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Shadows and Bogeymen: Horror, Stylization and the Critical Reception of Orson Welles during the 1940s

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Abstract

The article discusses Welles's critical reception during the 1940s, and demonstrates the ways in which he was understood as a horror star. In the process, it argues that his films illustrate the close connection between the paranoid woman's films and the noir thriller, categories that were not seen as distinct during the 1940s but as part of a larger generic category: horror. The first section focuses on his early films, when the *New York Times* regarded him as a promising director, but during which there were also developing concerns about his failings. The second section moves on to examine his career in the mid 1940s, by which point reviewers had started to express contempt for him, and presented him as an egomaniac and an exhibitionist. Finally, the last section concentrates on his last three films of the period, films that were seen as symptomatic of his problems, but were viewed nostalgically as also demonstrating the talent that he had squandered. Finally, the conclusion considers Welles's attempted comeback with *Touch of Evil*, a film that sought to nostalgically play upon his 1940s persona as a specialist in horror.

Keywords: Critical reception, horror, Orson Welles, studies of film genre and authorship.

One of the problems with studying genres historically is the tendency to impose contemporary definitions onto the past. For example, as James Naremore has pointed out, film noir can be understood as 'an idea we have projected onto the past' rather than a coherent group of films [1]. To put it another way, film noir can be seen as 'a nostalgia for something that never existed' [2]. Of course, this is not to claim that it is illegitimate for critics to look back on previous periods and identify patterns and connections that may not have been noticed at the time. The original understandings of a text are no more or less 'real' than those of later periods. But there is a problem when the critics of a later period present their own interpretations as being inevitably present within earlier contexts of reception.

As a result, reception studies can help us to reconstruct the ways in which films have not only been generically identified in specific periods but also how generic categories were understood. For example, if the term film noir was not in operation during the period in which many of its classic examples were originally produced and consumed, these films did not exist as a coherent group that were simply waiting for a name. As this article will demonstrate, through an analysis of the reception of Orson Welles, one of the key figures associated with film noir, many of the films and features originally associated with noir were associated with horror during this period. This is not to claim that these films were *really* horror films but quite the reverse. It demonstrates that the meanings of generic terminologies change over time and that, as a result, the ways in which films are understood can change in different periods as they are classified in different ways.

As David Thomson has argued, Orson Welles became a hero to a particular generation of critics and filmmakers, 'who worshipped him and made him a kind of father' [3]. This generation emerged in the late 1950s and the 1960s, and 'in the 1961-62 Winter issue of *Sight and Sound*, *Citizen Kane* was voted top of the top ten', a position which it still held in 2002 [4]. However, while Welles is remembered today for *Citizen Kane*, and often presented as an artistic genius who was cruelly used by Hollywood, he was seen very differently in the 1940s, in the years between his heroic arrival in Hollywood and his eventual, ignoble retreat to Europe. Even the *New York Times*, which was one of his staunchest supporters during the wrangles over *Citizen Kane*, quickly began to criticize him for squandering his talent and for being a shameless exhibitionist who dominated his films to their detriment. As a result, *Citizen Kane* did not define his image during the 1940s, but was often understood in terms of his larger reputation. In other words, his fame was constructed very differently in this period, a period in which he was more famous as a horror star rather than an artistic genius.

In short, he was not only understood as a key figure within the 1940s horror cycle but as a star whose image was strongly associated with horror, an association which was not only linked to his activities as an actor but also with his directorial style. Nor did Welles's star image simply encompass his roles as film actor and director but it was also produced across a range of different media, including film, theatre and radio. Indeed it is important to remember that, during the 1940s, Welles was at least as well known for his work in radio as in cinema.

Furthermore, his reputation as a horror star, and his self-promotion as a genius, were not necessarily at odds with one another during the 1940s. As Thomson claims, Welles had held a notion of himself as special since early childhood, and he had come 'away from family life with the blissful notion that he was not only brilliant, a genius even, but perhaps a changeling – *that touch of magic*' [5]. Thomson therefore argues that Welles was 'fascinated by power', particularly the 'manipulation' and 'command' that is 'the magician's power' [6]. While this could be one of his most fascinating and seductive of qualities, it also resulted in what many 1940s critics saw as his two greatest, and contradictory, failings. On the one hand, it resulted in the kinds of grandstanding that the *New York Times* would come to condemn as bombastic and shameless exhibitionism: "When the demon of showmanship was on him", said MacLiammóir, "he would be intolerable; something dark and brutal swept through him when a stupid audience surrounded him, and he would use them mercilessly, without shame or repulsion" [7]. On the other, it would also lead to the inverse, and he was often accused of being 'too lofty to beseech or woo an audience' [8].

However, if these supposed failings seem contradictory, they were two sides of the mysterious Byronic male to which Welles was repeatedly drawn as a character. Indeed, as Thomson notes, he had a fascination with these figures since childhood, when he had adapted and directed a version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1925, before he had even reached his teenage years. Even once he had become a professional man of the theatre, he had plans to stage a version of *Trilby*, George du Maurier's famous tale of the hypnotic Svengali. Furthermore, the play that would make his name, and take the New York theatre world by storm, was a sensational version of *Macbeth*, which featured a cast of black actors from Harlem, and turned the tale into a mysterious story of Voodoo enchantment. The play was not only a 'sensational event' but it 'made Welles known nationally' [9], although his greatest fame was not to be earned from the theatre but on radio.

In 1937, Welles began to play The Shadow on the popular radio series. The Shadow was a crime fighter who was created by Harry Charlton. This character created 'an identity for the previously anonymous narrator of "The Detective Story Hour"', a radio program that operated as 'a cheap promotional showcase for Street and Smith Publishers' *Detective Story Magazine*' [10]. *Detective Story Magazine* was itself a classic pulp publication, but the radio character proved so popular that Street and Smith gave him his own magazine, the first issue of which was published in 1931. The Shadow was an immense success and provided the inspiration for numerous superheroes, including Batman and Superman.

Like these later superheroes, The Shadow was a dual personality, whose associations with gothic horror were numerous. Not only were he and his partner 'an updating of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's dynamic duo, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson' [11], but his dual identity made him 'a kind of Jekyll and Hyde personality', particularly as his duality was not just a disguise but the product of 'a dark compulsion in which he takes sadistic glee – somewhat like a feeding Dracula'. As a result, his 'signature laugh is that of a dungeon master' and he 'toys with and terrifies his criminal victims before handing them over (sometimes, it seems, reluctantly) to the authorities'. As Hand puts it, 'the superheroic adventures of *The Shadow* were frequently in the world of the monstrous' [12], while Server claims that he 'existed somewhere near the foggy gaslit world of Sherlock Holmes and Count Dracula' [13].

