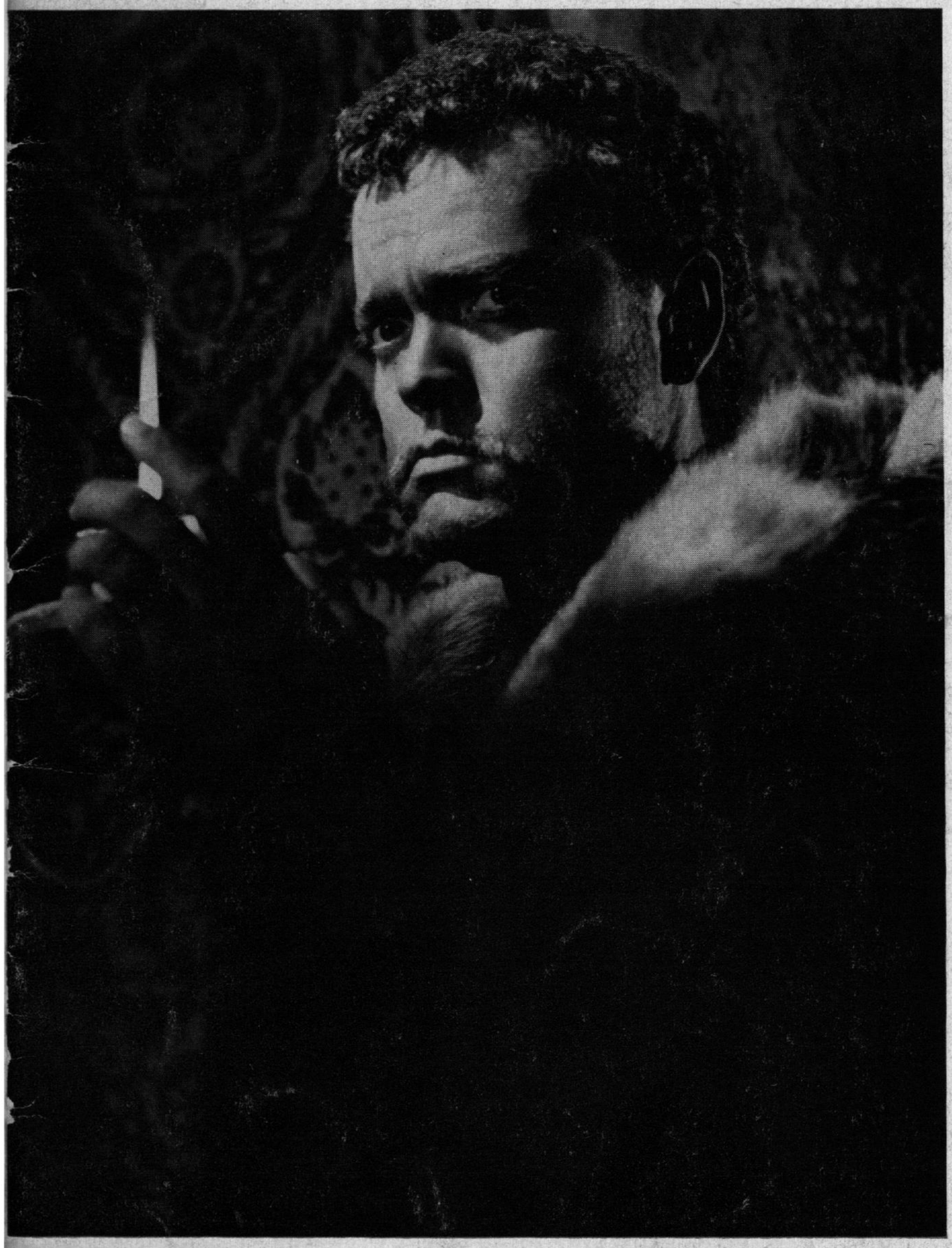
Document Citation

Title	**The cinema of Orson Welles**
Author(s)	Peter Bogdanovich
Source	*Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)*
Date	
Type	monograph
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	18
Subjects	Welles, Orson (1915-1985), Kenosha, Wisconsin, United States
Film Subjects	The magnificent Ambersons, Welles, Orson, 1942 Othello, Welles, Orson, 1952 The lady from Shanghai, Welles, Orson, 1948 The stranger, Welles, Orson, 1946 Mr. Arkadin, Welles, Orson, 1955 Touch of evil, Welles, Orson, 1958 Citizen Kane, Welles, Orson, 1941 Macbeth, Welles, Orson, 1948 Journey into fear, Welles, Orson, 1942



The Cinema of Orson Welles

BY PETER BOGDANOVICH

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Distributed by Doubleday & Company, Inc.
Garden City, New York

The Museum of Modern Art,
11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y.

"Orson Welles is a giant with the face of a child, a tree filled with birds and shadows, a dog who has broken loose from his chains and gone to sleep on the flower bed. He is an active loafer, a wise madman, a solitude surrounded by humanity."—Jean Cocteau

"Orson's courage, like everything else about him, imagination, egotism, generosity, ruthlessness, forbearance, impatience, sensitivity, grossness and vision, is magnificently out of proportion."—Michael Mac Liammoir

"One Orson Welles is enough. Two would undoubtedly bring about the end of civilization."—Richard Wright

"Orson Welles is without doubt one of the ten greatest filmmakers in the world."—Francois Truffaut

"The theatre and cinema are a-glitter with names; despite those who decry the worst manifestations of the star system, this has always been so and always will be. Some, a very few, of these names shine steadfastly like fixed planets; others shoot briefly across the night sky. There is one name, however, which burns as brightly as any, but seems to have no fixed place. Orson Welles is a wandering star of spasmodic incandescence. You never know what he will be doing next."—Michael Redgrave

"The American cinema is not the cinema of Hawks or Griffith, it is the cinema of Welles. Welles, the new Caravaggio."—Jean Domarchi

"I want to use the motion picture camera as an instrument of poetry."—Orson Welles

Like the movies of Renoir, Chaplin or John Ford, the films of Orson Welles are distinctively autographed by their maker. "Film is a very personal thing," Welles has said, "Much more than the theatre, because the film is a dead thing—a ribbon of celluloid—like the paper on which one writes a poem. Theatre is a collective experience; cinema is the work of one single person—the director."[1] In twenty years, Welles has made just seven pictures that can fairly be called his own, but there is a personal unity in his work that can be found in only the very greatest poets of the cinema. ("I believe that any work is good only in the measure it expresses the man who created it.") One may enter at any point in a Welles film and never doubt who its director is—not only because of his darkly lyric imagery, his mysterious, brooding sense of the evil in the world, his remarkable technical ingenuity and originality, his witty, probing dialogue, or indeed his own physical presence as an actor, but also because of the profound theme that runs through all his work, man as a tragic victim of the paradox between his sense of morality and his own dark nature. All the leading Welles characters are damned, from Charles Foster Kane to Hank Quinlan (in *Touch of Evil*), all of them larger-than-life, morally detestable men for whom, somehow, one has deep sympathy. As Welles put it: "I don't detest them, I detest the way they act—that is my point of tension. All the characters I've played are various forms of Faust. I hate all forms of Faust, because I believe it's impossible for man to be great without admitting there is something greater than himself—either the law or God or art—but there must be something greater than man. I have sympathy for those characters —humanly but not morally." And because of this compassion, Welles refuses to judge his people. He shows them for what they are, but his jacks are never one-eyed; he withholds judgment on the "great bastards" he portrays. "One has no right to judge except by a religion," he has said. "To decide if someone is good or bad is the law of the jungle."

The dark poetry of Orson Welles is peopled with men who in some form or another have made themselves a world over which to reign—have placed themselves above the law or God or art: Kane, who tried with his newspapers and money to win the love of the people; the Ambersons, symbols of the false pride of a useless, decaying aristocracy; Bannister, the lawyer (in *The Lady From Shanghai*) who placed himself above the law; Macbeth, with his "vaulting ambition"; Othello's "green-eyed monster"; Arkadin, the adventurer who created a world unto himself and tried to destroy his past; Quinlan, the cop who thought he could be the law and final judge. These are the doomed, classic characters of a Faustian world, the leading figures in the seven tragic poems of Orson Welles. For, more than anything else, the cinema of Welles is a poetic one—painted with dazzling, florid, bold strokes. Not to speak of his accomplishments in the theatre or radio, Welles is, perhaps, the most striking moviemaker of our time—his films sing, flow and vibrate with the vision of a thrilling, original talent and a consummate, inspired artist.

