

## Themes in ORSON WELLES' Films

### ROMANTIC LOVE

***Citizen Kane*** Love appears as contentious as it is multi-faceted between Kane and his wives, albeit toxic at times. Many characters point to Kane's hunger and search for love, but the discussion is always marred with negative connotations. According to Leland, Kane loved nothing and nobody but himself. According to Susan, Kane loved so that he could be loved back. The insinuation is that love was just a trade, an investment for Kane. He was going to get something out of it, one way or another, otherwise love wasn't worth this time. From Emily: her status as the niece of the President. From Susan: the project of an opera singer. Kane's love was contingent on the fact that he had to be loved back. That's why he failed to love.

***The Magnificent Ambersons*** The movie demonstrates the destructive power of love in its many incarnations. Between Eugene and Isabel, it is disguised as pride, terminating a relationship before it begins. Between Eugene and Fanny, it manifests itself as envy and grudge, which leads to scheming and manipulation. Between George and Lucy, it becomes a subtle power play between the parties: the former trying to dominate the latter and the latter trying to shape the former. In every occurrence, love is destined not to be consummated between the lover and the beloved. Even the marriages—between Wilbur and Isabel and Eugene and his wife—have dead spouses. Nobody can survive love in *The Ambersons*. If there is love, then there is destruction and death.

***The Lady from Shanghai*** The movie's take on romantic love is as cynical as it is circular, perfectly crystallized in the Chinese proverb Elsa quotes: "It is difficult for love to last long. Therefore, one who loves passionately is cured of love in the end." This fatalistic nature of love is in line with the movie's circular narrative: "One who follows his nature keeps his original nature," Mike says after he learns about Elsa's true identity. Nobody changes because everybody already is. Love is only a by-product of human nature, which is the real engine behind people's schemes and plans. Love is a nuisance for Arthur, but an efficient tool for Elsa and perhaps a fatal mistake for the other men. Whoever is in love in the movie is doomed: Arthur's hopeless connection to Elsa means that killing her will mean killing himself as well. Mike is so foolishly full of lust that he cannot see past his desire; George, too, fancies Elsa and perhaps hopes to run off with her. *The Lady from Shanghai* represents the femme fatale who controls men with the promise of lust that will never be satisfied.

***Mr. Arkadin*** The film has a very subtle theme of romantic love that decides the fates of almost all major characters. As already mentioned, Arkadin shows ill-advised paternal care towards his daughter and the other characters, like Raina, Mily, and Sophie, have suffered or are suffering from romantic love throughout the story. Raina, despite knowing what kind of a man Stratten is and what kind of a job he is hired to do, seems to have fallen for him. Her infatuation and her desire to please him is so strong that she follows the instructions of a man she's known for only a brief amount of time, disregarding her father in the process. Her sorrow at the end of the movie is multi-layered: the two men whom she loved are now gone, and she might have had something to do with it. Sophie's love acts similarly in that she still loves Gregory Arkadin, but that man, too, is long gone. She has a new life, a new business and new husband(s), and yet, Sophie still has a soft spot for Arkadin even after the latter's betrayal. The movie doesn't spend too much time developing her character, but Mily also seems to be romantically tied to Stratten. Her dream of becoming rich is less about her motivation for money than being a romantic criminal couple who become rich *together*. Like Raina, she also does whatever Stratten tells her to do, and like Raina, that also leads to her tragic end.

### PARENTAL LOVE

***The Magnificent Ambersons*** Married with a man she doesn't love, Isabel directs all her attention and love towards her son, George. He becomes the centre of her life. She dotes on him. She spoils him. And like a moon, she cannot help but orbit around her son disregarding her own wants and wishes. This borderline oedipal relationship ultimately decides Isabel's life trajectory. George grows up

to be a spoiled, entitled, self-centred person who cannot even tolerate the idea of his mother being with another man. Isabel is too powerless to go against her own son. She sacrifices her happiness and her life at the expense of those of George, who ultimately pushes Isabel to a lonely death.

**Mr. Arkadin** Arkadin's love for his daughter is his main motivation behind the plot he devises. This paternal love urges him to protect her, to control her sexual life, and to oversee her choices. It is as obsessive as it is toxic. He regards Raina as his daughter and his most valuable asset as if he is running a "daughter business". She is just another corporation he has to supervise. He is even ready to murder his old friends and associates just to make sure that his daughter never learns about his dark past. He cannot lose her. That's where his reason to live comes from. She is too essential to his being. In some respects, this toxic love feels uncomfortable, as one of the characters attests in the movie. It's a strange type of love that evokes Freudian tendencies, an obsessive animalistic drive which ultimately propels a powerful man into suicide.

**Chimes at Midnight** There is a triangular relationship between the three important characters in the movie that defines and characterizes fatherhood: Falstaff is a better father than a friend; Henry IV is a better king than a father; and Hal is a better warrior than a son/friend. All these relationships revolve around fatherhood and paternal figures in a man's life. Falstaff represents fatherly compassion and mentorship while Henry IV can only offer his son hereditary power and monarchical advice. However, each of these men lacks one crucial aspect that requires another man to fill in the gap. Hal seeks out a man like Falstaff because his father cannot provide him with the love, care and guidance Falstaff offers. On the other hand, Hal cannot stay friends with Falstaff because his real father is the one that can bestow upon him the power he needs.

## FRIENDSHIP

**Citizen Kane** The fraternal homoerotic friendship between Kane and Leland is contested and complicated at every turn. At first, Mr Leland supports Kane in his quest to be the voice of the working people. He even idealizes Kane, imagining that he'd become a history-altering figure in American history. When the newly-hired journalists arrive, he worries that they would change Kane. He wants to protect both Kane and his fight. He campaigns for Kane for political power. Unfortunately, when Kane as a revolutionary project fails, he also ceases to be a friend. Kane's infidelity, betrayal and tyrannical nature cannot overcome the power of friendship for Leland.

**Chimes at Midnight** One of the most important themes of the film is the unlikely friendship between Falstaff and Prince Hal. It is also, due to the hierarchal gap between two men, skewed towards Prince Hal. Both parties have a different understanding of this relationship. While Falstaff sees Prince Hal as a true companion, the latter uses Falstaff almost as a pawn in his own training as a man. Prince Hal's friendship is therefore opportunistic. He tells Falstaff that he is the sun while Falstaff belongs to the "base, contagious clouds." He tells Poins: "What a disgrace is it to me to remember thy name or to know thy face tomorrow." And yet he stays with Falstaff, Poins and the rest of the tavern company till they don't suit him anymore. This friendship, on a more symbolic level, represents a deep breach in society: the court representing power and the tavern representing the governed are two separate social spaces that can never interact.

## SELF LOVE

**The Stranger** Mary's love makes her vulnerable and gullible, but the defining characteristic is its self-referentiality. It's a product of her ego. She is momentarily paralyzed by love's attractive power so much so that she sacrifices her own well-being in the service of it. But she eventually replaces it with something else. Agent Wilson's observation of her is quite apt: "...but that she could ever have given her love to such a creature." Her love is so intricately connected to her sense of self that she cannot endure devaluing it. That's why she sticks with Kindler at the risk of becoming a criminal. And that's the same ego that ultimately wants Kindler to kill her when she figures out the truth. She "couldn't face life knowing what I've been to you." Who was she? A lover to a mass murderer. It is about her, not Kindler, when she adds: "But when you kill me, don't put your hands on me! Here! Use this!" She feels spoiled and violated. Her dignity overpowers her love at the moment of truth and her shooting Kindler repairs her own sense of worth.