The Shadow was a major success on radio and while 'Welles was not the first, nor was he the most renowned Shadow, ... he was unquestionably the most famous actor to play the role' [14]. Furthermore, it would be 'his best known role, until the release of *The Third Man* (1949) fixed him in the public mind as Harry Lime'. It is therefore important to remember that it was radio, and not cinema, which was 'the pre-eminent communication media' of the mid-twentieth century, and that by the 1950s nearly every household in the country owned a set [15].

However, despite the importance of *The Shadow*, it was another radio show that would earn Welles levels of popular fame virtually unparalleled by any star of film or radio at the time and so consolidate his image as a horror star. In 1938, Welles launched his *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* and, highly significantly, he chose *Dracula* as its first production, a classic horror story that allowed him to weave his hypnotic magic through tension and terror. Nor was this the only time he turned to such materials, and while *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, and its follow-ups *The Mercury Summer Theatre* and *The*

Campbell Playhouse, all sought to associate themselves with the literary classics, they also featured numerous tales of gothic intrigue and outright horror: *The 39 Steps*, *The Immortal Sherlock Holmes*, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Hitch-Hiker*, *Jane Eyre*, *Moby Dick*, *Rebecca*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Peter Ibbetson*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Magnificent Ambersons* and, most famously, *The War of the Worlds*.

Although *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* was not a particularly popular show, its broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* became infamous when the audience that was listening to *The Charlie MacCarthy Show* on another station became bored by 'a less than compelling singer' and 'switched stations' to Welles's broadcast [16]. Having missed the beginning of the show, they were greeted by what appeared to be an 'interrupted programme' and 'word that Martians had landed and were bent on mayhem'. While some recognised the artifice, others did not and took to the streets in panic. The event proved a national sensation and 'it made its actor-director, the twenty-one-year-old Orson Welles, an international celebrity' [17]. Although the reaction was largely due to accident and coincidence, it was also partly caused by Welles's story telling technique, which Hand has described as 'a triumphant example of radio form' that 'exploits the listener's imagination in the way that only radio can: the mixture of anchorman in the studio, reporters and eyewitnesses at the scene of the incidents give the play not merely a technical verisimilitude, but a sense of global crisis in the imagination of the listener' [18]. Nor is the show's status as 'a great moment of popular horror' simply an accidental one: it 'was deliberately broadcast, after all, on the eve of Halloween', and the show ended with the claim that it had been '*The Mercury Theatre's* own radio version of dressing up in a sheet and jumping out of a bush and saying "Boo!"' [19]

As a result of this newly won celebrity, Welles soon found himself being wooed by Hollywood, which now had an image of him as both a master illusionist and a horror star. Nor does he seem to have resisted this image, and he planned to adapt Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as his first film. Not only does the story feature the kinds of gothic melodrama that had fascinated him in the past, but it was also planned as an experiment in subjective storytelling, in which the camera would stand in for Marlowe as he moved up river, travelling deeper and deeper into the jungle, in his search for the mysterious figure of Kurtz.

By the time Welles arrived in Hollywood, then, he had an established reputation as a purveyor of horror and it was this reputation that shaped the expectations of the studios that employed him, the critics who commented upon his films and the audiences that watched them. The following article will therefore explore Welles's reputation as a horror star during the 1940s through an analysis of the critical reception of his films from *Citizen Kane* to *Macbeth*, and will thus serve as a contribution to the body of reception studies work which has explored the ways in which circulating discourses (such as those within film reviews) can contribute to the 'reputation building' of major canonized figures (for instance, Robert E. Kapsis on Hitchcock, Barbara Klinger on Sirk and Charles J. Maland on Chaplin) [20]. In order to do this, the following analysis will concentrate on reviews published in the *New York Times*, although other publications will also be referenced to provide some sense of context and debate. During the period, the *New York Times* was not only the most prestigious and respected newspaper, but its screen editor and foremost film critic, Bosley Crowther, was a figure of immense importance and influence [21]. Furthermore, under Crowther's editorship, the newspaper's film critics occupied a position between the opposed poles of the pure gaze and popular taste [22], without simply becoming a middlebrow publication [23]. On the contrary, its critical judgements represented the standards of legitimate taste, the standards of cultural respectability and authority. The focus on the *New York Times* is therefore useful given that its critics' positions can hardly be dismissed as arbitrary or idiosyncratic, but also given that the reviews provide a way of mapping the broader social field: as the voice of legitimate taste, the newspaper's critical judgements were necessarily defined against the opposed poles of the pure gaze and popular taste, opposed poles that structured the field of cultural tastes.

Through the reviews published in the *New York Times*, the article will argue that the reception of Welles's films demonstrate that both the gothic (or paranoid) woman's film and the noir thriller were not simply seen as closely related categories but were understood as being examples of a larger generic category: horror. The first section will therefore focus on his early films, when papers such as the *New York Times* regarded him as one of the most interesting and promising directors working in Hollywood, but during which there were also developing concerns about his failings. The second section then moves on to examine his career in the mid 1940s, by which point reviewers had not only lost interest in his films but even demonstrated contempt for them, a contempt that was based on their sense that he was an egomaniac and an exhibitionist. Finally, the last section concentrates on his last three films of the period as he lost his hold in Hollywood, films that were seen as symptomatic of his problems, but were also regarded almost nostalgically as films that also demonstrated the talent that he had squandered over the decade. Finally, the conclusion considers Welles's attempted comeback with *Touch of Evil* in 1958, a film that sought to nostalgically play upon his 1940s persona

as a specialist in horror.