1. Unless otherwise specified, the quotations are taken from an interview with Orson Welles in *Cahiers du Cinema*, Vol. XV, No. 87, Sept., 1958.

1941 CITIZEN KANE (RKO Radio Pictures). A Mercury Production directed and produced by Orson Welles; original screenplay by Welles and Herman J. Mankiewicz; photography by Gregg Toland; art direction by Van Nest Polglase and Perry Ferguson; set decoration by Darell Silvera; edited by Robert Wise and Mark Robson; music by Bernard Herrmann; special effects by Vernon L. Walker; costumes by Edward Stevenson; sound by Bailey Fesler and James G. Stewart. Released: May, 1941; 119 minutes. Cast: Welles, Joseph Cotten, Dorothy Comingore, Agnes Moorehead, Ruth Warrick, Ray Collins, Erskine Sanford, Everett Sloane, George Coulouris, William Alland, Paul Stewart, Fortunio Bonanova, Gus Schilling, Phillip Van Zandt, Georgia Backus, Harry Shannon, Buddy Swan, Sonny Bupp.

Citizen Kane is a criticism of American plutocracy and the power of the popular press, but it transcends these social considerations. It is, as Welles called it, "a portrait of a public man's private life.

Citizen Kane is the story of a search by a man named Thompson, the editor of a news digest (similar to the *March of Time*), for the meaning of Kane's dying words. He hopes they'll give the short the angle it needs. He decides that a man's dying words ought to explain his life. Maybe they do. He never discovers what Kane's mean, but the audience does. His researches take him to five people who knew Kane well —people who liked him or loved him or hated his guts. They tell five different stories, each biased, so that the truth about Kane, like the truth about any man, can only be calculated by the sum of everything that has been said about him.

"Kane[2], we are told, loved only his mother—only his newspaper—only his second wife—only himself. Maybe he loved all of these, or none. It is for the audience to judge. Kane was selfish and selfless, an idealist, a scoundrel, a very big man and a very little one. It depends on who's talking about him. He is never judged with the objectivity of an author, and the point of the picture is not so much the solution of the problem as its presentation."

By Welles' own description, one can see the morality-humanity theme clearly developed throughout the movie itself. From the opening shot ("No Trespassing") to the last line ("I don't think any word explains a man's life"), it is evident that Welles has no intention of passing judgment on Kane: "Kane is detestable but he is a human being." It has been argued that the final shot of the sled is a sentimental oversimplification of Kane's life, but, though it is one of the most successfully surprising and poignant final moments in cinema, it is clear in the script that it was not Welles' intention to make that shot the film's all-encompassing solution: "Maybe Rosebud was something he couldn't get or something he lost, but it wouldn't have explained anything . . . I guess Rosebud is just a piece in a jigsaw puzzle—a missing piece." Though the director supplies that missing piece it serves only as a kind of moving reminder that, in spite of everything, Kane was a man with feeling, passionate and with courage.

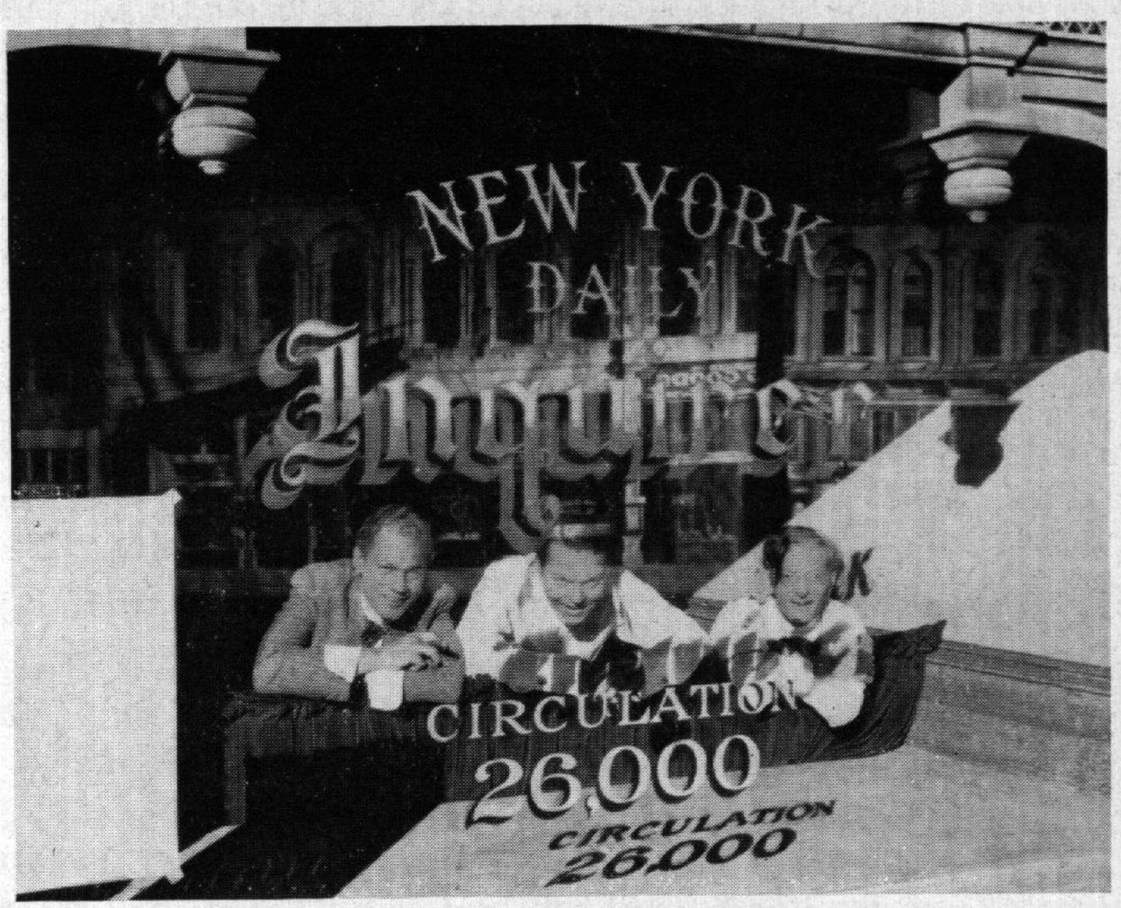
Technically, *Citizen Kane* is a treasure chest of the screen-language. With his first film, Welles climaxed the sound cinema; he explored all the possibilities of moviemaking, sharpened old devices, gave new life to tired ones, and brought in some startling new ideas. He thus synthesized what had gone before, foreshadowed what was to come, and made everything seem original and fresh. Perhaps the most valuable innovation in the film was its inventive use of sound, which Welles brought to movies from his years of radio work. The overlapping dialogue (now a Welles trademark) gives the picture a remarkable flow and sense of reality, making most other films seem stage-bound because of their cued delivery: first A talks, then B, then A, then B; but in life A and B are very often talking at the same time, and Welles makes abundant use of that fact. The sound in *Kane* (as in all his subsequent work) is also used for a vivid economy of gesture: when Kane is eight, Thatcher is seen saying, "Merry Christmas . . ." and with

2. *Friday,* Vol. II, No. 7, Feb. 14, 1941.

that the scene cuts about eighteen years forward to Thatcher saying ". . . and a Happy New Year." With one sharp transition, we have jumped into the story of Kane's adult life. Later, we see Leland campaigning for Kane before a handful of people, announcing that "Kane entered this campaign . . ." and we cut to Kane speaking at the lectern of a huge auditorium ". . . with one purpose only . . ." Again the point has been made directly, briefly, effectively. Or, of course, the famous breakfast-table sequence between Kane and his first wife, where the nine-year deterioration of a marriage is summed up through one continuing conversation over five flash-pans.