## COMPASSION

**Citizen Kane** There is the maternal compassion Mrs. Kane displays for her son so powerfully that she agrees to part ways with him. She makes sacrifices so that he could have a better future without being abused by his father. There is the paternal love, not from Kane's biological father but from his business partner, Mr Bernstein, who supports his decisions no matter what, encourages him in his actions though they might be unethical, and protects his legacy. Finally, we see Mr Thompson feeling sorry for Kane after learning more about his tragic life. Though he is supposed to be an objective journalist, he is impacted by Kane. Like every person who has known Kane, Mr Thompson cannot help but feel compassion towards the man.

## SUSPICION

**Othello** Iago's plot is to try and create situations where people second-guess other people's motivations, which breeds distrust and suspicion. Brabantio suspects that his daughter must have been bewitched by the dark-skinned Othello thanks to Iago's provocation. Othello suspects his wife of disloyalty because of Iago's conspiracy. Even Roderigo, despite his suggestible nature, is suspicious of Iago's plans regarding Desdemona and Cassio. The world Iago wants to construct in Othello is a place where nobody trusts anybody, except Iago, who then provides them with the facts and the tales he thinks are appropriate.

## REMORSE

**Macbeth** Macbeth is a tragic character, but not a remorseful figure by the end of the story. He accepts that he is going to die and fights till the bitter end, but he does not accept to bend the knee for Malcolm. The apparitions, his wife's suicide and his disgraceful reign make him contemplative and a thinker, but do not transform him into a man with regret. There is no chance for redemption. It is Lady Macbeth who has to carry the burden of their crimes and sins. After the murders of Lady Macduff and her children, she admits they have gone beyond the point of no return. "Tis safer to be that which we destroy than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy," she tells Macbeth. Her immediate illness, sleepwalking, and her eventual suicide are how repentance looks in the play. At least, remorsefulness allows Lady Macbeth the chance to take her own life compared to Macbeth, whose head is cut off by the most honourable character in the story.

**Othello** Regret is an emotion for those who are capable of self-criticism and introspection. Therefore, by definition, Iago is incapable of it. His looking down, from a hoisted cage, at the funeral procession without a tinge of emotion is proof of his lack of any remorse. Fortunately, there are other characters in the film who rue their acts. Cassio, for one, regrets his recklessness that led to mutiny. He believes that he has hurt his reputation beyond repair after Othello's rebuke. Emilia's regret in aiding Iago is more complex as she was always duty-bound to her husband in marriage. She hands him the handkerchief—an essential part of Iago's plans—despite suspecting that he's going to use it for evil purposes. In her final speech, we can hear the angst in her voice as she exposes Iago. Perhaps, the biggest regret in the film is that of Othello, who realizes that he murdered his innocent wife. His suicide can be construed as half-payment, but it's not enough. He also wants Cassio to record him in history without changing what he did and who he was. He regrets being Othello, and he wants it to be known by everyone.

## JEALOUSY / GREED

**The Magnificent Ambersons** As alluded in the movie, Aunt Fanny's only role within the Ambersons family is to be an aunt. Unmarried and unemployed, she has nothing to hold onto in her life except her undying love for Eugene. Unfortunately, this is also unrequited as Eugene has been in love with the Ambersons' pretty daughter Isabel. Fanny has no choice, but to endure their love from afar. What is worse is that she has also had to endure being teased about it constantly. Her sorrow turns into bitterness, which in time turns into toxic jealousy. After Wilbur's death, Fanny is so envious of the possibility that Eugene and Isabel can get together that she manipulates Isabel's son into breaking up the couple, which she manages. Alas, Eugene never considers Fanny even after Isabel's death. The final scene shows who she has always been: a woman in tears.

**The Lady from Shanghai** Mike's parable about sharks reveals the nature of the upper-class, rich people Mike resents. Their true nature that they follow to the bitter end is driven by greed and

gluttony. They want more because they have more. Arthur has Elsa followed because she is just like him: She wants more by getting rid of Arthur. Elsa's plot to kill Arthur will ultimately give her the control of Arthur's fortune. It's not enough that she lives in luxury: she wants to own luxury. George agrees to be her accomplice because he wants the insurance money. All these sharks want so much more of everything that they eventually eat themselves.

**Othello** In Othello, jealousy is represented less as a natural urge and more as a construct. It's Iago's villainy and racist hatred that breeds jealousy in Othello like a wild plant. When Iago starts weaving his web of conspiracy, Othello at first disregards the suggestion, or even the mention, of jealousy. He refuses to live his life under the shadow of envy. His wife being honest and loyal is a given for Othello (which can also be explained by Othello's trust in the patriarchal system, in which women had no agency even for adultery). Iago, however, keeps adding different angles to the construct by calling upon women's so-called prurient nature and the question of race. "I know our country disposition well. In Venice, they [women] do let heaven see the pranks," Iago tells Othello and adds: "As to be bold not to enter into a marriage of her own clime, complexion and degree whereto we see in all things nature tends." Jealousy here is a composite emotion constructed out of misogyny and racism.

## WAR

**Chimes at Midnight** Orson Welles portrays war not as a romantic pastime but a bloody and murky affair among men who cannot be differentiated on a battlefield. The way he shoots the battle scenes makes it impossible to tell friend from foe, which is the point. Death is ugly and muddy, certainly not honourable nor venerable. Falstaff puts the code of chivalry in context for everyone before the war begins: "What is honour? A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday." Robert Bell agrees: "Yet the film presents no countervailing zeal for heroic self-sacrifice ... Chivalric heroism is a straw man, Falstaff the only vital spirit and viable alternative." Falstaff, standing pat amongst men who are fighting to kill, is the life-affirming counterpoint to war.

## REPUTATION

**Othello** "I have lost the immortal part of myself and what remains is bestial," Cassio says in despair after being dismissed by Othello. In the world of a soldier, the body is accepted to be an expendable item. His name, rank, and deeds are what survive the body. Cassio knows this as does Othello when he tells Cassio: "What is the matter that you unlace your reputation thus and spend your rich opinion for the name of a night-brawler?" A soldier's reputation is what prevents him from becoming a beast. This proves to be rather prescient as Othello, after killing Desdemona and thereby becoming a beast himself, pleads with Cassio that, when the latter relates these unlucky deeds, he should "speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice." This is Othello's reputation: He has killed his innocent wife and himself. He doesn't want any revision of his deeds. He wants Cassio to tell it as it is. This is going to be his reputation: a bestial man.

## AMBITION

**Macbeth** Characters in Macbeth are rarely passive agents during the course of the story. All of them act on their ambitions either to do good or evil. Macbeth, consumed by his desire for power, murders anyone who stands in this way. Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband into acting on his desire so that she can share the power with him. Banquo, perhaps the most passive amongst them, is still ambitious about the fortunes he was foretold regarding his future and that of his sons. It is no coincidence that all these characters meet their death by the end of the story, which enables us to compare them with the equally ambitious characters of Macduff and Malcolm. These two characters, as the carriers of justice, lean on their ambition in order to bring back the status quo of law and order. Their ambition is in the service not of their own kingdom, but of the kingdom on earth and in heaven.