'Well-Fitted to the Welles Technique': Form, Content and Early Promise

As is now well known, *Citizen Kane* divided the critics on its original release in the United States. For example, *Variety* was generally positive and it claimed that Welles had not only 'nearly scared the country half to death' on the radio but proved that 'the screen [was] as effective for his unique showmanship as radio and theatre' [24]. It therefore praised the film as one that demonstrated that Welles was 'a master of the technique and mechanics of his medium', the *New Republic* complained that it was Welles's obsession with technique which meant that the film would only please someone 'who gets excited about how things can be done in the movies' [25]. It therefore maintained that the film was uneven and that 'between the dramatic high points' all that 'goes on is talk and more talk'. Welles was therefore seen as being responsible for both the strengths and weaknesses of the film so that 'his presence in the picture is always a vital thing, an object of fascination to the beholder'; but it is also the only thing that holds it together: 'In fact, without him the picture would have fallen into its various component pieces of effect, allusion and display'. In this way, the review already contained what would become the key complaints about Welles later in the decade: that he was an egomaniac, who had little interest in his films except as vehicles for his own self-promotion, so that they had more concern with style than with substance.

However, while the *New York Times* would later come to claim that Welles had squandered his early promise as a director through terms that were strikingly similar to those of the *New Republic*, its initial review of *Citizen Kane* declared the film to be a masterpiece, which not only demonstrated Welles's talent as a director but also suggested the enormity of his potential. As a result, the review was eager to defend the film from attacks by the Hearst Empire, and claimed that while the film had been subjected to a 'withering spotlight as no other film has ever been before', the attacks upon it by the Hearst press were unfounded, although its virtues were so considerable that it actually deserved the attention to which it had been subjected [26]. Indeed, the review stated that 'suppression of this film would have been a crime', and that it was not only 'the most surprising and cinematically exciting motion picture to be seen here in many a moon', but that it even 'comes close to being the most sensational film ever made in Hollywood'.

If this is great praise for a first film by a young director, Welles was also praised for the scale of his ambitions, and for his experimental and inventive approach. Ironically, of course, it was these very features that would later be criticised so that his ambition came to be seen as pomposity, and his stylistic invention was claimed to amount to little more than precocious affectations that were wildly in excess of his film's ostensive subject. The review of *Citizen Kane* therefore idealises Welles as a man who 'doesn't do things by halves':

Being a mercurial fellow, with a frightening theatrical flair, he moved right into the movies, grabbed the medium by the ears and began to toss it around with the dexterity of a seasoned veteran. Fact is, he handled it with more verve and inspired ingenuity than any of the elder craftsmen have exhibited in years.

Theatricality is here seen as a sign of drama and showmanship, although it would later suggest that the director was merely a 'ham' of the worst sort. Thus, while some questions are raised about the film, it is Welles's theatricality that is seen as its saving grace: 'Isn't it enough that he presents a theatrical character with consummate theatricality?'

If Welles is a figure who 'doesn't do anything by halves', the medium is seen as perfectly suited to him and it is claimed that, with the help of Gregg Toland, he had 'found in the camera the perfect instrument to encompass his dramatic energies and absorb his prolific ideas. Upon the screen he discovered an area large enough for his expansive whims to have free play'. Again, these issues of scale would later become a problem, but here the result is generally seen as positive: 'he has made a picture of tremendous and overpowering scope' and one that 'really moves'. It is therefore interesting that it is Kane himself who comes to represent what would later be seen as Welles's own failings. Here, Kane is not only referred to as a 'titanic egomaniac' but also as a man who is 'consumed by his terrifying selfishness'.

Furthermore, it is also Welles's handling of this character that becomes the main point of contention in the review, and it is stated that 'this corner frankly holds considerable reservation' about 'the story which [Welles] tells'. The film is therefore championed 'in spite of some disconcerting lapses and strange ambiguities in the creation of the principal character', so that it 'fails to provide a clear picture of the character and [his] motives'. If Kane is therefore 'consumed by

his terrifying selfishness', the review also asks 'just exactly what eats him'. Even 'the final, poignant identification of "Rosebud" sheds little more than a vague, sentimental light upon his character' so that in the final analysis 'Kubla Kane is still an enigma – a very confused one'.

If Welles's problem is that 'his abundance of imagery is so great that it sometimes gets in the way of his logic', the review does not present this as a major problem, or rather it suggests that it can be forgiven in a first time director. While the account of Kane is seen as unsatisfactory, it is claimed that one can 'check that off to the absorption of Mr. Welles in more visible details' and the final verdict is that 'you shouldn't miss this film'.

It is therefore with *The Magnificent Ambersons* that the *New York Times* started to express serious doubts about Welles's judgement as a filmmaker, and started to identify Welles as a director for whom style was not matched by substance. Indeed, it is not merely that his films are claimed to lack depth but that he is seen as having very little interest in anything other than an exhibitionist display of his own talent. Again, however, this was more generous than the *New Republic*, which claimed that 'the story is told as badly as would seem possible', so that the film is claimed to be 'burdensome', 'heavy' and 'dull' and to move 'haltingly and clumsily' [27]. Again the complaint is that the film 'stutters and stumbles' between flashy moments so that, in the dull passages in between, 'for something to do, you count the shadows'.

In contrast, then, the *New York Times* stressed that, while Welles has 'only two pictures to his credit', he has 'demonstrated beyond doubt that the screen is his medium' [28]. Again, he is praised for the scope and ambition of his filmmaking, which 'has an eloquent, if at times grandiose, flair which only the camera can capture'. As a result, while the review of *Citizen Kane* saw the ambition as an unambiguously positive feature, the review of *The Magnificent Ambersons* was less supportive and expressed concerns at the director's tendency towards the grandiose. Indeed, the review identifies severe problems with his filmmaking. For example, it is claimed that, despite 'his remarkable talent', Welles 'still apparently refuses to make concessions to popular appeal', and that his talent is not enough in itself: the new film, 'however magnificently executed, is a relentlessly sombre drama on a barren theme'.

While the *New York Times* valued films that had socially significant themes, it was also quite happy to praise directors such as Hitchcock who provided stylish entertainment, although it did complain when Hitchcock's attraction to the tour de force slipped into mere gimmickry [29]. Unfortunately, its complaint about Welles was that he seemed to exhibit the worse of both worlds: he not only 'refuses to make concessions to popular appeal' but also chooses subjects of little real significance and only seems interested in projects to the extent that they can showcase his talents [30], a situation that results in flashy filmmaking that is little different from Hitchcock's tendency towards gimmickry.

The *New York Times* review is therefore particularly harsh about the subject of the film, particularly given the historical situation in 1942:

In a world brimful of momentous drama begging serious screen treatment, it does seem that Mr. Welles is imposing when he asks moviegoers to become emotionally disturbed over the decline of such minor league American aristocracy as the Ambersons represented in the late Eighteen Seventies.