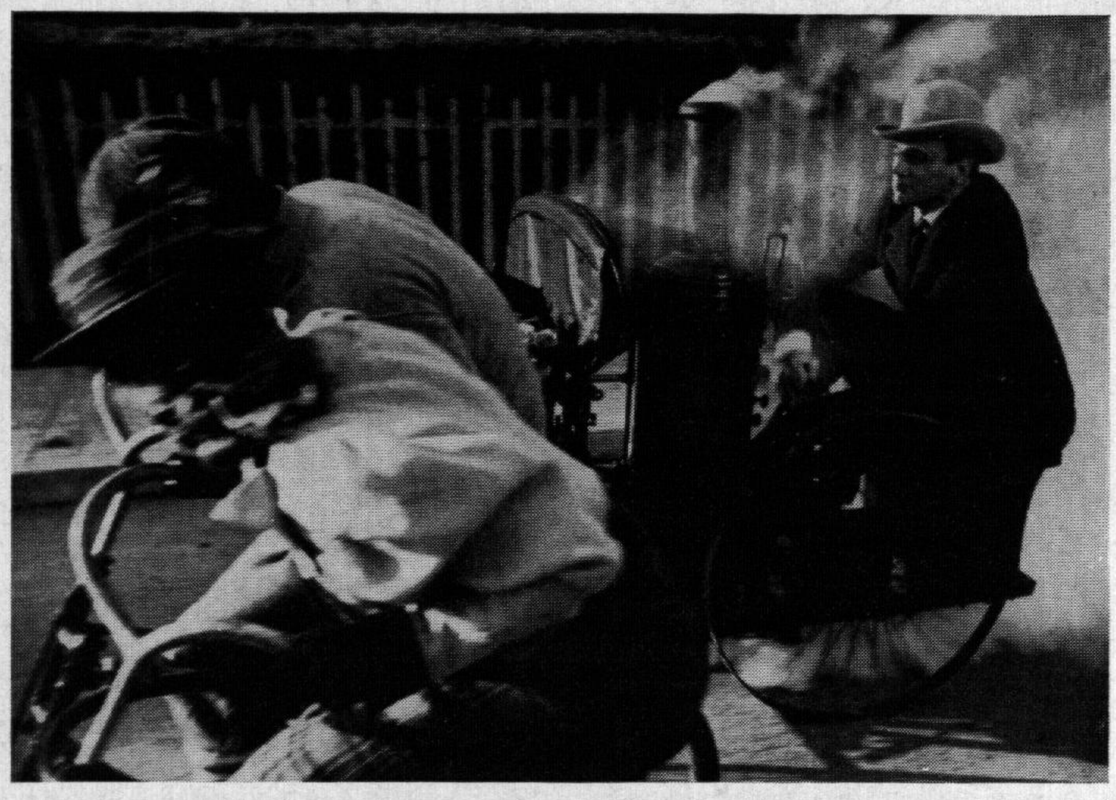
Among the other aspects of *Citizen Kane* which struck the 1941 public with the force of extreme novelty, the "News on the March" sequence is outstanding. A perfectly imitated news digest, it is also, aside from Wolcott Gibbs' profile of Henry Luce, the sharpest of all parodies of "Time-style" ("For forty years appeared in Kane newsprint no public issue on which Kane papers took no stand"). In photography, the most important feature Welles brought to *Kane* (and to all his later movies) was the deep-focus lens developed for him by photographer Gregg Toland, enabling him to keep the entire frame in equally sharp focus, and making for economy of editing: the contract signing scene, for one example, in which within one frame we see the equivalent of a close-up (Bernstein), a medium-shot (Thatcher), and a long-shot (Kane), all equally sharp. This lens made it possible for Welles to compose his frames with maximum depth, and allowed him to use chiaroscuro in a new way.

Beyond all these considerations and their effect on subsequent directors, the script and its significance is all important. It broke with exciting success all the Hollywood cliches of movie construction and brought to the screen an adult, personal style. *Citizen Kane* is the only one of his films made and released exactly as Welles wanted, so it becomes easy to call it his best picture, but we shall see that he developed much further



Joseph Cotten, Welles and Everett Sloane in *Citizen Kane*

The deep-focus lens: *Citizen Kane*



Race between double cycle and steam auto: a deleted sequence from *The Magnificent Ambersons*

Composition in depth: Ray Collins in *The Magnificent Ambersons*

both technically and intellectually. *Kane* remains an extraordinary achievement, important not only for itself, but because it set the theme that haunts all the films of Orson Welles.

THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS

> 1942 THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS (RKO Radio Pictures). A Mercury Production directed and produced by Orson Welles; screenplay by Welles, based on the novel by Booth Tarkington; photography by Stanley Cortez; art direction by Mark-Lee Kirk; edited by Robert Wise; music by Bernard Herrmann; special effects by Vernon L. Walker; costumes by Edward Stevenson; sound by Bailey Fesler and James G. Stewart. Released: August, 1942; 88 minutes. Cast: Joseph Cotten, Dolores Costello, Tim Holt, Anne Baxter, Agnes Moorehead, Ray Collins, Richard Bennett, Donald Dillaway, Erskine Sanford.

Welles does not appear in *The Magnificent Ambersons* (he narrates) but the representative character of his theme is George Minafer, archetype of a dying plutocracy—the Ambersons. Proud, rich, spoiled, reactionary, he dominates his weak mother's life, and ruins it along with the happiness of Lucy and Eugene. How he (and indeed his whole way of life) receives his "comeuppance" is the story of the film. Though it is clear that progress is what Welles is affirming, he paints a nostalgic, moving picture of life before the horseless carriage and brings to the screen a faithful re-creation of Tarkington's novel. George Minafer is a decidedly disagreeable and unlikeable boy, and yet it is impossible not to pity him. And as he kneels by his mother's bed at the end and asks softly, "Mother, forgive me. God, forgive me," he is a poignant symbol of a dead society.

With *Ambersons,* Welles adopted a different style from that of *Kane,* more lyric and tender, with a technique as different as the subject. Purposely, he holds many of his scenes for an extended time, either with a stationary camera (as in the cake-eating scene between George and Aunt Fanny) or with a long tracking shot (George and Lucy in the carriage) so that the mood of

the film is the sad, slowly developed atmosphere of the late 1800's. Welles displays an exquisite understanding of the period and its style—as in the beautiful opening shot with a fuzzy quality around the edges, framed with the archaic quaintness of tintypes, and his narration evokes a deep nostalgia for a time gone forever.

Since he was not allowed to do the final cut of *Ambersons* ("It looks as though somebody had run a lawnmower through the celluloid.")[3] and because a few of the scenes were neither written nor directed by him, it becomes difficult to evaluate exactly what Welles wanted the finished film to look like. It is known, for example, that he had shot a lot more footage of the growing, ever-industrializing town than is shown in the movie; clearly it was to have been used as a counterpoint to the Ambersons' decline. Welles was then nearing the end of his tenure at RKO and *Ambersons* is a mutilated work. It is the more amazing that so much of Welles' conception survived the released print.

JOURNEY INTO FEAR

1942 JOURNEY INTO FEAR (RKO Radio Pictures). A Mercury Production directed by Norman Foster; produced by Orson Welles; screenplay by Joseph Cotten and Welles, based on the novel by Eric Ambler; photography by Karl Struss; music by Roy Webb; edited by Mark Robson. Released: February, 1943: 71 minutes. Cast: Welles, Joseph Cotten, Dolores Del Rio, Ruth Warrick, Agnes Moorehead, Everett Sloane, Jack Moss, Richard Bennett.

This is not a Welles film. It features the Mercury Players, was scripted by Joseph Cotten (supposedly with Welles' assistance) and Welles is credited as producer, but RKO assigned Norman Foster as director. He was considered "safe"; Welles was not. Asked about *Journey,* Welles has said: "For the first five sequences I was on the set and decided angles; from then on, I often said where to put the camera, described the framings, made light tests . . . I designed the film but can't properly be called the director."

It is just possible to approximate what Welles might have done with the picture if he had been allowed to direct it (or at least edit it)—a kind of light parody of innocents-abroad or a take-off on the *Casablanca*-type thriller so popular around that time. Anyway, as he put it: "I was in South America waiting for the rushes while some RKO gremlins, headed by a brace of vice-presidents and the studio janitor, 'cut' the film."[4]

THE STRANGER

1946 THE STRANGER (RKO Radio-International). Directed by Orson Welles; produced by Sam Spiegel; screenplay by Anthony Veiller and John Huston, from a story by Victor Trivas; photography by Russell Metty; art direction by Perry Ferguson; music by Bronislau Kaper. Released: May, 1946; 85 minutes. Cast: Welles, Loretta Young, Edward G. Robinson, Philip Merivale, Richard Long, Billy House.