## REVENGE

**Macbeth** It is not only Macduff who embarks on a journey of revenge. The king's son Malcolm and the Holy Man also seek to bring justice back to the world. Macduff's story is that of the hero who must leave home to slay the dragon (fiend). Revenge is a motivation for him. For Malcolm and the Holy Man, revenge is dressed up as duty rather than personal quest. As the true heir, Malcolm is mandated to establish the old and reliable power structures within monarchical succession. That's his

fight of revenge—for the law of the land. The Holy Man's motive is more divine than earthly in that he has to fight against the demonic power of the unnatural to establish the old and reliable power structures within God's world. That's his fight for revenge—for the law of the Lord. His revenge is steeped in God's fury.

## MARRIAGE

***The Lady from Shanghai*** The movie portrays marriage not as a peaceful and happy institution between two people who love each other, but as a trap that people find themselves boxed inside. In the case of Elsa, she was forced into marriage because she is being blackmailed by Arthur. In the case of George, marriage acts like a prison that he wants to escape by murdering Arthur. Though we later learn that George lies about him being married, the overall point stands: Marriage, in the lives of these crooked people, represents a broken contract between somewhat unwilling participants. It is the antithesis of freedom. Even Arthur, after marrying Elsa by blackmailing her, realizes that he, too, is trapped in it because killing Elsa would mean killing himself as well.

***Othello*** Marriage appears not as an institution between two equal beings, but as an extension of society that regulates women's relationship with men. After obeying her father, Desdemona willingly marries Othello with the understanding and acceptance that she will now obey him. A progressive character like Desdemona, who goes against the accepted norms by entering into a multi-racial marriage contract, still submits to her husband without questioning. She even resigns herself to the idea of death instead of fighting for herself as if it were yet another order from her husband she has to obey. Even though their marriage is built upon romantic love, Othello's and Desdemona's union is fundamentally similar to that of Emilia and Iago. Despite being strong, honest, and witty, Emilia also obeys Iago and his wishes within the confines of their marriage. She knows that Iago has foul plans for the handkerchief, and yet, she still delivers the goods. "Tis proper I obey him, but not now," she says before exposing Iago. Her rebellion only comes towards the end after the tragedy has occurred. Her "reward" for breaking the contract and disobeying her husband is death

## QUEST / INTRIGUE

***The Stranger*** Agent Wilson is determined to find out where Franz Kindler / Charles Rankin is and bring him to justice sooner or later. He first allows Meinike from the prison with the intention of trailing him to catch Farnz kindler, then follows him pretending to be a old clocks expert

***The Lady from Shanghai*** As a narrative tool, the voice-over signals to us that the story we are about to watch has already ended and that characters have experienced the consequences of their actions. On one level, it takes the "fun" out of watching a story unfold as we know the narrator, Mike, has survived. On another level, though, this choice turns this whodunit story into a whydunit, which creates intrigue and suspense. The movie begins with Mike announcing that "If [he]'d known where it would end, [he]'d have never let anything start," an ominous sign of what is to come: fake murder plot, real murders, plot twists and four mysterious characters whose stories are never fully revealed. The element of suspense as well as mystery and intrigue are baked into the story thanks to the use of first-person, retrospective narration. We are invited on a journey of exploration. Part of the appeal is that, since we can only know what Mike knows, we may never learn the truth. The famous hall of mirrors scene symbolizes not only the many identities of these flawed characters but also the complicated and sophisticated nature of the story, almost impossible to untangle.

***Othello*** Iago's sophisticated conspiracy creates dramatic irony in that we, the audience, are aware of his motivation and all of his plans (directly from the horse's mouth at that) while all the other characters are none the wiser. This leads to intrigue and suspense as we keep wondering if the tragedy will come to pass the way Iago plans, or if he will be thwarted by some divine intervention. We watch the story unfold, speculating whether Othello will indeed succumb to Iago's manipulation, whether Roderigo will hopefully realize he's been used as a pawn and whether Emilia can prevent the downfall.

***Mr. Arkadin*** The film has the structure of a thriller with its central mystery being its titular character Gregory Arkadin. Until we meet him, he's portrayed as a mythical character with a sinister past and a present secret. The fact that we are first introduced to him in a masquerade is a symbolic gesture that strengthens the cloud of enigma surrounding Mr. Arkadin. There is even a meta-narrative buried in the

plot: Gregory Arkadin doesn't know about Gregory Arkadin. The subsequent investigation and interrogation of a bevy of outrageously varied characters do nothing but add more questions to the central wonder of the narrative: Who is *really* Gregory Arkadin? What is his dark secret? And how is Sophie related to that fundamental riddle? All these questions form the engine of an adventurous plot.

***Touch of Evil*** The film's first image is a time bomb in the hands of an anonymous man, which heightens the stakes from the very beginning and adds a significant amount of suspense and intrigue that spans the entire length of the movie. Interesting part is that the mode of intrigue functions like a virus jumping from one host to another throughout the movie: it originates in the bomb, then moves onto Susan and her dealings with the cartel, then travels back to Hank and his intuition-based detection methods, and ends with Tana. We are constantly invited to question those characters' motivations: Who planted the bomb? Why did Susan not tell Miguel about the photograph or Pancho holding a flashlight at her? Why is Hank so determined to frame Sanchez? And why does Tana seem like she knows everything just by looking? Tana is indeed one of the biggest sources of intrigue. It is assumed that she has a past with and almost a psychic connection to Hank. The way she tells Hank that "he has used up all his future" while playing tarot cards makes us wonder who she really is. And at the end of the movie, instead of delivering the closure, Tana leaves us even with more intrigue by another Hank-related judgement: "He was some kind of a man." As she walks away from the camera, we are left to believe that she was also "some kind of a woman" who, at times, had an angelic quality that belonged more to a fantastic world than to reality.

***The Trial*** The biggest mystery of the story is what crime Josef K. has been arrested for. In perfect Kafkaesque fashion, we never get an answer because that is not the point of the movie. The mystery drives the plot, it shapes the characters' choices and it produces the situations, but it is not revealed because the mystery is not the story. If anything, the story is the real mystery: What is this tale all about? Is it the individual's inevitable defeat by the powers-that-be? Or is it about the unnamed and unspeakable evil that seals our fate?

## POWER

***Citizen Kane*** Power could be analysed in many different ways in the interpersonal relationships. Kane's innate power comes from his wealth, but he also garners an additional power through his newspapers. While the former gives him the opportunity to purchase material goods, the latter bestows upon him an authority that he abuses to further his social, political, and personal interests. What defines Kane and his legacy is chiefly the power he has over people: the way he wields it to manipulate his friends, his business partners, and most importantly women into becoming minions of Charles Kane. He demands that the chief of editor fabricate stories so that his newspaper can compete with his rival; he pushes for the Spanish-American war by manipulating public opinion so that he can increase his circulation; he refuses to accept being blackmailed by his political archenemy, which ironically strips him of political power; he forces Susan to take opera lessons though Susan does not want to; he publishes fake reviews to promote his wife's performance. At every turn, he refers back to his innate and tyrannical power to course-correct, but nothing prevents him from dying alone in a castle. From Kane's perspective, power emerges as a vulnerability that only reveals the weakness in him. Aside from Kane's fragile masculinity, there are two other characters who discover and utilize their power much to Kane's detriment—Leland and Susan. The former rejects Kane's \$25,000 check and sends it back in an envelope, which also contains the original document of Declaration of Principles. For Susan, the moment arrives before she leaves Kane for good. She realizes that this decision alone.