Thus, while 'it must be admitted that [Welles] has accomplished with marked success what he set out to do', his ambitions are seen as misdirected, being more concerned with questions of style rather than substance: 'All in all, "The Magnificent Ambersons" is an exceptionally well-made film, dealing with a subject scarcely worth the attention which has been lavished on it'.

If *The Magnificent Amberson's* is attacked for its lack of significance, *Journey into Fear* receives no such criticism. On the contrary, the film is judged as an entertainment and, as such, it is generally regarded as a 'superior' film in this context [31]. One reason for this may have been that although Welles appeared in the film and was involved in both its scriptwriting and production, he was not credited with its direction. Some debate still exists on what, if any, involvement Welles had in directing this film but Thomson claims that, despite RKO's expectations, Welles 'never intended to direct it himself' [32], and it seems that he was more interested in moving on to his ill-fated production, *It's All True*. None the less, the association with Welles does seem to have been significant and while the film is said to be less 'ambitious than any of the company's previous productions', it is 'never the less many notches above the garden variety regularly sent to Broadway' [33]. More specifically, the film is identified as an adaptation of 'Eric Ambler's thriller', although the association

between thriller and horror is clearly in the description of it as 'an uneven but generally imaginative and exciting tale of terror'. Nor is this designation a secondary identification. On the contrary, the film is only referred to as a 'thriller' once, but is frequently referred to in terms that associate it with horror. For example, the 'frightened protagonist' of the film is an 'American ordnance expert', whose 'fright ... is constantly underscored by an uncanny use of light and distorted shadows in the ratty corridors of the ship; in a blacked-out cabin one senses the terror of the hidden expert as footsteps echo from the pitch-black screen'. Similarly, *Time* described it as a story of 'eerie adventures' in which Welles is able to create 'terror and suspense' through 'tricks of bizarre lighting and ominous disappearances' that show that he is 'a careful student of Alfred Hitchcock' [34].

Much of this description might equally apply to film noir, and the film has been read as an early example of noir, but not only were most of the films that would later be identified as noir categorized as horror during the 1940s [35], but the term 'uncanny' also provides a different quality to its frightening passages than is common in contemporary understandings of the thriller. Indeed, not only is a reference to 'fear' a crucial element in the title of the film, but this is also a frequent reference point in the *New York Times* review. The review notes that the film features 'a melodramatic climax that is breathless and intense' and it is described as 'a tense invitation to heart failure by fright' [36]. However, while the review also claimed that the film is made up of a series of 'strange and indeterminate characters' who are just 'the odd sort of flotsam that melodrama is made of', it is also suggested that they are responsible for 'the lapses in the film': 'Vividly executed, they become too much of a good thing', particularly when the director 'sometimes lets them get out of hand in irrelevant talk'.

If the film is strongly associated with horror through these various references, it should also be stressed that this is not seen as strange for a Welles film. On the contrary, while the studio identified Norman Foster as the director, the film is described as having 'a story well fitted to the Welles technique' so that 'either directly or indirectly it is Welles's fine flair for the melodramatic that is stamped on every scene'. The review even implies doubt about the authorship of the film, and suggests that Welles may have had a greater hand in the direction than the credits suggest. It also implies that, even if Welles did not direct the film, Norman Foster is not an original author but rather an able 'pupil' whose 'style is still more derivative of Welles than it is vigorously individual', even if he is still 'a director worth watching closely'. In other words, as the references to the 'shadows' in *The Magnificent Ambersons* also illustrate, Welles's style was seen as one strongly associated with the gothic and horrific.

'Huge Burlesque': Over-Indulgent, Over-Bearing and Over-Blown

By the time of *Jane Eyre* in 1944, the critics had clearly lost patience with Welles, and even the *New York Times* condemned him both for overacting and for selfishly dominating the film. Nor were these problems seen as a simple misstep by Welles but rather as the culmination of his tendencies throughout the period, a culmination that led to the most overt identification yet of Welles as a horror star. For example, the *New York World-Telegraph* described the film as 'a horror drama' in which 'the terrors are genuine and spring directly from the story' [37], but this generic designation was not seen as out of character with the reputation of its male star. On the contrary, while it was claimed that 'horror is the tone that dominates the picture', and while it was also acknowledged that Welles is not officially identified as the director, the review also maintains that 'the Welles spirit and method that typified his earlier pictures dominates the writing, direction and photography of this one'. Nor was the *New York Herald-Tribune* the only newspaper to identify the film as horror. The *New York Sun* referred to it as 'a dark and melodramatic tale', in which the atmosphere and settings were both 'eerie' and 'terrifying', and it claimed that overall 'the film is reminiscent of "Rebecca" and often of "Wuthering Heights"' [38]. Similarly, while the *New York Herald Tribune* described the film as having a 'grand guignol atmosphere' [39], the *New York Daily News* demonstrated the closeness between the terms thriller and horror in the period through its claim that audiences 'may thrill to the melodramatic happenings' and 'chill to the mysterious experiences to which Jane is subjected' [40].

However, the reviewers disagreed over whether the film remained faithful to Charlotte Brontë's novel, and while the *New York Daily News* maintained that 'the essentials of the Brontë story are retained in the film' [41], the *New York World-Telegraph* begged to differ and stated that it 'is not the Jane Eyre that most of us carry in our memories' [42]. However, there was little debate over Welles's performance, which was almost unanimously condemned as overdone. The reviewer for the *New York Sun* was probably the most generous, and while she acknowledged that Welles was 'overacting' in the film, she also claimed that his 'overacting suits well the part of Rochester' [43]. However, the reviewer for the *New York*

Daily News was far less forgiving, and while she maintained that 'the cast is excellent', she singled Welles out as the one exception [44]. Moreover, while she claims that he 'overplays Rochester', she also maintains that he is hopelessly miscast in the role: 'Almost any other actor in Hollywood, with the possible exception of Frank Sinatra, would have been a better choice for the role of the master of Thornfield'. Given the fact that the reference here is to the Sinatra of the 1940s, when he was a rather callow teen idol, this is a fairly damning criticism. Similarly, the *New York Newspaper PM* claims that Welles 'strikes high Victorian attitudes with a deep seriousness that few other actors would entertain except as part of a huge burlesque' [45], while the *New York Herald Tribune* simply complained that he 'plays Rochester a bit too dynamically for comfort' and that he 'pitches his performance too high at the start and has a hard time making it stand up, when he is coping with his crazy wife, trying to marry his governess and finally finding happiness through ultimate physical misfortune' [46].