Since Welles had no hand whatever in the screenplay of this picture (he did write a few scenes but they were all cut), we cannot include it among his personal works. Because he directed he does refer to it as one of his movies but says: "*The Stranger* is the worst of my films. There is nothing of me in that picture. I did it to prove that I could put out a movie as well as anyone else. It is absolutely of no interest to me. I did not make it with cynicism, however, I did my best with it."

Decidedly a minor effort, *The Stranger* is an exciting little film with some striking small-town atmosphere, particularly the scenes in the drug store, but its only real interest is Welles' own performance of the Nazi. Again he is able, through his own personality and charm, to invest the character with considerable sympathy despite a script that wants to paint him totally black. However, this is probably just a matter of Welles' magnetism as an actor and it is doubtful if he was consciously trying to make him sympathetic.

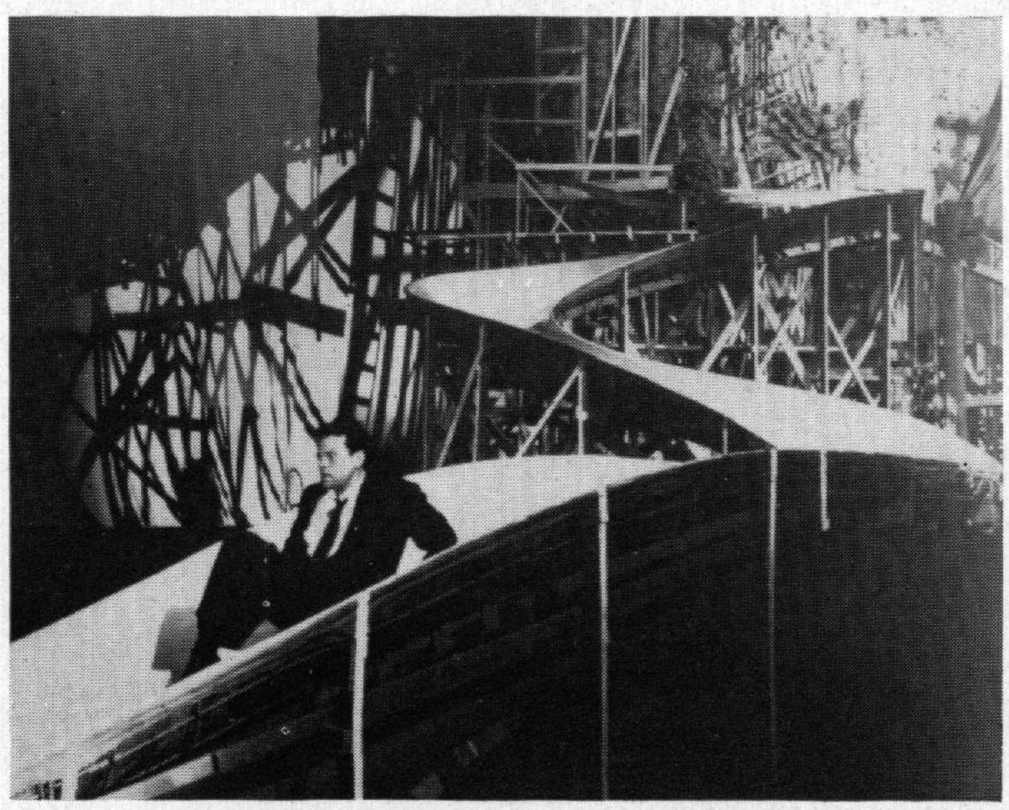
3. Peter Noble, *The Fabulous Orson Welles,* Hutchinson & Co., 1956. 4. Ibid.

1948 THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI (Columbia Pictures). Directed and produced by Orson Welles; screenplay by Welles, based on the novel by Sherwood King; photography by Charles Lawton Jr.; art direction by Stephen Gooson and Sturges Carne; set decoration by Wilber Menefee and Herman Schoenbrun; music by Heinz Roemheld; edited by Viola Lawrence; sound by Lodge Cunningham. Released: June, 1948; 87 minutes. Cast: Welles, Rita Hayworth, Everett Sloane, Glenn Anders, Ted de Corsia, Erskine Sanford.

The Lady From Shanghai returns to the bravura style of *Citizen Kane* and is perhaps even more dazzling and fluid. Much of the editing and composition is more daring and the courtroom scene, the chase in the Chinese Theatre and the final gunfight in the deserted Hall of Mirrors are sequences as good as anything he has ever made. Thematically, *Shanghai* develops the motif of *Kane* and *Ambersons* in its critisism of the corruptive powers of plutocracy, and begins to probe into the morality of the law, something he was to take even further in *Touch of Evil.* Bannister is an extremely successful ("I never lost a case"), wealthy and powerful criminal lawyer, but he himself is a criminal. A spokesman for the law, he thinks he is above it, and this is his tragic fault. His associate, Grisby, has been thoroughly perverted by his position as a defender of criminals ("We're going to commit murder and not break laws") and indeed the malignant cancer of the two lawyers has spread to Elsa, Bannister's pretty wife. The three of them envelope O'Hara, a basically innocent bystander, in their machinations, and though he lets himself be carried along, he is in opposition or contrast to them. "O'Hara is the poet and the victim," says Welles. "He represents the aristocratic, the cavalier point of view, and corresponds to very ancient European ideas." O'Hara speaks for the author in his haunting, frightening, Poe-like anecdote about the sea of sharks driven mad by the taste of their own blood as they eat first each other and then themselves.

Shanghai takes many sly thrusts at the immorality of law and the judicial system, reinforcing Welles' continuing anti-judgment motif. The scene in the courtroom, for example, where one juror has to be

The Hall of Mirrors: with Rita Hayworth in *The Lady from Shanghai*



In the deserted amusement park: *The Lady from Shanghai*

shushed into quiet from a laughing fit, where another has a sneezing spell interrupting the proceedings, indeed the witty circus-tactics of Bannister taking the stand and cross-examining himself, all these are satiric comments on common morality and a witty parody of the American obsession with right and wrong. And there is that subtle juxtaposition of images when the film cuts from the judge at a chessboard to an overhead shot of the deserted courtroom waiting for the jury's return. ("If the fact of dragging a murderer in front of a jury is an important and just task in itself it loses all importance—everything like peace and happiness —if one has to arrive at it at the expense of man's dignity.")

The Lady From Shanghai is a morality play without preachment; it can be taken as a bizarre adventure yarn, a bravura thriller, a profound drama of decay, or all three. Bannister is a crippled spider limping through his infected world, but his love for his wife is genuine and deep, and at the end he truly kills the thing he loves. And Elsa Bannister, beautiful and fatal, conveys the quality of unconsciously perverted innocence; she is never quite aware of her own evil.

The forthright, imaginative development of *The Lady From Shanghai* is unendingly inventive: the day-long picnic, the scenes on the boat, the love scene in the aquarium, the scenes in the courtroom, the Chinese Theatre and the Hall of Mirrors. Welles' camera work and editing show an abandon and freedom, a slashing, driving energy decidedly advanced from *Citizen Kane.* Though the film was re-edited by the studio, it still retains its force and impact; the script is elliptic, witty and evocative, and the images cling to the imagination.

The Lady From Shanghai remains Welles' wildest, most restless picture and one of his most elusively significant. Behind the magical showmanship is the voice of a poet decrying the sin and corruption of a confused world. And O'Hara, the victim, the innocent, has been irrevocably touched by the abyss into which he fell: "Maybe I'll live so long I'll forget her, maybe I'll die trying."