***Macbeth*** The movie offers a two-pronged discussion over the question of power. On one side, people are subjected to law and order as regulated by monarchy, military and religion, which together determines the course of their lives. All these modes of power are manifestations of the God's own grace on earth. Shakespeare, however, creates a dichotomy by pitting the natural order against the destructive power of the supernatural by creating the faceless witches. They are, by and large, a derivative of the Satan figure who spreads fear and evil by diverting people from the good. "Fiend" is what Macduff calls Macbeth, evoking the image of the devil. In the final battle between the representations of the good (Macduff) and the evil (Macbeth), the witches also make a final appearance to remind the audience of their relentless power. The good may have prevailed over the evil, for now, but the source of the evil is still among us, powerful and alluring.

**Othello** The film is an intriguing narrative in terms of locating where and in whom power lies. The Duke and the Venetian Council hold military power in deciding to send Othello to war with the Turks. They also exert judicial authority in mediating the dispute between Othello and Brabantio. On an individual level, Othello has a mandate to govern Cyprus through his power bestowed upon him by the Duke and the Council. There is also historical and systematic power in patriarchy, which seems to be fluid, flowing from father to husband in deciding women's fate. These are all institutional influences either inherited from or mandated by a superior entity. There is also the soft power to tell a good story. Othello has that power, which helps him woo Desdemona. Iago, among other things, is a supremely talented storyteller, which gives him an immense power over the others. He is able to run many story lines together, all simultaneously working towards the same result, while people and situations change constantly. In that sense, Iago is the world-maker, a supreme being, capable of creating fictions and having people believe them. Since such power is inherent to one's self, no institution or entity can renounce or withdraw it. He may be just an ensign, but also the most powerful man in the story.

**Mr. Arkadin** There are two kinds of power in the movie—hard power and soft power. The former is all about the wherewithal to direct people, manipulate situations and manufacture results, the power Mr. Arkadin holds in abundance. It originates from money and is executed through violence. It is aggressive, coercive and based on fear. He uses it on his daughter to shape her life, on Stratten to manipulate him into doing what he wants, and on others to access information germane to his ends. Soft power, which relies on co-option rather than coercion, is all about strategy and policy. As the other side of the Arkadin medallion, Sophie uses soft power in her dealings. Her decision not to employ the information regarding Arkadin's dark past allows her to keep the status quo, which serves her needs. While Arkadin uses the information to attack Stratten, Sophie chooses *not* to use what she knows. The power not to act is in and of itself a display of power. It's a subdued diplomacy. Her power lies in her ability to decide not to act whereas Arkadin's power almost always forces him to react. They are complete opposites in terms of how they execute their authority.

**The Trial** Power flows from a system into an elite group of people through a paradoxical chain because those people are the ones who have invented the said system in the first place. Therefore, the Law emerges as an exclusive game, in which power always stays within. The individual is categorically and systematically deprived of it. It is the Law that determines who will hold the power over whom. The initiated—lawyers, judges, clerks, court officials—understand the dynamics which is by design kept away from the uninitiated on whom such power is exercised. Therefore, in an ironic twist, the Law creates hierarchy rather than parity. The official court painter draws the picture for all of us to see. When K. asks him if he will be free, the painter says: "Ostensibly... ostensibly free." Individuals will stay as a subject even when they are allowed to walk out.

**Chimes at Midnight** In *Chimes at Midnight*, the transfer of power through royal succession is shown broken. Henry IV usurps the crown by denying the true heir, Edmund Mortimer. Therefore, his reign is mostly about fighting against plots, rebellions and assassinations since his power is considered illegitimate. During the Tudor period, one available outlet outside the usual framework of hereditary monarchy is war. The victors claim the throne and power. Hotspur Percy and his accomplices choose war against the illegitimate reign of Henry IV for the purpose of claiming power back for themselves. Ironically, this war is partly responsible for the coronation of Prince Hal as he comes out victorious in his battle with Hotspur and ultimately succeeds his father as the legitimate king of the realm.

**The Other Side of the Wind** The director holds the power around the movie set, setting scenes up, directing actors, evoking emotions and provoking contemplation. His artistic power lends him an authority he may also choose to wield outside the framework of art. The man within the artist can also be seduced to utilize the power of the artist as is case with Hannaford. Looking at the fates of his leading men, it is clear that he abuses his power to dominate and subjugate them in a way to replicate what the journalist refers to as the 'master-and-slave dialectic'. This is not a relationship between people of equal status. It is a hierarchal dynamic between a dominatrix and his subjects, which turns him into a tyrant.

## POLITICS

**The Stranger** Politics is not the main concern of the movie as it was supposed to be a Hollywood

thriller, but it still permeates the story in subtle ways. Orson Welles, via documentary footage of the Holocaust, introduces the politics of war as a meta-commentary. The monster lurking in the shadows becomes a war criminal responsible for genocide. Suddenly, the police procedural is not only entertainment, but politicized to lend the movie a political heft. Orson Welles was very vocal about his anti-Nazi views, and *The Stranger* gives his political activism another potent platform. Having Kindler mention the “extermination” as a solution to an imagined problem involving a race is his way of rendering the idea as ludicrous as possible.

***The Trial*** The movie presents and explicates bureaucracy less as a matter of paperwork than a potent system that traps individuals within its procedures that are inscrutable to the uninitiated. In this game, the lawyers, clerks, judges and even the official painters hold all the power against people who cannot move through the system’s procedures to defend themselves or prove their innocence. The decision is up to the powers-that-be who have designed the bureaucratic barriers. The painter, of all people, gives a glimpse of the legal bureaucracy when he asks K. what kind of acquittal he wants. “Ostensible, or definite acquittal or deferment?” Then, Titorelli lists all the other steps following the acquittal: “Third arrest, fourth arrest, fourth acquittal...” all point to a convoluted maze that entraps whoever dares to enter it.

***Chimes at Midnight*** The movie goes back and forth between the court and the tavern, each representing a different social level in the Middle Ages. The tavern scenes are almost always full of entertainment with patrons laughing, drinking, and enjoying themselves in the company of others. The camera is always on the move, following the joy whenever it goes. “The court represents the real world of politics and war, while the tavern is a Brueghel-like scene of play and fun,” Robert Bell writes, pointing out the dichotomy between these two important social spaces. One can see the castle, and therefore the court, looking from the tavern, but one cannot see the tavern from anywhere within the castle. The invisible line between the two is consecrated by the new king himself after banishing Falstaff (read: the tavern) from the court. The two are like the Pauli exclusion principle in physics: “Two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time.” The final frame of the movie showing Falstaff’s casket outside the tavern leading away from the castle is a poignant reminder of the incompatibility of the two.