Even the *New York Times* found itself critical of Welles in this film, and its main objection was to the ways in which Welles dominates the film. As a result, the presence of Welles is said to overshadow Jane, who 'is strangely obscured behind the dark cloud of Rochester's personality' in the film and becomes 'a sort of bloodless Trilby from the time Rochester sweeps upon the scene' [47]. From that moment on, Jane becomes little more than 'a hypnotic under his Svengali spell, and exists in a world of shapeless horrors which are governed entirely by him'. It is therefore asserted that the early part of the film, before he enters the action, is by far the best and 'seems remote from the rest of the picture'.

It is also suggested that Welles's presence 'accounts for some distortion of Miss Bronte's full-blooded book':

No depths of consuming passion are plumbed very diligently in this film. No haunting pathos pervades it. The producers had little time for that. With Orson Welles playing Rochester, the anguished hero of the book, they mainly gave way to the aspects of morbid horror to be revealed. They tossed Mr. Welles most of the story and let him play it in his hot, fuliginous style.

As a result, not only is Welles's presence seen as diverting attention from both the female lead and the narrative concerns, but he is also directly associated with the horror genre, and crucial to the film's designation as 'a romantic horror film'. However, it is not his association with horror itself that is seen as the problem, but rather his excessive egotism: 'His Rochester has the studied arrogance, the restless moods of a medieval king carrying his own soul on a halberd and demanding everyone look at it'. However, even then, if his 'ferocious performance doesn't limn Miss Bronte's hero', he does create 'a figure that is interesting to observe'. As a result, while Welles is condemned for his selfish attention seeking, he is still seen as worth watching and, while it is implied that the film could have been so much more, the film is presented as having 'continuous vitality as a romantic horror tale'. In other words, the film is claimed to provide good entertainment value, although it is seen as further evidence of Welles's decline, and of the way in which he was wasting his potential to satisfy his ego.

If Welles was therefore most directly identified with horror during this middle period of the 1940s, it is also the period during which he was most closely associated with the woman's film. While reviewers identified *Jane Eyre* as a horror film, they also saw it as a romantic film, and one that was 'reminiscent of "Rebecca"'. It is therefore interesting that his next two ventures were a straight forward 'weepie', *Tomorrow is Forever*, and *The Stranger*, a film that has been often identified as an example of film noir but was clearly identified as horror in the period and can be equally clearly seen as an example of the types of horror more recently referred to as the gothic (or paranoid) woman's film.

Tomorrow is Forever is therefore described, by the *New York Times*, as a film in which 'Mr Welles comes back into the life of his wife, Claudette Colbert, after presumably having been killed in the First World War' and 'persuades her, with some difficulty, to be content with her new husband, George Brent' [48]. In this case, the film itself is seen as a problem: 'a more, over-wrought and hackneyed telling ... has not been thrown on the screen since the silent days'. As a result, while Welles 'dominates the show' once again, it is stressed that 'the best way to view the performance of Orson Welles ... is as a studied display of overacting calculated to disguise an empty script'. In other words, in a choice between Welles's shameless scene stealing and the film's sickly sweet 'Hollywood taffy', the star is given the benefit of the doubt. But even in this context, he cannot be taken very seriously, or even in very large doses, and it is therefore claimed that his mission is not that difficult: 'Muffled in a beard ... stumbling with physical mutilations and muttering gutturally, he is plainly hard to take'.

If Welles was seen as being at odds with the story of *Tomorrow is Forever*, and his overacting can be seen as an attempt

to 'disguise' its postero script, he was seen as being back on home territory in *The Stranger*, a film that was not only identified as horror but again demonstrates the close relationship between this term and the thriller on the one hand, and the gothic (or paranoid) woman's film on the other. As the *New York Times* notes, the story opens when 'a G-man blows into [a small Connecticut] town' in the hope of unveiling 'the big brain behind the Nazi torture camps', a figure who has managed to disguise himself and is now 'living successfully incognito' within the community [49]. This 'erstwhile monster' is played by Welles and 'the first thing you know he is plotting the murder of his knowledgeable wife'. In other words, although the film is usually read as a classic example of film noir today, or simply as a thriller, its narrative focus becomes that of the gothic (or paranoid) woman's film, a group of films that not only feature women threatened and tormented by their lovers, but that overtly revolve around the problem of female knowledge [50]. The women in these films are not only the chief investigators within the narrative but the films often explicitly focus on issues of repressed or forbidden knowledge. Furthermore, as *Jane Eyre* makes clear, the gothic (or paranoid) woman's films were usually identified as horror within the period [51].

Welles's presence confirms this association with horror and the film is described, by the *New York Times*, as one that has been 'custom-made' for him as an actor who 'plainly gets much pleasure out of playing villainous roles', given 'his choice and performance of bogey-men in the past' [52]. Of course, the bogey-man is not just any villain but the monster of childhood horror stories. Furthermore, as a director and star who 'does nothing by halves', this 'custom-made role' is one in which he plays 'the inventor of [the Nazi's] monstrous-murder machine' – 'Nothing less, mind you!' – a role that is claimed to even exceed his previous ambitions and demonstrate 'beyond any question that he loves to scare people to death'.

However, these ambitions are seen as the main problem within the film, and both the film and his performance are seen as ludicrously over-the-top. Within a short time of the film's opening, 'his nostrils begin to flare and his eyes pop and roll' so that, by the end of the film, he is accused of 'puffing wildly and sweating at every pore'. As a result, despite the claim that he has 'directed his camera for some striking effects, with light and interesting angles much relied upon in his technique', his performance is described as 'one of the least convincing features of the film', a 'boyishly bad acting job in a role which is highly incredible'.

Furthermore, while the film is described as 'far fetched' and as having both a poor script and a 'silly performance from Loretta Young as the killer's wife', it is also alleged that 'the whole construction of the tale relieves very soon all the mystery and suspense that such a story should have' by revealing the identity of the villain. As a result, it is claimed that the 'atom bomb newsreels on the same bill are immeasurably more frightening'. In this way, the review presents the film as an exercise in overstatement, in which Welles's 'boyishly bad acting job' comes to stand for the whole: while Welles's early career was seen as the work of a boy wonder, his youth is turned against him in the reception of *The Stranger*, which is ultimately presented as a symptom of immaturity and inexperience, and as aspiring to be that which it is not equipped to attain.