MACBETH

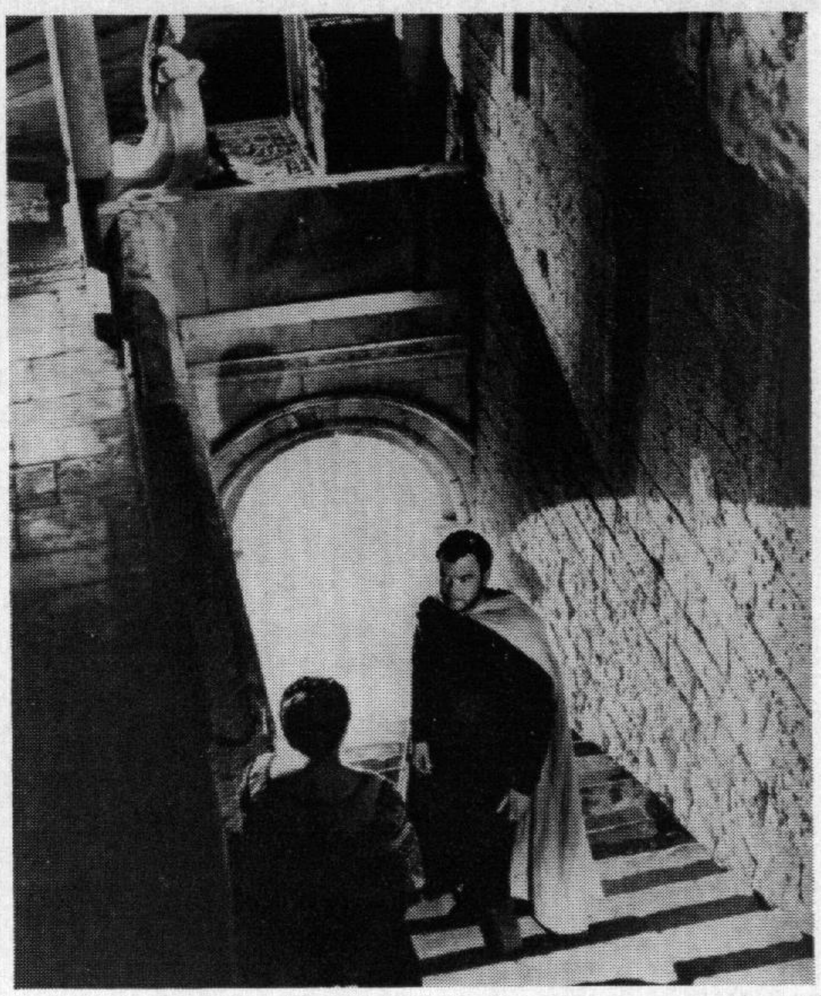
1948 MACBETH (Republic Pictures). A Mercury Production directed and produced by Orson Welles, from the play by William Shakespeare; photography by John C. Russell; art direction by Fred Ritter; set decoration by John MacCarthy Jr. and James Redd; costumes by Welles and Ritter (for the men), Adele Palmer (for the women); music by Jacques Ibert; edited by Louis Lindsay. Released: October, 1948; 107 minutes. Cast: Welles, Jeanette Nolan, Dan O'Herlihy, Roddy McDowall, Edgar Barrier, Alan Napier, Erskine Sanford, John Dierkes, Christopher Welles, Lurene Tuttle.

"*Macbeth* was made in twenty-three days, including one day of retakes," as Welles tells the story. "People who know anything at all about the business of making a film will realise that this is more than fast. I never thought I was making a great film, or even an imitation great film. I thought I was making what might be a good film, and what, if the 23-day shooting schedule came off, might encourage other film-makers to tackle difficult subjects at greater speed . . . I am not ashamed of the limitations of the picture . . . *Macbeth,* for better or worse, is a kind of violently sketched charcoal drawing of a great play."[5]

Shakespeare has had a tremendous influence on the work of Orson Welles, not only in the largeness of his poetry and vision but also in his philosophical ideas: "The great quality of Shakespeare is that he had neither moral nor political partisanship. Shakespeare never wrote real tragedy; he wrote melodrama that had the stature of tragedy, and all his interesting characters are bastards." In that opinion, Welles reveals his own code: "The moral aspect is the only one of importance. I am more interested in character than in virtue . . . I call it artistic morality above bourgeois morality. Macbeth is detestable until he becomes king; after that he becomes a great man."

5. Orson Welles, "The Third Audience," *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Jan.-Mar., 1954.

On the heath in *Macbeth*



Stylization in black and white: *Othello*

In his *Macbeth,* which he accurately describes as a rough sketch, we can see the beginnings of his filmic conceptions of Shakespeare, which he was to perfect in *Othello.* That is, of interpreting the Bard *for* the screen, rather than the other way around as the other movie versions of Shakespeare have done. He takes Shakespeare's theme, story, and poetry and freely adapts them into motion picture terms. That way, he uses the play as a starting point in developing his own visual design. He rearranges the speeches so that they flow more naturally on the screen and elaborates on Shakespeare's stagebound directions: Lady Macbeth's death is described in the text as "a cry of women within," but on the screen there is no reason not to let her hurl herself from one of the heavy, brooding cliffs that surround the action of the piece. There is a claustrophobic quality to the world of Welles' *Macbeth* that is perfect in intention—the crimes of that dank world are exposed yet entombed. Macbeth is a cursed man, but he is a great character. That is Shakespeare and that is Welles.

Since the film was shot in 23 days, perfection was neither intended nor can it be expected. Therefore the performances are uneven in execution; Jeanette Nolan is too pale a figure as Lady Macbeth and many of the supporting parts are not entirely realized. Welles himself gives a free-wheeling, inspired reading of the title role, a performance that, like the film, is a "violently sketched charcoal drawing" of the character. The photography and the atmosphere are almost completely successful—the weird opening with the witches, the grimly terrifying invasion at the end, the shadowy, foreboding mood of the entire film, as well as the initial conception of making the people of *Macbeth* barbarians. And the movie remains of interest, not only for

itself, but because of the way it foreshadows Welles' technique of filmed Shakespeare, which he was to bring to fruition with his next film.

OTHELLO

> 1952 OTHELLO (United Artists). A Mercury Production directed and produced by Orson Welles, from the play by William Shakespeare; photography by Anchise Brizzi, G. Araldo, George Fanto, Obadan Troania, Roberto Fusi; music by Francesco Lavagnino and Alberto Barberis; edited by Jean Sacha, Renzo Lucidi, John Shepridge; art direction by Alexander Trauner; costumes by Maria de Mateis. Released in United States: June, 1955; 92 minutes. Cast: Welles, Suzanne Cloutier, Michael MacLiammoir, Robert Coote, Hilton Edwards, Fay Compton, Nicholas Bruce, Doris Dowling, Jean Davis, Michael Lawrence.

Discussing his film, Welles said: "*Othello,* whether successful or not, is about as close to Shakespeare's play as was Verdi's opera. I think Verdi and Boito were perfectly entitled to change Shakespeare in adapting him to another art form; and, assuming that the cinema is an art form, I took the line that you can adapt a classic freely and vigorously for the cinema."[6]

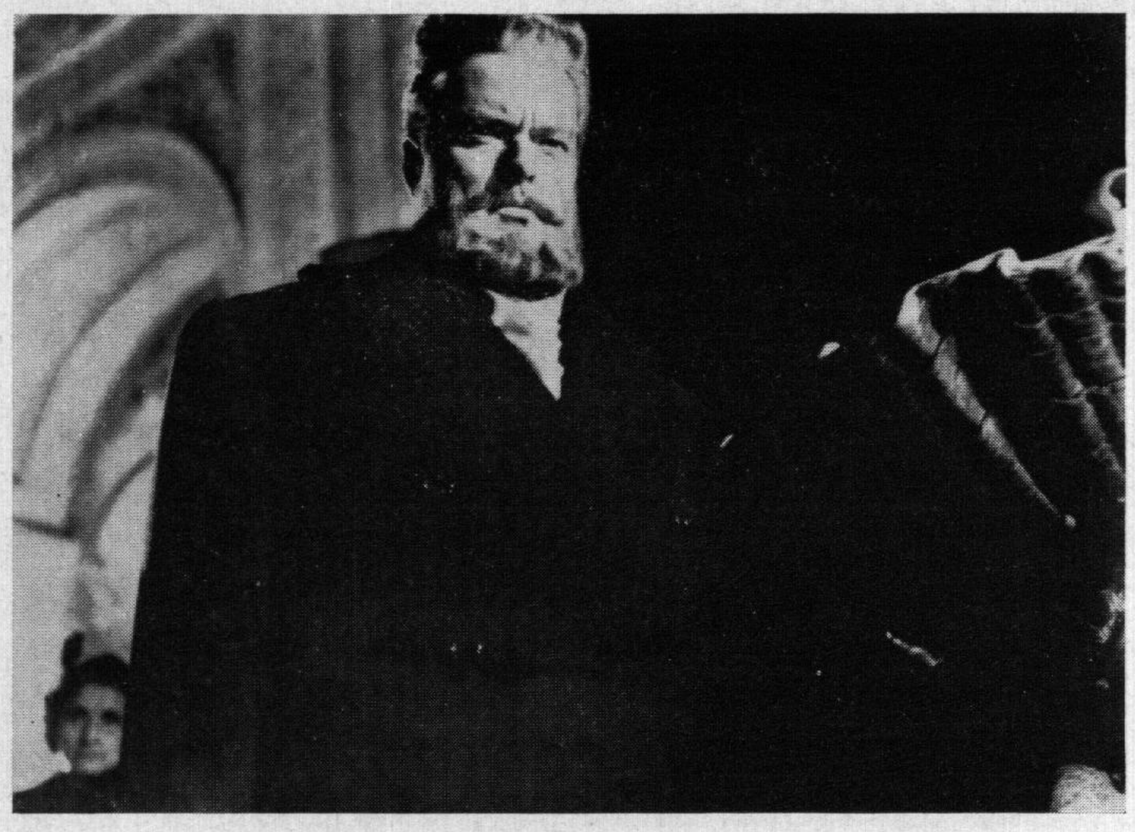
Welles, speaking the credit titles of the film (they do not appear on the screen), is careful to say, "This is a motion picture *based* on 'The Tragedy of Othello' by William Shakespeare." The play itself, therefore, is only a starting point, and Welles is creating a visual variation on its theme. His *Othello* is pure cinema, in contrast to the stage-bound Shakespearean adaptations of Olivier, Mankiewicz, or Cukor. Changing the verbal into visual magic, he does not, for example, use the line, "I kissed thee ere I killed thee" because he films the murder of Desdemona with that line in mind: placing a thin veil over her face so that she looks like a helpless, terrified child, he passionately smothers her with his kisses. The image remains in the eye just as the line sticks to the ear.