## CLASS

***The Lady from Shanghai*** Class plays an intriguing role in the film. On the surface, Arthur and Elsa represent the cold upper-class, while Mike is the down-to-earth member of middle-class. Mike’s characterization of them as “sharks eating at themselves” conforms to the image of the rich as predators and the poor as their prey. Welles’ classism is subtler and more sophisticated than the Rich-Poor binary opposition as we learn that Arthur actually comes from a low socio-economic background. “The great Bachrach, who kept me out of his club, because my mother was a Manchester Greek,” Arthur says. His vertical migration through class lines represents an uncomfortable truth: His money keeps him there, not his blood or status. For him, money has become the measure of life. The Rich use money, but the Poor need it. And Arthur needs money to hold onto his power. As he boasts about getting Bachrach on perjury, he says: “He died bankrupt. And here I am.” As he talks about his maid, Bessy, he equates her happiness with her salary. In a way, Arthur has bought his way into the upper-class and he will stay there so long as he is rich. Elsa is not immune to this, either. We are not told about her background, but she admits she’d be penniless if Arthur divorced him. The threat of losing money, hence her hard-earned status in society, is enough reason to kill Arthur. In a rather twisted irony, all these powerful, rich, upper-class individuals die, while only the poor member of middle-class survives.

## TECHNOLOGY

***The Trial*** One of the changes Welles made to the story is to inject some 1960s technology. “Although I have tried to be faithful to what I take to be the spirit of Kafka,” Welles justifies his modernization, “the novel was written in the early twenties, and this is now 1962.” Therefore, he introduces, for instance, a machine that can reportedly tell K. what he is charged with. “Well [the machine]’d need the data, economic, sociological, psychological,” K. says in a bid to transform and understand the concept of crime as a matter of fact. In a scene cut from the final edit, this assumption is further developed. The supercomputer, by processing K.’s data, predicts that K. will commit suicide. This is an amazingly prescient move from Welles. Beside the fact that he may have inspired Douglas



Adams, he also undercuts the bureaucratic power of the Law by offering a fresh perspective on the concepts of crime and punishment.

## LAW / JUSTICE

**The Stranger** The movie presents a consistent moral structure, in which Evil is defeated by Good. Probably the film's least interesting part, its ending, wraps up this moral universe by having the pure and innocent soul kill the devil in a heavily symbolised moment. The "fiery sword of Siegfried" that Kindler discusses during his ironic dinner monologue ultimately becomes the sword of the American town that delivers the justice to him. And it is of no coincidence that Mary, who deals the first blow, happens to be the daughter of a Supreme Court Justice. In this world, where the moral order is momentarily disrupted by Evil, murder also becomes an accepted form of justice, a "Carthaginian peace" if you will.

**The Lady from Shanghai** The courtroom scene plays out like a caricatured version of a trial bordering on self-parody. The "trial by ambush" practice, which is rarely if ever seen in real-life cases, is stretched to its almost absolute limit in order to make the process absurd. Nothing that happens in that courtroom resembles a proper trial. The defense attorney on the witness stand cross-examining himself looks like something out of a Groucho Marx routine than a criminal trial. And all this is relevant and functional considering the movie's intention. In Welles' world, justice for the little man will never come out of a courtroom as the law and justice system are stacked against people like Mike. As the fall guy, he has been played, manipulated and controlled by everyone. His place in the defendant chair has been engineered by the sharks who will never let him off the hook because that's not in the nature of a predator—hence the flaw in the justice system: That it does not always protect the innocent. Justice is found outside the courthouse. Through a rather cheeky closure, the movie insists that it is actually found in the funhouse.

**Touch of Evil** Similarly, Welles' treatment of law enforcement is not binary. While Hank and the local DA office represent the corrupt side of power, Menzies and Miguel emerge as idealizations of benevolent power. The DA office, while trying to protect one of his own, refuses to hear Miguel's evidence and supports Hank. This enables corruption and creates a culture of toxic fraternity that prioritizes an internal code over the law. Even if Hank's morally ambiguous methods are self-serving, his ambition to catch murderers and solve crimes still serves society. Miguel Vargas emerges as another law enforcement figure, through which Welles offers a nuanced argument *vis-à-vis* morality. Miguel plays the chivalrous man of justice who protects the weak, the innocent, and the pure at all costs. The ironic twist is that he, too, resorts to extra-legal methods to achieve his end. On the surface, it seems that the "good" law enforcement agents, Miguel and Menzies, utilize their collective authority to deliver justice for a more noble purpose, but they still cross the line as do their "evil" counterparts.

**The Trial** Orson Welles opens the movie with the parable "Before the Law," a text that was published in the 1915 New Year's edition of *Selbstwehr* before it appeared in the novel, *The Trial*. What this parable conveys is that justice is for everyone and therefore no-one. The assumption that every individual is equal before the Law is just that, an assumption. In practice, not everyone will be allowed to enter the system to receive justice because the way it is set up privileges some over others. The guard ensures that it stays that way; the guard could be a lawyer, a judge, or even an advocate's maid. The official court painter, who knows every judge and every procedure, tells K. about the mazelike corridors of the Law, which makes K. dizzy. The tragedy is that, as soon as he understands how the Law works, he is unable to get out.

## PSYCHOLOGY

**The Stranger** The investigator Agent Wilson employs his rather clumsy psychoanalysis on Mary while trying to explain away her unwillingness to accept the presented truth. His reference to Mary's "subconscious" is unfortunately erroneous as there is no such thing as subconscious in psychoanalytical literature; however, his larger point regarding psychology still stands if we assume that he actually means "unconscious mind" in the theory of repression. In Mary's case, this plays out in a fascinating manner. First, the relationship between her ego and her love causes a split in her psyche, forcing her to push the truth deep in her consciousness. Second, the resulting repressed guilt surfaces in the shape of a dream in a very Freudian fashion. She dreams about Meinike, who appears

to move away, but his “shadow stayed there behind him and spread out just like a carpet.” She course-corrects her cognitive dissonance when she eventually kills the source of her guilt, accomplishing her wish-fulfilment. Mary’s character arc is an interesting dramatisation of psychoanalysis, which was getting more and more popular in America in the 1940s and 1950s.

## CINEMA

***The Other Side of the Wind*** In this movie, Orson Welles pays homage to filmmaking while also engaging in cynical and self-reflective metacommentary regarding the art form itself. Famous directors who appear as themselves; film students and critics who use esoteric language; the press who is always attacking the director... Welles is in a hurry to mock them with discernible disdain. A reporter’s question – “Mr. Hannaford, is the camera eye a reflection of reality or is reality a reflection of the camera eye? Or is the camera merely a phallus?” – suddenly becomes absurd when Hannaford answers it with a “I want a drink.” Welles takes the air out of this intellectual space completely. Or during an intense argument, a filmmaker can come out of nowhere and ask Otterlake: “What is the fundamental aesthetic distinction between a zoom and a dolly?” The bemused Otterlake’s reply – “What possible difference can that make except to another dolly?” – turns the whole ‘serious talk’ into a cheap one-liner. His cynicism, however, is mostly geared towards Hollywood-branded cinema. The French New Wave element (Claude Chabrol appearing as himself), a hat-tip to surrealism with the Dale dummies and midgets who come and go as they please with no narrative punch, and the American Independents (Denis Hopper’s appearance as himself) can be interpreted as his respectful nods to the art of filmmaking. Aside from his general views on cinema, Welles also delivers a self-lacerating critique of the director. Hannaford’s last words in the movie-within-a-movie are also the last words of the great Orson Welles in cinematic form, his swan song on the art he dedicated his life to:

*Remember those Berbers up in the Atlas? They wouldn't let us point a camera at them. They're certain that it dries up something. The old eye, you know, behind the magic box. Could be it's an evil eye, at that. Medusa's. Who knows, maybe you can stare too hard at something. Drain out the virtue, suck out the living juice. You shoot the great places and the pretty people. All those girls and boys. Shoot them dead.*

## RELIGION

***Macbeth*** The supernaturalness of the witches is established very early on in the story. “What are these that look not like the inhabitants o' the earth, and yet are on't?” asks Banquo, referring to their abnormal existence. Welles chooses not to give them a face to heighten the sense of foreboding. These women are not innocent palm-readers who have the gift of clairvoyance. Emerging out of the fog and speaking in hush tones, they are indeed an extension of some ill and evil that exists out of time and space. They can appear at anywhere and at any time without being bound to physical laws. One can also assume that apparitions and ghosts Macbeth sees are of their making. Their supernatural power is reflected on the unnatural state of the world. When Lady Macduff points to the dark sky even though it’s morning, the Holy Man answers her, “’Tis unnatural, Even like the deed that’s done.” Murder merges the supernatural with the unnatural.

***The Other Side of the Wind*** Religion is evoked in a couple of places especially when it refers to the status of the director within the hierarchy of filmmaking. For instance, Hannaford is called a God with Dale his creation, which also supports the master-slave dichotomy mentioned earlier. But the God, according to Hannaford, is an invention of the Jewish man to put down the Jewish mother, invoking a gender-based commentary on the role of God. “We’re all ruled by the wind, aren’t we, lady?” Hannaford tells Rich. The other side of the wind, as it were, is where the male image of God is destroyed by the ideal female image. At the end of both movies, the symbolic masculine figures are dead and destroyed: the phallus in Hannaford’s film, and Hannaford in Welles’s film. This is as an aesthetic statement as it is a religious one.

## VALUES

***Chimes at Midnight*** Valour, honour, chivalry and loyalty are the values that both the aristocracy and the common people are expected to uphold. The prince, as the elite member of monarchy, needs to conduct himself in a manner befitting his status by being a just ruler and a courageous commander. For the soldier, honour and loyalty manifest themselves as self-sacrifice in the face of death. Falstaff,

as someone who is a knight and also a common man mingling with other commoners, refuses to comply with these long-established expectations, prioritizing his own life over vague definitions. His noncompliance is such that he creates his own rulebook to live by. "Honour is a mere scutcheon [shield]. And so ends my catechism," he says, pitting his values against those of the society of which he is a member.

## CRIME

**Macbeth** In *Macbeth*, crime pays, but only to an extent and for a more ethical project. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth claim power through their criminal enterprise, but the pleasure of success happens to be very short-lived. In fact, there is no joy to be found in the fulfilment of their desires through murder and deceit. Both these characters suffer from their crimes. Sleepless Macbeth is tormented by the ghosts of his victims as he slowly loses his touch with reality, while Lady Macbeth's only way for a total cleansing of her soul is to embrace death. Crime, in its manifestation as disruption of earthly and heavenly authority, inflicts both bodily and spiritual damage to the perpetrators. Individual becomes corrupted with no chance of a redemption except by death.

**Mr. Arkadin** Crime appears as the essential motivator and plot engine in the movie. Its protagonist, with whom we are invited to identify, is a petty criminal peddling cigarettes and contraband goods. The antagonist has his whole life centred around crime: be it helping the Nazis or Fascists in building their regimes, or running a sex trafficking gang, or killing the members of the said gang so that his criminal past wouldn't surface. In fact, Gregory Arkadin is so deeply synonymous with criminal behaviour that he almost becomes a caricature of himself, a metaphor whose symbolic meaning goes beyond the story's borders. Indeed, the film scholar James Naremore suggests that *Mr. Arkadin* can be construed as a Cold War allegory with Guy Van Stratten resembling a young, athletic Richard Nixon and Gregory Arkadin a stand-in for Josef Stalin. Stratten, Mily, Sophie, and all the peculiar interviewees Stratten interrogates throughout the story are or were part of a criminal underground network at some point in their lives. Raina, who seems to be the only innocent party, is eventually impacted by the consequences of a criminal enterprise.

**Touch of Evil** The movie turns the tables on expectations regarding the cartel, or mafia, by setting them up for failure from the outset. Susan is supposed to be threatened and scared by them, but she challenges them and even insults its leader with impunity. Another member of the cartel, a rogue youth, tries to throw acid at Miguel's face, but fails miserably. Welles ensures that we get a separate scene in which the cartel leader berates that assailant for acting without permission, a sign that the leadership is in disarray and the cartel may just be a source of ridicule rather than threat. This view is supported by the scene between Grandi and Hank. The power dynamics between the two men is so skewed towards Hank that we are frightened more by a detective than a cartel leader.

## GENDER

**Citizen Kane** Even though the movie reinforces patriarchal gender relations and roles, a close reading also reveals that women are not always placed in a subordinate position against men. In the final moment, it's women who make choices despite Charles Kane. His mother, Mrs. Kane, sends her son away so that he can have a better future despite her husband's complaints. She successfully swats him away to achieve what she wants to achieve: a better life for her son. Similarly, Charles Kane's first wife, Emily, decides to confront Kane's lover and eventually makes the decision to leave him of her own volition. Her indictment of Kane is also spot on. When he says, "There's only one person in the world to decide what I'll do. And that's me," Emily answers: "You decided what you were going to do, Charles, some time ago" suggesting that Kane's corruption has already begun. And Susan, who has been ignored by everyone throughout the movie, realizes her power in the final scene and leaves Kane to gain her independence. It's her choice that triggers the domino effect of Charles Kane's downfall.

**Macbeth** Lady Macbeth and Malcolm manipulate Macbeth and Macduff, respectively, by appealing to their manhood to shame them into doing the thing they want them to do. When Macbeth has second thoughts about the plan to murder the king, Lady Macbeth insinuates that Macbeth has lost his manliness. "If you weren't a man, then what kind of animal were you when you first told me you wanted to do this? When you dared to do it, that's when you were a man." She further provokes him by saying that she, as a woman who has "given suck and know How tender 'tis to love the babe

that milks me," would have murdered the baby before dismissing the chance of becoming "something more than a man". Malcolm, too, asks Macduff to "Dispute it like a man" rather than wallow in sadness after learning about the death of his family. And gender also works on Macduff. "Oh, I could play the woman with mine eyes and braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens, cut short all intermission," says Macduff, finally deciding to "act like a man" as he prepares for the attack. Malcolm gladly accepts it: "This tune goes manly." Gender stereotypes play a role in Lady Macbeth's fall from grace as well. Her "Unsex me" prayer plays on the assumed characteristics of men and women, in which women must shed their femininity and become more like men to act heinously. The punishment of this "unnatural" conversion is death by suicide.