However, the film represented a turning point in the reception of Welles's films and, if this film represented the low-point in the *New York Times's* estimation of his work as a filmmaker, it was positively received by James Agee in the *Nation*, who regarded its lack of ambition as a relief. Agee had long been critical of Welles and he therefore notes his irritation at the ways in which Welles has been 'fatuously overrated as a "genius"' [53]. None the less, he also acknowledges that while 'Welles never was and never will be a "genius", ... he is just as gifted as he ever was', and that the film is a welcome break from the director's bombastic self-promotion:

In this film he is not using the most adventurous, not to say florid, of his gifts, but neither is he indulging any of his weaknesses. There is nothing in this picture that even appears to be 'important' or 'new', but there is nothing pretentious or arty either, and although I have occasionally seen atmospheres used in films in far grander poetic contexts, I don't think I have seen them more pleasantly or expertly appreciated. In a quite modest way the picture is, merely, much more graceful, intelligent and enjoyable than most other movies; I think that anyone capable of looking at it without bias will find plenty of reason to be glad that Welles is back at work.

In other words, the film is praised for its lack of pretension in which 'Mr. Welles takes a reasonable amount of care not to insist [that it] is an "art" movie'.

'Our Old and Perennially Villainous Friend': Nostalgia, Affection and the Promise of Redemption

Ironically, although Welles virtually disowned *The Stranger*, and although the film registered the low point in the *New York Times's* evaluation of his work as a filmmaker, it was actually one of the few Welles projects to actually make money during the decade. However, it was a case of too little and too late and, by the late 1940s, he was out of favour in Hollywood. Ironically, but perhaps not too surprisingly, this was the period in which his critical reception seemed to improve, although it might be more accurate to say that reviews tended to comment on his films nostalgically. Instead of expressing contempt for Welles's supposed self-indulgence, the reviews tended to view his films as offering glimmers of what might have been.

Nowhere is this clearer than the *New York Times's* review of *The Lady from Shanghai*, which claims that 'the Wellesian ability to direct a good cast against fascinating backgrounds has never been better displayed' [54]. It even goes so far as to maintain that, in certain ways, 'it might almost match "Citizen Kane"'. The first section of the film is therefore praised for its depiction of the 'murderous hates and jealousies' of its key characters, and the 'sheer visual modelling of burning passions in faces, forms and attitudes, galvanized within picturesque surroundings'. As a result, the 'build up ... of the tensions among these four people, in particular ... is tremendously captivating' and 'in the subtle suggestion of corruption, of selfishness and violence in the group, intermingled with haunting wisps of pathos, Mr. Welles could not have done a better job'.

However, if the film is seen as evidence of Welles's prodigious talent, it is also seen as evidence of his tragic failings:

For a fellow who has as much talent with a camera as Orson Welles and whose powers of pictorial invention are as fluid and as forcible as his, this gentleman certainly has a strange way of marring his films with sloppiness which he seems to assume his dazzling exhibitions of skill will camouflage.

Welles is therefore depicted as a great man tragically at war with his own limitations so that 'no sooner has Mr. Welles, the director, deposited [his cast] in literal San Francisco after a particularly vivid voyage up the Mexican coast than Mr. Welles, the author, goes sloppy and leaves him in the lurch'. Of course, again this suggests that Welles is an egomaniac, who tries to control too many aspects of the film, and actually ends up unable to control himself: 'As producer of the picture, Mr. Welles might better have fired himself – as author, that is – and hired somebody to give Mr. Welles, director, a better script'.

Nor do the problems end there. The plot becomes 'thoroughly confused and baffling', so that the tension achieved at the start 'is recklessly permitted to drain off in a sieve of tangled plot and in a lengthy court-room argument which has little save a few visual stunts'. Furthermore, while the cast, and Welles's handling of them, are generally well regarded by the *New York Times* reviewer, Welles's own performance is seen as seriously damaging to the film, and it is argued that 'he could have done much better than use himself in the key role':

For no matter how much you dress him up in rakish yachting caps and open shirts, Mr. Welles simply hasn't the capacity to cut a romantic swath. And when he adorns his characterization with a poetic air and an Irish brogue, which is painfully artificial, he makes himself – and the film – ridiculous.

Thus, although the film reminds one of Welles's promise as a director, the film is seen as a victim of the familiar problems, in which Welles's extravagant style fails to make up for the film's ultimate lack of substance, so that 'his exhibitionist cover-ups of the story's general untidiness' give 'ironic point to his first line: "When I start out to make a fool of myself, there's very little can stop me"'.

Unlike many of his earlier films, *Lady from Shanghai* is not directly associated with horror, except for references to it as 'creepy' [55] or as displaying the occasional 'weird glimpse of real black magic' [56]. Instead it is simply described as 'a terrific piece of melodramatic romance' [57]. This is partly because the film was made in 1948, when the thriller had begun to be distinguished from horror [58], but there is no sense that the film was identified with a new category of films that critics had yet to name as 'film noir'. On the contrary, although the *New York Times* review clearly identifies Hayworth's Elsa as an 'enchantress who is a sleek, seductive thing' that has 'mesmerized' Welles's sailor [59], it does not identify this female character with a new type of woman (the femme fatale) or as the product of a new type of film (film noir). As the term 'enchantress' makes clear, she is instead associated with the past through fairy tale and myth, and is later referred to as 'the Circe in the swinish company' aboard the ship.

However, the reviews for both *The Third Man* and *Macbeth* would re-emphasize Welles's association with horror. For example, elements of Carol Reed's film are referred to as 'grotesque' and 'eerie' [60], and, in the *New York Times*, it is also described as 'a ghostly Graham Greene story' in which the soundtrack is claimed to feature 'haunting music' with 'weird refrains', and to be one of the film's most distinctive features:

Mr. Reed ... must be credited with the brilliant and triumphant device of using the music of a zither as the sole musical background in the film. This eerie and mesmerizing music, which is rhythmic and passionate and sad, becomes, indeed, the commentator – the genius loci – of the Viennese scene. Pulsing with hopefulness and longing with "menace" and poignance and love, it thoroughly completes the illusions of a swift and intriguing romance [61].