Made over a period of four years and almost completely financed by Welles himself, (he was forever flying off to act in other directors' films so as to invest his earnings in *Othello*), the picture is in many ways a greater work than *Citizen Kane*. The camera is freer, more daring, the images more striking and poetic, the editing bolder and more incisive. How economically, for example, he sets up at the outset the entire mood and struggle of the story: the bodies of Othello and Desdemona being carried to their grave in a series of evocative dissolves, then the rough encasement of Iago into an iron cage high above the crowds edited in staccato style, effectively summarizing what is to happen against the breathtaking beauty of Venice, evoked in a series of lyric dissolves as the credits to the film are narrated. Then with the first line of dialogue, the conflict that haunts the story is set forward: "I told thee often and I tell thee again, I hate the Moor." And, immediately, the story moves forward without a wasted motion to its inevitable tragic end.

Welles has said: "Othello is not detestable, the jealously is." And here again one can see his refusal to pass judgment on people. Even Iago is not so totally black a villain as he is usually played; we feel a strange kind of pity for him and an understanding. At the end when Othello says: "Demand of that demi-devil why he hath thus ensnared my soul," Iago replies: "Demand me nothing, what you know, you know" and there is a swift exchange of looks between the two which makes it clear that Othello has seen Iago in the deepest sense and cannot despise him. And neither can we.

Because of the time, patience and courage it took him to make the film, *Othello* is clearly one of Welles' most personal works. Beyond that, it is his most deeply poetic and richly visual one. And, finally, what we see in his movie is a bloody, brooding, dark-evil, passionate, tender, harsh, poetic and profoundly tragic story of some great, larger-than-life people. And that's who Shakespeare was writing about.

6. Ibid.



Welles as *Mr. Arkadin (Confidential Report)*

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

1955 MR. ARKADIN (CONFIDENT REPORT) (Warner Bros.). Directed by Orson Welles; produced by Louis Dolivet; original screenplay by Welles; photography by Jean Bourgoin; music by Paul Misraki; decor and costumes designed by Welles; edited by Renzo Lucidi. Released in Great Britain: September, 1955; 99 minutes. Cast: Welles, Paola Mori, Robert Arden, Michael Redgrave, Patricia Medina, Akim Tamiroff, Mischa Auer, Katina Paxinou, Peter Van Eyck, Suzanne Flon.

This film, Welles said, has been butchered more than any of his works, and it looks it. Originally told through a complex flashback technique developed and expanded from *Citizen Kane,* the distributors have tried to put it into chronological order, which is somewhat like starting *Kane* with his birth and ending with his death. This so violates Welles' dramatic conception that one must be extremely well acquainted with his style to approximate what the picture looked like when he finished it.

Confidential Report (the British release title) concerns an almost mythical, fantastically wealthy financier, Arkadin, who hires Guy Van Straaten, a cheap young American smuggler, to prepare a confidential file on his, Arkadin's, activities before 1927. Claiming to have forgotten his past, he fears it was shady and wants it concealed from his daughter, Raina, whom he loves with possessive passion. Van Straaten proceeds to gather information from various people—a tailor in Zurich, a flea-trainer in Copenhagen, a fence masquerading as an antiquary in Amsterdam, a Polish baroness —and discovers that Arkadin began his career as a member of a white slave gang run by the baroness. No sooner has Van Straaten found the necessary information than Arkadin's emissaries begin to kill off the people who could implicate their boss. Van Straaten soon realizes he too is on the list, and flies to tell Arkadin's beloved daughter the truth about her father. Failing to stop him, Arkadin commits suicide, but Raina leaves Van Straaten when she learns that he caused her father's death.

Toward the middle of the film, Arkadin tells a fable about a scorpion who wants to get across a lake and asks a passing frog to give him a lift. The frog refuses, thinking the scorpion may bite him. But the scorpion reassures him saying that if he were to bite him they would both die, for the scorpion would surely drown. So the frog agrees and they start across the lake. In the middle of their journey, however, the scorpion does give the frog a fatal sting. As they are going under, the frog asks the scorpion why he had done it since now he too was to die. And the scorpion answers, "I know, but I can't help it, it's in my character." Welles has developed this theme clearly from *Shanghai* through *Arkadin* into *Touch of Evil,* and, as he himself describes it: "The point of the story is to show that a man who declares himself in the face of the world, I am as I am, take it or leave it, that this man has a sort of tragic

dignity. It is a question of dignity, of verve, of courage, but doesn't justify him. The story serves a dramatic purpose but is not meant to justify Arkadin or to assassinate him.

"Arkadin uses barbarian intelligence for profit. He is a barbarian in conquest of European civilization. But only the morality of Arkadin is detestable. It is impossible to detest anyone who is passionate. Arkadin is a parasite who feeds off the corruption of the universe. He never seeks to justify himself; he is a Russian adventurer. Arkadin created himself in a corrupted world; he doesn't try to better that world, he is a prisoner of it."

This was the first Welles script since *Citizen Kane* to be based on his own story. It continues and elaborates the depiction of an evil and disintegrating world begun in *The Lady From Shanghai* (except that by now, even the frog, O'Hara before, is corrupt). The photography and what remains of Welles' original editing mark it as perhaps Welles' most ambitious film to date.

TOUCH OF EVIL

1958 TOUCH OF EVIL (Universal-International). Directed by Orson Welles; produced by Albert Zugsmith; screenplay by Welles, based on the novel, "Badge of Evil," by Whit Masterson; photography by Russell Metty; art direction by Alexander Golitzen and Robert Clatworthy; music by Henry Mancini; edited by Virgil W. Vogel and Aaron Snell. Released: February, 1958; 95 minutes. Cast: Welles, Charlton Heston, Janet Leigh, Joseph Calleia, Akim Tamiroff, Joanna Moore, Ray Collins, Dennis Weaver, Marlene Dietrich, Zsa Zsa Gabor; unbilled, Mercedes McCambridge, Joseph Cotten.

In *The Lady From Shanghai,* Welles dramatized the corruption of a crooked lawyer, in *Touch of Evil* he extends that world to portray a crooked policeman. "Hank Quinlan is the incarnation of everything I fight against politically and morally," Welles has said. "*Touch of Evil* is not critical of plutocracy but of the state, because the state is more powerful than money. I firmly believe that in the modern world we have to choose between the morality of the law and the morality of basic justice. That is to say between lynching someone and letting him go free. I prefer to let a murderer go free than to let the police arrest him by mistake." As morally detestable as Quinlan is ("a policeman may be everything but a judge") it is impossible to hate him: "Quinlan is sympathetic because of his humanity, not because of his ideas; because he's a man of heart, one can't help feeling sympathy for him."