**Othello** Othello's world is neatly demarcated in terms of gender roles and relations: women are subordinate to men. A woman is first owned by her father and then passed to her husband, both of whom define and determine her world in a setting that constantly reaffirms this one-way interaction. Even Desdemona's rebellion is marked by her obedience to the male rule: "You are lord of all my duty," she says to her father. "And so much duty as my mother showed to you preferring you before her father so much I challenge that I may profess due to the Moor." Not love, but a sense of duty is called upon and it is that sense of duty that condemns Desdemona to death as she cannot even defy her husband's explicit desire to murder her. "Kill me tomorrow. Let me live tonight" is the tragic fate of women under patriarchy. Emilia, through her speeches and actions, manages to buck the norm by bringing in a proto-feminist point of view; however, her life is short-lived as her reward for her progressive views is not dissimilar to Desdemona's—death by a man.

**Touch of Evil** What is "touched by evil" is that which is innocent, pure, and preferably virgin. Susan fulfils this destiny. She is utilized in the movie as bait, a sacrificial lamb, among men fighting over her honour. Her husband, who is the literal law, is there to protect her against the forces of evil. That's his manifest destiny, while Susan's is to enable his. In his memo, while explaining the reason why he split the newlyweds and used parallel editing, Orson Welles refers to the women's "classic failure to fully appreciate and sympathize with that sense of abstract duty so peculiar to the male." The so-called duty is highly gendered in the movie. For Miguel, it is his duty to protect Susan's honor so that "[n]othing's been touched by all this... filth." On the other hand, Susan's duty is to let him perform his societal duty by becoming an object that deserves to be saved. In the balcony scene where Susan is screaming for help, onlookers laugh at her, assuming that she is a prostitute and therefore does not deserve to be saved. Her body, as an object, has already been touched by evil; therefore, there is no manifest destiny or duty to be fulfilled. Susan's "polluted body is transformed and becomes invisible to her husband." It is frustrating because the movie, in the first half, introduces Susan as a courageous, powerful and strong woman who can defend herself. It's the second half that completely erases and disregards that image, turning her into a plot device amidst the men's fight for power.

**Chimes at Midnight** *Chimes at Midnight* is a film about, of and by men. When women appear on screen, they are either a prostitute, a mistress, or a nagging wife who doesn't understand the ways of men. The fact that the tavern is the only place where we see women, albeit always in a role of serving men, is an accurate portrayal of Middle Ages where women never held positions of power. There is not a woman present in the court. The only time we see a female interacting with any kind of power or royal personage is when Hotspur's wife, Kate, tries to prevent Hotspur from leaving home. Even then, she's always in the background or getting chided while Hotspur deals with courtly business.

**The Other Side of the Wind** "Men only like men," Valeska says, to which Hannaford replies: "And women keep us away from each other." This little dialogue could be interpreted as confirmation of Rich's insinuations that Hannaford possessed the girls of his leading actors so that he could possess the men. The suggestion is that Hannaford regarded women as only conduits in his attempt to possess, overpower, direct or otherwise create his actors/men. There is a sinister sexual component to this master-slave rhetoric; however, larger narrative examines gender roles, which Hannaford also seems to be breaking down in his movie. "But if I cut him off ... what will be left of him? An amputee, perhaps, an emotional basket case," Valeska completes her train of thought on men loving only men. Hannaford's tragedy is that he is tired of his own image as a despotic man who abuses men and women, hence the ending of his movie in an attempt to reverse the gender roles. He indeed becomes an emotional basket case in the end who commits suicide in a car to put an end to his own misery.

SEXUALITY

**The Trial** Women in *The Trial* are awkwardly and inexplicably attracted to the accused men. Leni uses her sexuality to manipulate the Advocate's clients, who are all men. The courtroom guard's wife is being harassed by a Law student right in the middle of K.'s defence, and everybody seems to consider this to be business as usual. The wife herself tries to seduce K. with the promise of legal help and her husband seems to be unable to prevent her. Even the little girls are driven by an inexplicable urge to touch and spy on K. in the painter's hut. The Advocate's explanation is as good as any: "It's just... something about them, something... attractive." Curiously, none of the accused in the movie are women. There seems to be a linkage between the sexuality of women and the crimes of men, both of which are mediated through the legal system.

**The Other Side of the Wind** The movie-within-a-movie represents sexuality in its many different stages. 1) Male pursuing female, 2) Male courtship, 3) Sexual tension, 4) The act of sex, 5) Female sexual empowerment. Both the male and the female actors stay muted throughout the movie, which amplifies their actions and demeanours. Dale, who plays the leading man, gets uncomfortable when The Red takes the initiative in the car despite him being the pursuer up until that moment. When, with Hannaford's directing, The Red's sexual advances turn oppressive and possibly violent, Dale walks off the set, angry at the position he was put in. That's the deeper story of the movie-within-a-movie as shown in the final scene: The Red destroys a phallus, symbolically replacing the male power with female power. Sexuality, in the movie, appears to be a function of power relations and authority.

## TIME

**The Magnificent Ambersons** "When times have gone, they aren't old, they are dead," Eugene says during the dance scene. "There aren't any times but new times." One can argue that old times never die or go away, but emerge as memories, grudges, hatred and love. And new times are not always shiny and welcoming because they can also destroy, kill, or amputate individuals, societies and families. The movie's treatment of decay has two dimensions: one is related to individual time and the other is about societal time. In the former, people remember, people get old and people live the consequences of their actions, whereas, in the latter, technological progress manufactures a slightly different time, out of synch with individual time, in which interactions are forever altered. The *Magnificent Ambersons* demonstrates the tragic friction between these two forms of time: for individuals, time is never dead, but frozen in memories and remembrances; for society, time is forever changing, creating new history every moment. It is ultimately the language of death and decay. "The point of *The Ambersons*," Orson Welles says in the 1982-documentary *Arena*, "everything that is any good in it is that part of it which was really just a preparation for the decay of *The Ambersons*."

**The Stranger** Franz Kindler / Charles Rankin and Meinike have worked in the concentration camps as a Nazi officers. They are hiding from the law. However their past catches up with them and they die at the end. Franz Kindler tries to hide his past and Agent Wilson tries to expose him in his new town.

**Mr. Arkadin** In the movie, the past emerges almost as a physical space that has a real and tangible connection with the present. Even the movie's flashback structure makes this relationship as relevant and inevitable as possible—at least as far as the Orson Welles' original conception goes. For Gregory Arkadin, the past is where his identity was forged, so it is something to be destroyed by getting rid of everyone that has a connection to it. For Sophie, too, the past is where her story was forged, but it is something to be cherished and embraced. Arkadin fears his past whereas Sophie understands it. Arkadin uses his past as a weapon, while Sophie uses it as a shield. Arkadin wants to divorce himself from the shackles of time, whereas Sophie hides herself in a protective cocoon. In each case, identity emerges as a function of the past. Both Arkadin and Sophie have new personas in the present; however, the former wants it to be isolated, while the latter appreciates its continuity.