Furthermore, while the film is described as a 'romance', a 'melodrama' and even 'a mystery-thriller-romance', it is also distinguished by Reed's 'devilishly mischievous humor', which touches the 'darker depressions with little glints of the gay or macabre'. However, it is Welles who most clearly evokes the associations with horror and he is not only described as 'our old and perennially villainous friend' but is even supposed to turn in a 'nice job of shaping a dark and treacherous shadow as the "third man"'. In this way, readers are reminded of his earlier incarnation as the horrific radio superhero, and of his more general 'choice and performance of bogey-men in the past' [62].

However, although Harry Lime would become one of Welles's most famous creations, and his first character to rival the Shadow in 'the public mind' [63], he is barely mentioned in the *New York Times* review, which is far more concerned to evaluate the film in relation to 'the awesome hoopla it has received' [64]. Indeed, the review in *Time* made it clear that Welles was still seen as a potential liability in relation to the film, and it is claimed that the 'ultimate proof of Reed's powers as a director: he has managed to get a temperate, first-rate performance out of Orson Welles' [65]. Furthermore, by the time the *New York Times* reviewed the film, it already had a tremendous reputation, and the reviewer was concerned to argue that, despite the buzz surrounding the film, this European hit 'isn't a penetrating study of any European problem of the day' and it 'doesn't present a "message" or have "a point of view' [66]. But if the film was not considered to be significant as social commentary, it was recommended as entertainment and claimed to be a valuable film if understood as such: 'It is just a bang-up melodrama, designed to excite and entertain ... Once it is understood clearly, there is no need for further asides'. It is therefore praised as an 'extraordinarily fascinating picture' that features a 'strangely off-beat story' and a Graham Greene script that 'is tops'. Furthermore, its various elements are said to 'flow smoothly and beautifully together into one piece of top screen artifice', and while it is stressed that 'the key word [in this assessment] is "artifice"', this is only intended to alert viewers to that fact that it is a finely crafted entertainment rather than a piece of social commentary. Thus, while the *New York Times* placed a high value on social commentary at the time, it did not disparage entertainment and saw the film as 'a thriller of superconsequence'.

If these films are therefore part of a process of critical recuperation, the nostalgic defence of Welles can be seen most clearly in the *New York Times's* review of *Macbeth*. As a result, it is noted that, while the film has been 'cut, re-cut, re-recorded and oft exhibited far and wide in the past three years', it is 'less of a vagary than its history might lead one to expect' [67].

Of course, the old complaints are still present. For example, there is an objection that the film lacks 'the searching insight and the dramatic clarity that one might desire', and that: 'In the established Welles tradition, which has been building for a number of years, the theatrical mechanics of the medium are permitted to dominate the play and Shakespeare is forced to lower billing than either the director or the cameraman'. The film is therefore seen as another example of Welles's egotism and he is supposed to 'favor the pointing of the camera at himself from all sorts of distorting angles and in close-ups that make his face bulk large'.

However, despite these problems, the film is also presented as having 'a great deal in its favor in the ways of feudal spectacle and nightmare mood'. Indeed, the film's main virtue seems to be its association with the horror genre and Welles's own preoccupation with 'the dark, oppressive horrors' of the story. As a result, credit is given to the 'weird sets' and the ways in which 'Mr. Welles deploys himself and his actors so that they move and strike the attitudes of tortured grotesques and half-mad zealots in a Black Mass or an ancient ritual'. In the process, the figure of Macbeth acquires 'a monstrous quality', while Lady Macbeth becomes 'a pop-eyed and haggard dame'.

While the film is therefore supposed to 'accomplish no illumination of the classical character', it is largely commended for its dark vision of the story and its visualisation in which there is also 'precious little ... in the way of mere set lighting'. As a result, the lack of insight into the characters is excused with the claim that the film 'is a study of the tensions, the political conflicts and the religious troubles of an ancient time' so that 'the whole purpose of [Welles's] production seems to be to create the vicious moods, the ruthlessness and the superstitions of the warriors in Macbeth's day'. Furthermore, it should also be remembered that Welles was not the first director to have produced a gothic version of Shakespeare in the late 1940s, and Olivier had already had a critically successful hit in 1948 with his version of *Hamlet*. Not only did Olivier's film emphasize the gothic features of its story, but it also turned the play into a psychological study at a time when psychological concerns were still largely associated with horror and fantasy, even if it was beginning to become associated with realism after *The Lost Weekend* [68]. As a result, the *New York Times* review notes that 'Mr Welles has borrowed from Sir Lawrence Olivier', particularly in his handling of the soliloquies, and while Welles's film is seen as less 'effective' than Olivier's, and to display too many 'characteristically theatrical' tricks and flourishes, there is still the sense that the review wants to defend the film [69]. Not only is it 'less of a vagary than its history might lead one to expect', but it is claimed to even have its 'redeeming' features.

Conclusion: Trading on the 1940s in *Touch of Evil*

If *Citizen Kane* remains the key reference point for Welles today, and is used to confirm his reputation as an artistic genius, Welles is also understood as a thriller director, particularly a director of classic film noirs, for which the key reference points are *The Lady from Shanghai* and *Touch of Evil*. Indeed, *Touch of Evil* is not only read as a classic noir, but is often seen as the culmination of the form, and is often used to mark the end of its classic period.

However, as David Thomson has pointed out, the film can also be seen as a nostalgic reference back to the 1940s. For example, he argues that the film 'was clearly an attempt at a comeback – and one that might have caused a sensation ten years earlier, or ten years later' [70]. In other words, it was a film in which Welles sought to trade on Hollywood's conception of him as a figure, and one that would have proved more successful if it had been released during the 1940s, memories of which it tries to evoke, or during the 1960s, when there was a massive revival of interest in the 1940s as a period and in Welles as a figure.

Unfortunately, if Welles designed the film to conform to Hollywood's image of him as a stylist of nightmarish horror, the film not only reminded them of his positive features but also confirmed its negative image of him too. On the positive side, the *New York Times* claimed that Welles 'soundly succeeds ... in generating enough sinister electricity for three such yarns' and has brilliantly presented it as 'a wild, murky nightmare' in which its female star, Janet Leigh, 'has the most blood-curdling time of all' [71]. While the review concedes that any 'other competent director might have culled a pretty good, well-acted melodrama from' this story of 'good versus evil', it stresses that Welles has created something special and striking by bringing his 'stylized trade-marks' to the film. He uses his camera 'like a black-snake whip' so that he 'lashes the action right into the spectator's eye', and his 'tempo, at least in the first half, is plain mercurial, as befits a thriller'. If the car at the opening is 'rigged with dynamite', then so is the film's 'yarn-spinning director'. The film is therefore said to demand the attention so that: 'Thanks to Orson Welles, nobody, and we mean nobody, will nap during "Touch of Evil", which opened yesterday at R.K.O. Theatres. Just Try'.