The struggle in *Touch of Evil,* then, is between Quinlan and Vargas, who is "civilized and of a higher culture, he also understands what it means to be good." Vargas argues intelligently against Quinlan and gives us part of Welles' conception when he says: "The law protects the guilty as well as the innocent. It's only easy to be a policeman in a police state. That's the point, don't you see, who's the boss, the cop or the law?" But Quinlan is not judged in the final sense. Years ago he was a man of integrity and passion, but his wife was strangled, and although he knew the killer, could not prove it; he declared a personal war on crime. A pitiable figure who thereafter really believes he is "aiding justice," that all those people he "strapped in the electric chair" were "guilty, guilty, guilty," Quinlan never realizes he has no right to be judge and jury. Welles' epitaph in the last lines:

Schwartz: "He was a great detective . . ."
Tanya: "And a lousy cop."
Schwartz: "Is that all you have to say for him?"
Tanya: "He was some kind of a man. What does it matter what you say about people . . ."

And with this, Welles harks back twenty years to the end of *Citizen Kane* ("I don't think any word can explain a man's life") and we see vividly the consistency and unity of his view of the conflict between man's morality and his nature. The dark poetry of Orson Welles is a song of the damned, but it is one of humanity and compassion.

Welles inherited the novel, *Badge of Evil,* which Universal had already purchased for production. He "transformed the scenario and remodelled it to give it form," and was given carte blanche on the direction. On completion, the picture was taken away from him and a few scenes he hadn't directed were added and a few he had made were cut. The additions: four scenes between Vargas and his wife, particularly in the hotel lobby, but they only last about a minute of screen time. The cuts are more serious: a humorous scene between Quinlan and Vargas at the beginning, in which their characters are defined and they become enemies; a scene in which Menzies drives Susan Vargas to the hotel and explains to her how Quinlan saved his life years ago by stopping a bullet for him, thus crippling himself and necessitating the cane which explains Quinlan's line: "That's the second bullet I've stopped for you, partner"; scene in which Tanya and Quinlan spend the night together and he sees Vargas passing by the window but doesn't identify him with certitude, motivating his later line to Menzies: "I thought you were Vargas"; dialogue between Menzies and Vargas in which Vargas studies the recording machine used at the end and states his distaste for that part of his job. As Welles said: "They kept all the scenes of violence but cut out the moral ones." Also the credits were to have appeared at the end over the shot of Tanya disappearing into the dark instead of the beginning where they distract from the brilliant flow of the opening sequence.

Technically, *Touch of Evil* is Welles' most advanced film. All the innovations and experiments of twenty years work reach a climax in this picture: the opening shot, as the camera pulls back from a close-up of a homemade bomb to reveal a whole street, then tracks over and around, up and down, taking in the leading characters of the story—Vargas and his wife—immediately establishes the mood and feeling of the film, fluidly setting up the circumstances; this is one of his most successful and expressive shots. The murder of Grandi in the hotel room, with the rapid cutting intensified by the on-and-off blinking of the neon light is

The brothel: with Marlene Dietrich in *Touch of Evil*

Touch of Evil

a triumph of terror; the macabre scenes at the motel with the insane night watchman (whom Welles calls a "Shakespearian lunatic"); the sad decadence of the brothel with its tinkling pianola and its dreams of lost youth; the final sequence up and over the huge construction project, the filthy water under a murky, shadow-filled bridge; Welles himself as Quinlan, ugly, no longer young, a decaying mountain of flesh in a corrupt world he created. *Touch of Evil* is a masterpiece—a Goya-like vision of an infected universe.

Now completing a modern film version of *Don Quixote,* Welles at 46 is at the height of his creative powers. Asked of his future projects, he says, "My only project is to find money to work. I need money to make movies —film is the most expensive paintbox ever invented—if I were a writer or a painter I'd only need a pen or a couple of tubes of paint. I have made only eight films in twenty years. I will go wherever there is work."

Asked about the cinema in general: "I liked movies better before I started making them. Now I always hear the clapboard before every shot; all the magic is gone. I don't like the cinema except while I'm working; then it is necessary to know not to be timid with the camera, to do violence to it, to force it beyond its last boundaries, because it is a vile machine. What counts is the poetry."

Orson Welles, the showman and magician, is so dazzling a craftsman that too often people do not see the depth for the effect, the philosophy for the trick, the discipline for the bravura, the artistry for the flamboyance. But he is a master stylist of the American screen, and though he is too little appreciated or understood in his own country, one of its most representative artists.

1963 "THE TRIAL"
67 "CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT" (FALSTAFF)
68 "THE IMMORTAL STORY"

THE FILM PROJECTS OF ORSON WELLES

George Orson Welles was born May 6, 1915 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, son of Richard Head Welles, a sometime inventor, and Beatrice Ives Welles, a concert pianist. Since the age of five his career has zigzagged continuously from the theatre to radio to the movies to television and back again. A complete chronology of his life and work is available in *Cahiers du Cinema,* Vol. XV, No. 87, Sept., 1958. Some of his unrealized film projects include:

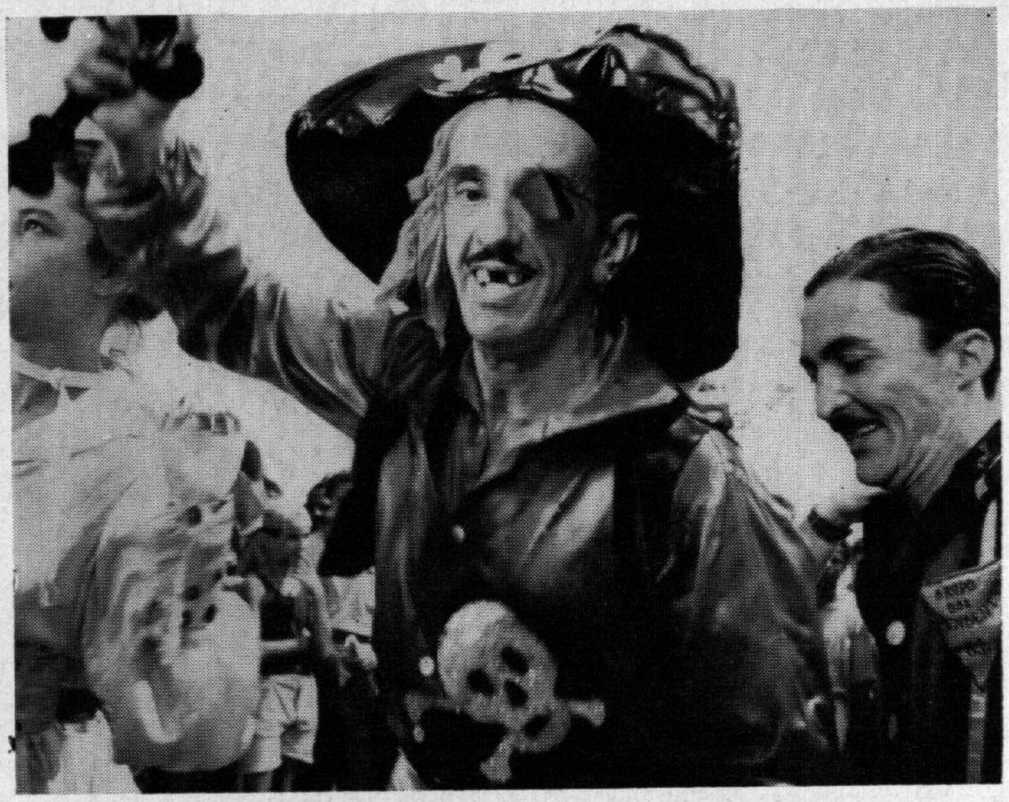
1939. HEART OF DARKNESS, after the Joseph Conrad novel, to have been Orson Welles' first film, was turned down by RKO Radio Pictures. Set in Africa, Welles was to have played Kurtz, a man living in the heart of the jungle, whose rescue is attempted by Marlow, the book's narrator and the character through whose eyes the entire film is seen. Marlow was not to appear in the picture itself (much like the unseen reporter in *Citizen Kane*). The war cut down many of Hollywood's overseas markets and RKO wanted to prune the over one million dollar budget considerably; the contracted Austrian star, Dita Parlo, had also been interned in France as an enemy alien.

1939. THE SMILER WITH A KNIFE, after the detective thriller by Cecil Day Lewis ("Nicholas Blake"). After *Heart of Darkness* had been turned down, George Schaefer, president of RKO, suggested to Welles that he do the thriller instead. Welles agreed with the stipulation that RKO let him do *Heart of Darkness* afterwards. For that he would write, direct, produce and act in *Smiler with a Knife* for nothing. The studio agreed but new conflicts arose on matters of casting, in particular the leading female role, for which Carole Lombard and Rosalind Russell were approached, neither of whom wished to take a chance on the untried film director. The starting date of December, 1939 passed and this project too was shelved.