**Touch of Evil** The story is a fast-paced murder mystery set in the present time containing no flashbacks; however, the weight of the past is felt throughout. We are given two very important characters with which to track time: Hank Quinlan and Tana. Hank's memory about his wife's murder is the main construct behind his motives and psychology. It's his first "sin" that he's been trying to undo by punishing others' "sins". Deep down, he knows that this is futile, hence his need for nostalgia and wish fulfilment. It is no coincidence that, after killing Grandi, Hank goes back to Tana's brothel because it's the place that "sure brings back memories." It's where he can find some peace in the safety of his memories. There is very little interaction between Hank and Tana. Hank sits in the chair, drinking while she plays cards. In their only interaction, Tana tells Hank that he's used up all his future,

meaning that his end is approaching. Tana, in one sense, represents the nostalgic past that Hank wants to retrieve. With her mysterious air, she is Hank's conscience and memory. She *is* time itself. "What does it matter what you say about people?" she says. Through her, we think that life is transient anyway, that we all change, and that past is in the past.

## TRANSCIENCE / APPEARANCE

***The Magnificent Ambersons*** The small Indiana town where the film is set provides the audience with a strong symbol of impermanence. The message is clear: even a powerful and wealthy family cannot fight against the current of time and progress. Eugene's prescient soliloquy is most illuminating in highlighting the precarious nature of power, wealth, progress and status as they relate to families, towns and civilizations. "With all their speed forward, [automobiles] may be a step backward in civilization," he says. "It may be that they won't add to the beauty of the world or the life of men's souls. I'm not sure. But automobiles have come." The change is here: Adapt, or perish. It is almost as if the fates of the small town and the Ambersons have already been decided the moment the idea of automobiles came about.

***Othello*** Iago is the only character in the film who splits himself into many personalities and appearances. He is a distinctly different person in almost all of his interactions with people. There is a different Iago for each and every one of them: Roderigo, Brabantio, Othello, Cassio and Emilia. He dominates, he plays the honest servant, he is the instigator and he is the trustworthy friend. Iago is none of them and also all of them, a composite psychopath who can take on any appearance to ensure he gets what he wants. In all the other characters, appearance is important as it relates to their reputation, not manipulation. Cassio is devastated after being stripped of his rank; Desdemona cannot bear being called an adulteress; and Othello wants history to reflect his name and his deeds as exactly they are.

***Mr. Arkadin*** There are several party and carnival scenes, all of which contain symbolic and at times literal references to masks, personas, hoods, and statues. The point is that the film's central characters all play a game of identity, marked by different masks and personas. Mr. Arkadin is seen wearing a mask the first time he appears on screen, a not-so-subtle reference to his façade revealed later. Similarly, Stratten, who appears to be friendly with Raina, is only trying to hide his real identity as a con-artist to get what he wants. There are also several shots of animal statues, bats hanging upside down and a flea expert, all of which could be regarded as references to the animalistic features of some characters. Arkadin, for one, makes a subtle point about himself as he tells the story of a scorpion who stings a frog that carries him across a river. "Couldn't avoid it. It's my character," the scorpion (read Arkadin) says. The flea expert makes a similar connection between crooks and fleas. "They're just the stupidest, the fleas of the world," he tells Stratten, who he knows is just another crook, a flea.

***Chimes at Midnight*** The film offers two kinds of deaths: one that takes place in battle, which is messy and bloody, and one that takes place in bed, which is likened to a peaceful sleep that "hath divorced so many English kings". When death comes for a soldier, it robs him of his life; however, when death arrives at in a king's bedroom, it merely sends him to sleep for another king to be coronated. This symbolic dichotomy reveals the different types of deaths the society conceptualizes: For monarchy, death brings the next in line, while for a soldier death takes him away, nameless.

## ORIENTALISM

***The Lady from Shanghai*** Played by a blonde Rita Hayworth, Elsa's identity as a Chinese woman is complicated. It is similar to the construction of Arthur's upper-class status: In their core, they are not what they pretend to be. Elsa is not Chinese, and Arthur does not come from an upper-class background, but they choose to wrap themselves in these cloaks for protection and influence. The reason Welles may have chosen to associate Elsa with an Asian identity is a more complicated question. There is a deep literature of Western fascination with the exotic East, which manifests itself in movies of this ilk as either sexual threat from Asian men or sexual fascination with Asian women. In Elsa's case, however, the so-called sexual threat is inverted. Instead of being the target of sexually devious Asian men, Elsa becomes the sexual threat who lures a white man into her trap as a white woman with an Asian heritage. The stereotypical expectations are, thus, subverted in the eyes of the film viewer. Yes, she's the femme fatale, but an orientalist version of it. As the scholar and poet

Michael Davidson argues, Elsa's layered identity is still the product of Western fear vis-à-vis "yellow threat" as "Caucasian woman is ruined not by villainous Asians but by associating with them."

## BORDER

***Touch of Evil*** The film plays off the idea of border on several levels. As a physical concept, border forms the setting that separates two countries, or two cultures. In some ways, this separation leads to segregation between those two parties that fall on opposite sides of the border; segregation leads to xenophobia, racism, and bigotry. A similar split occurs on a moral level between the two opposing forces: Evil and Good. The small border town, while separating the two nations, also offers a place for a showdown between good and bad. This distinction, just like the physical line of a border, gets blurry now and then. Evil, manifested as Hank, is not an irredeemable mythical devil; we are asked to feel somewhat sorry for him. In the same way, Good, in the form of Miguel Vargas, steps over the line in trying to trap Hank. The symbolic border between good and bad, like the physical line marking the border, can be lifted momentarily. Miguel, in trying to rid the world of evil, ultimately gets touched by the same.

## RACISM

***Othello*** Xenophobia and bigotry form the backbone of the story of Othello, a dark-skinned military commander who is married to the white daughter of a Venetian senator. Iago incites Desdemona's father, Brabantio, by playing off the latter's bigotry. He makes a reference to lascivious Othello's "gross clasps," creating a grotesque and subtly racist image in Brabantio's mind regarding their union: The Beauty and the Beast, so to speak. Brabantio presses charges on Othello before the council for "abusing, stealing and corrupting her by magic spell," expressing his outrage in these words: "Fair and happy would ever have to incur a general mock, run from her father to the sooty bosom of such a thing as that.<sup>4</sup>" Direct insults to Othello's body, dehumanizing references to his charm or lack thereof stem from the fact that the only sin the Moor commits is to have a darker skin when compared to fair Desdemona. That's Brabantio's real outrage, and of course, that of Iago, whose racism works in a much subtler manner. Iago's racism becomes especially clear when he starts "working" Othello. He suggests that Desdemona went against her nature by marrying Othello and not a man "[o]f her own clime, complexion, and degree." This is a below-the-belt punch to Othello's unspoken and repressed anxiety about his status, which Iago ruthlessly abuses. The green-eyed monster Iago refers to at various points in the story is never jealousy, but Othello the Dark himself.

***Touch of Evil*** It is not far-fetched to argue that Welles based Hank Quinlan on the Los Angeles Sheriff, E. Duran Ayres, who testified during the Sleepy Lagoon Trials<sup>iv</sup> as an expert witness that Mexicans as a community had a "blood-thirst" and a "biological predisposition" to killing, citing "the culture of human sacrifice practiced by their Aztec ancestors." Hank has a similar xenophobic and racist profile in his dealings with Mexican characters, treating them as inferior to himself and, by extension, to Americans. Class, socio-economic status, or level of education does not matter in Hank's bigoted mind. His marker is race. Shoe clerk or special prosecutor receive the same treatment from Hank because they share one common denominator: They are both Mexicans, and, therefore, inferior.