However, Welles's 'stylized trade-marks' are also seen as the problem with the film, and yet again the implication is that Welles is too egocentric and is only interested in himself. Not only has he succeeded in 'helping himself to the juicy role of a fanatical Texas cop', but he and his character are rhetorically conflated so that the film's official star, Charlton Heston, finds himself 'battling Mr. Welles, a psychopath who runs the town'. Ultimately then the director is described as using 'an obvious but brilliant bag of tricks', so that 'the lasting impression of the film is effect rather than substance'. If *Touch of Evil* was designed to nostalgically trade on his 1940s persona as a director and star who liked to terrify his audience with monstrous bogey-men, the film thus also confirmed his critical reputation as a director of flashy but insubstantial films, while his problems with the studio reconfirmed him as a director who was troublesome and difficult to manage.

The critical reception of Orson Welles's films during the 1940s illustrates the ways in which his image as a star was closely associated with the horror film. Furthermore, it also alerts us to the historically specific definitions of horror that were in operation during the 1940s, definitions that were not limited to the Universal monster movies of the period but also encompassed both the gothic (or paranoid) woman's films and the thrillers usually identified today as examples of film

noir. However, while Welles's reputation was clearly defined in relation to this genre, the association did not determine the critical evaluation of his films. Some horror films were highly praised by the *New York Times* within the period, while others were derided, and while the newspaper clearly believed that his early films demonstrated Welles's promise as a director, it also voiced concerns about his failings. Crowther and his colleagues promoted the idea that films should not only be technically adventurous but should provide a commentary on society. Certainly, they valued films that made no pretence to being anything more than entertainments, but their objection to Welles was that he violated their cultural categories. As the decade wore on, the *New York Times* reviewers started to express contempt for him, and presented him as an egomaniac and an exhibitionist. If they condemned his films as flashy technical displays, their complaint was not simply that Welles showed little interest in stories of social significance but that he was not content simply to produce entertainments either. For the *New York Times*, he was a pretentious filmmaker precisely because his films emphatically aspired to cultural authority but had nothing to say.

As a result, Welles's association with horror was not just a matter of the parts that he chose to play but also of the visual style that he employed as a director, and reviews from the 1940s demonstrate that his celebrity was associated with his presence as a director at least as much as with his presence as an actor. Even when he was not officially identified as the director of the films in which he appeared, critics were tempted to credit him with directing them. Not only does this situation illustrate that the director was an important figure long before the emergence of auteurism but also that it is necessary to make sense of how directors were understood at this time. The point here is not to return to a position in which the director is used to 'authorize' the 'real' meaning of texts, but to understand how particular directors and even authorship itself may have been understood in very different ways in different historical contexts. As has been demonstrated, Welles was understood very differently in the 1940s when compared with contemporary understandings of him as a figure.

Finally, this article hopes to have demonstrated that generic definitions are not only defined differently by different groups within a historical period [72], but that their meanings change over time and that definitions of horror in the 1940s were very different from those in operation today. In short, genre studies has much to benefit from studies in historical reception, studies that can dramatically transform our understanding of genres and their histories.

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Notes

[1] James Naremore, *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 11.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

[3] David Thomson, *Rosebud: The Story of Orson Welles*, London: Abacus, 1996, p. 349.

[4] 'Top/Ten', *Sight and Sound*, 31, Winter 1961-2, pp. 10-14; and 'And the 2002 Results Are...', *Sight and Sound*, 12, September 2002, pp. 24-50

[5] Thomson, *Rosebud*, p. 6.

[6] Thomson, *Rosebud*, pp. 3-4.

[7] Thomson, *Rosebud*, p. 40.

[8] Thomson, *Rosebud*, p. 182.

[9] Thomson, *Rosebud*, p. 57.

[10] Lee Server, *Danger is My Business: An Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines*, San Francisco: Chronicle, 1993, p. 91.

[11] Paul Heyer, *The Medium and the Magician: Orson Welles, the Radio Years, 1934-1952*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005, p. 26.

[12] Richard J. Hand, *Terror on the Air! Horror Radio in America, 1931-1952*, Jefferson: McFarland, 2006, p. 10.

[13] Server, *Danger is My Business*, p. 94.

[14] Heyer, *The Medium and the Magician*, p. 25.

[15] Hand, *Terror on the Air!*, p. 5.

[16] Thomson, *Rosebud*, p. 102.

[17] Hand, *Terror on the Air!*, p. 6.

[18] Hand, *Terror on the Air!*, pp. 7-8.

[19] Quote in Hand, *Terror on the Air!*, 8.

[20] Robert E. Kapsis, *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992; Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning: History Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994; and Charles J. Maland, *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

[21] Frank Eugene Beaver, *Bosley Crowther: Social Critic of the Film, 1940-1967*, New York: Arno Press, 1974. See also Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning*; and Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*, Princeton University Press, 1992.

[22] For Bourdieu, the pure gaze is not only associated with the tastes of those richest in cultural capital but it is also defined against popular taste. As Bourdieu puts it, pure taste asserts its superiority over popular taste through its 'denial of lower, course, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment' and it celebrates 'the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures'. In other words, the pure gaze privileges form over function. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge, 1984, p. 7.

[23] See Mark Jancovich, "Two Ways of Looking": Affection and Aversion in the Critical Reception of 1940s Horror', forthcoming. I am thankful to Joanne Hollows for drawing my attention to this distinction, see also Dick Hebdige, 'The Impossible Object: Towards a Sociology of the Sublime', *New Formations*, 1: 1, 1987, pp. 47-76.

[24] Flin., 'Film Reviews', *Variety*, 16 April 1941, p. 16.

[25] Otis Ferguson, 'Citizen Welles', *New Republic*, 2 June 1941, p. 761.

[26] Bosley Crowther, 'Orson Welles's Controversial "Citizen Kane" Proves a Sensational Film', *New York Times*, 2 May 1941, p. 25. Until the next endnote, all subsequent quotations are taken from this review.

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[72] This is a point I make elsewhere in Mark Jancovich, 'A Real Shocker: Authenticity, Genre and the Struggle for Cultural Distinctions', *Continuum*, 14: 1, April 2000, pp. 23-35.

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