1941. THE WAY TO SANTIAGO. A Mexican locale was the background for this project, written by Welles, and planned as his second film, to be made free, after *Citizen Kane.* Gregg Toland was to be the photographer and Dolores Del Rio was to star. Based on the novel by Calder Marshall, the film was never made although some locations were scouted by Toland.

1941. THE PICKWICK PAPERS. A projected adaptation by Welles of the novel by Charles Dickens, to star W. C. Fields as Pickwick. Not greeted with much enthusiasm by RKO.

1942. IT'S ALL TRUE. Extensive footage for this project was completed in Brazil, and the projected film consisted of three short stories. The first, filmed in color was the history of the "Samba," set in Rio de Janeiro during the yearly Carnival;



Shot for the carnival sequence of *It's All True,* 1942

the second, called "My Friend Benito," written by Robert Flaherty, dealt with bull-fighting in Mexico; the third, titled "Jangadieros," was filmed in Brazil and told of four fishermen who become national heroes. Welles and his crew spent four months traveling in Mexico, the Argentine, Brazil; thirty thousand feet of film were shot. During Welles' absence from Hollywood, RKO President Schaefer was removed and it was decided to recall Welles and scrap the Mexican project. Half a million dollars was spent on the film, which was edited into a rough cut; but RKO was adamant and the picture was left to the vaults. The footage, reportedly, has often appeared as stock-shots on various television shows.

1943. WAR AND PEACE. Alexander Korda announced that Welles was to direct his own adaptation of Tolstoy's novel to be produced by Korda himself.

1944. THE LANDRU STORY, based on the life of the notorious French murderer. Welles originally talked to Charlie Chaplin about making the picture in collaboration with him. Chaplin agreed but soon afterward decided he wanted to try the film on his own and paid Welles $25,000 for the story idea, which he later developed into *Monsieur Verdoux.*

1945-48. A series of projects to be produced with Alexander Korda, including CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, SALOME, CYRANO DE BERGERAC, AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS.

1949. ULYSSES. Welles spent a good deal of time with Ernest Borneman on the script of the Homer epic; the project foured back and forth for quite a while until Carlo Ponti and Dino di Laurentis announced plans to film the story with Kirk Douglas. Welles sent them his screenplay but they declined to use it, after which Welles announced immediate plans to proceed with the project himself. He was paid handsomely to desist.

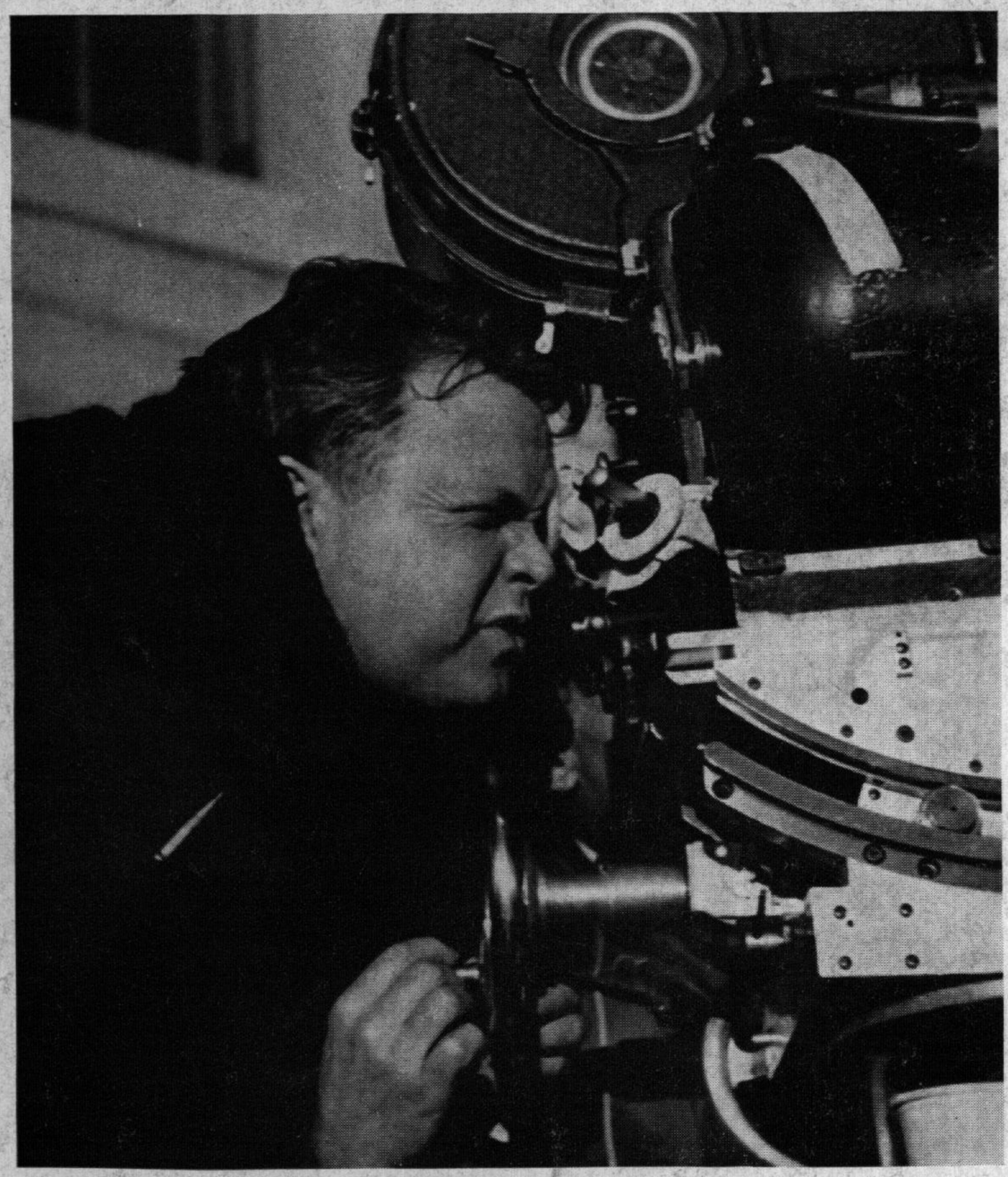
Other film projects to which Welles has devoted his time include: MOBY DICK, KING LEAR, RICHARD III, THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, MEASURE FOR MEASURE, and JULIUS CAESAR in modern dress.

THE FILM ROLES OF ORSON WELLES

The following is a list of Orson Welles' performances in feature motion pictures not directed by himself:

1943 JANE EYRE (Edward Rochester).
1944 FOLLOW THE BOYS (Welles sawed Marlene Dietrich in half as he had done in the *Mercury Wonder Show*).
1945 TOMORROW IS FOREVER (John MacDonald).
1947 BLACK MAGIC (Cagliostro).
1948 THE PRINCE OF FOXES (Cesar Borgia).
THE THIRD MAN (played and wrote the character of Harry Lime, only role he ever acted without make-up).
1950 THE BLACK ROSE (General Bayan).
1953 TRENT'S LAST CASE (Sigsbee Manderson).
THE ROYAL AFFAIRS OF VERSAILLES (Benjamin Franklin).
THE MAN, THE BEAST AND THE VIRTUE (the Beast).
1954 NAPOLEON (Hudson Lowe).
THERE CASES OF MURDER (Lord Mountdrago).
1955 TROUBLE IN THE GLEN (Sanin Cejador y Mengues).
1956 MOBY DICK (Father Mapple).
1957 MAN IN THE SHADOW (Virgil Renckler).
THE LONG HOT SUMMER (Varner).
1958 THE ROOTS OF HEAVEN (Cy Sedgwick).
1959 COMPLUSION (Jonathan Wilk).
1960 CRACK IN THE MIRROR (Hagolin and Lamorciere).
1961 FERRY TO HONG KONG (Captain Hart).
DAVID AND GOLIATH (King Saul).
AUSTERLITZ (Fulton).
LA FAYETTE (Benjamin Franklin).

(Note: All dates signify release dates rather than year of production.)



Above: during shooting of *Touch of Evil* Front cover: *Othello*