movie capital after years in exile and begun a new film project. A newly "hot" celebrity, he's surrounded by paparazzi, friends, and critics, among them a rising young filmmaker who strongly resembles Peter Bogdanovich (and is acted by Bogdanovich), a film critic who resembles Pauline Kael (Susan Strasberg), and a producer who resembles Paramount's Robert Evans (Jeffrey Land). He lords over a beautiful young woman he has cast in the film (Kodar), and develops a crush on the leading man (Bob Random). When his film loses favor with producers, his longstanding, carefully maintained armor of tough masculinity begins to dissolve. During a party celebrating his birthday, the drunken Hannaford speeds off in a sports car he was planning to give the actor and dies when it crashes. As is typical with Welles, the story is told in flashback. It begins and ends on July 2, the date of the birthday party, which is also the date of Hemingway's suicide.

One of the most interesting aspects of *The Other Side of the Wind* is that it eschews the long-take, wide-angle, halls-of-mirrors style usually associated with Welles, relying instead on postmodern pastiche. The entire film is structured by varieties of mediated perception. Super 8 and 16mm footage, some of it in black and white, is intercut with 35mm color sequences and occasional still photographs. Guests at Jake Hannaford's birthday party are shown being photographed by a film crew (Welles's crew for the film we are watching) and behave as if they know they are being filmed. The *cinéma-vérité* party scenes are interspersed with talking-head interviews with Hannaford, who reminisces about his past, and with scenes from the film he is making—a color art film titled *The Other Side of the Wind*, which is relatively humorless and enigmatic, but symptomatic of Hannaford's sexual obsessions.

As his career neared its end, Welles had turned cameras on the working world around him and created a self-reflexive critique of celebrity culture in the United States. Although *The Other Side of the Wind* is about Hollywood and filled with Hollywood veterans, it's nearly unique among movies about movies because was made almost completely outside the system, with the aid of old professional friends and young admirers who worked for very little.

Welles was one of cinema's last romantics, who made use of his biography and observed New Hollywood from an exile's perspective. He died in 1985, still working and having filmed other projects, never knowing if *The Other Side of the Wind* would be seen. A vagabond and a citizen of the world, his memorial gravesite is in Spain. His achievements will long continue to have international relevance and artistic significance.

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