

**A SOCIOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF MATERIALIST  
FETISHISM IN ORSON WELLES' USE OF  
CINEMATOGRAPHY IN *CITIZEN KANE* (1941)**

**EARNEST. B. AINEMBABAZI**

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Literature at Kyambogo University Kampala. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Signed

.......... DATE 15/09/2015.....

**EARNEST. B. AINEMBABAZI**

1. ENDORSED.......... DATE 15<sup>th</sup> Sept 2015.....

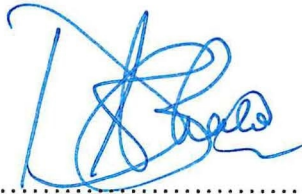
**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OKAKA OPIO DOKOTUM**

**SUPERVISOR**

## APPROVAL

This dissertation was done under the supervision of Associate Professor Okaka Opiio

Dokotum.



SIGN ..... DATE .....

15<sup>th</sup> Sept 2015

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OKAKA OPIO DOKOTUM**

**SUPERVISOR**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my beloved children Beryl and Brandon, their mother Rhoda my dear parents and my great friends Caleb and Penelope.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how Orson Welles uses deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting (chiaroscuro) and mise en scene to socially critique materialistic fetishism in *Citizen Kane*. The dissertation is premised on the analysis of materialist fetishism, how materialist fetishism breeds individualism and the ways in which materialistic individualism negatively impacts on the individual. Materialism in this dissertation is defined as an orientation that reflects the importance a consumer (person) attaches to worldly possessions (Belk, W. Russell, 291-297). A materialist is defined in this dissertation as any person who believes in Belk's philosophy. Fetishism is defined in this dissertation according to Karl Marx as "anything to which more respect or attention is given than is normal or sensible" (05). This dissertation is grounded in sociological theory, especially the views of Wilbur S. Scott, that "the relations between art and society are vitally important, and that the investigation of these relationships may organise and deepen one's aesthetic response to a work of art" (123), Austin Harrington, who writes that "sociological approaches generally possess a stronger sense of the material preconditions, historical flux and cultural diversity of discourse, practices and institutions of art" (31), and Karl Marx who insists that "literature should reflect the real world" (70).

This dissertation concludes that through the use of specific elements of style; notably deep focus photography, chiaroscuro lighting and mise en scene, Orson Welles serves up a timeless criticism of capitalism and the ills of materialism. Until society overcomes these problems, it is likely that *Citizen Kane* will continue as a perpetually contemporary reminder on what is truly important in this money driven world.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

*Citizen Kane* is a 1941 American drama film, directed by, and starring Orson Welles; it was also his first feature film. The film was nominated for Academy Awards in nine categories (New York Times: 2008); it won an Academy Award for Best Writing (Original Screenplay) by Herman Mankiewicz and Welles (1941). *Citizen Kane* was voted the greatest film of all time in five consecutive *Sight & Sound's* polls of critics, ("*Sight & Sound – Top ten*") until it was displaced by *Vertigo* in the 2012 poll. *Citizen Kane* is particularly praised for its innovative cinematography, lighting, music, and narrative structure. Kate Cameron, in her review for the *New York Daily-News*, said that *Citizen Kane* was; "one of the most interesting and technically superior films that has ever come out of a Hollywood studio" (May 2, 1941). In his review for the *New World Telegram*, William Boehnel said that the film was "staggering and belongs at once among the greatest screen achievements" (May 2, 1941). Otis Ferguson, in his review for *The New Republic*, said that *Citizen Kane* was "the boldest free-hand stroke in major screen production since Griffith and Bitzer were running wild to unshackle the camera" (June 2, 1941).

### 1.2 The synopsis of *Citizen Kane*

Charles Foster Kane, an enormously wealthy media proprietor, has been living alone in Florida in his vast estate Xanadu for the last years of his life, with a "No trespassing" sign on the gate. He dies in bed while holding a snow globe. Before his death and before the

snow globe slips from his dying hand and smashes on the floor, he utters the word "Rosebud..." Kane's death then becomes sensational news around the world. Newsreel reporter Jerry Thompson on the instruction of Lawlstone sets out to investigate Kane's private life and, in particular, to discover the meaning behind his last word; "Rosebud".

*Citizen Kane* largely underscores the vanity of materialist fetishism in the 1940s American society. In 1931, James Truslow Adams stated in *The American Epic* that to Americans; "life should be better and fuller for everyone with the opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of social class or circumstances of birth" (47). This was later to be adopted as a set of ideals for most American citizens. However, this ideology's encouragement of the rags- to- riches mentality lays great respect on material wealth to the extent of making material acquisition fetish in nature. Those who have wealth worship it and do not see anything beyond their wealth. They concentrate on personal enrichment and aggrandisement. This dissertation therefore sought to evaluate the representation materialist fetishism in *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Fetishism is the system of idolizing material things and a materialist is a person who believes in material acquisition with a total disregard of cordial interpersonal relationships. This materialist idolization is the product of the American dream gone sour. Bernard F. Dick states that "the American dream can at times become a nightmare" (355). Dick's comment hinges on his analysis of the aspirations of that dream which as reflected in *Citizen Kane*, do not come to fruition. In fact, I think the equivalent of the statement would be that chasing the American dream is like chasing one's own shadow. The study argued that Orson Welles' deviation from the norms of Classical Hollywood

Cinema was entirely to disparage the false materialistic goals of the American dream which had culminated into materialistic fetishism. Welles created a new style of filmmaking by studying various forms of movie making, and combined them to bring forth his themes. The most innovative technical aspect of *Citizen Kane* is the extended use of deep focus. In nearly every scene in the film, the foreground, background and everything in between are all in sharp focus. This helps the viewer to have a clear view of each scene in which materialism is expressed.

The study used the sociological theory of both literary and film analysis since the argument was that the film under study had a lot to offer in terms of critiquing society that was bent on the worship of material acquisition. Literary theories; notably the historical, sociological and Marxist theories were largely helpful in the analysis of the texts that supported the study. Besides, film and literature share the same theories of criticism. What changes is just the method of application and the critique but the tenets are almost similar. Much as the study was concerned with film, *Citizen Kane* is a novelistic film because of the qualities like use flashbacks, omniscient narration and symbolism that it shares with the novel and theatre like of flashbacks and the lighting which is more appropriate to theatre than cinema. Louis Giannetti asserts that “*Citizen Kane* is a social adaptation of the biography of a ruthless publishing baron; William Randolph Hurst” (536). This means that the viewers should always prepare to see a representation of society. Hurst was a social figure and adapting his life story into a film would mean reflecting some of his traits that reflected his society. Giannetti goes on to say that “almost all characters in the film are composites drawn from the lives of famous American tycoons” (536). This suggests that *Citizen Kane* is closely related to and plays

a role in criticizing the materialistic society in which it was produced. As Giannetti says, most of the characters are composites of famous “American tycoons”, and not “paupers”. The Sociological analysis was backed by Terry Eagleton and Karl Marx’s theories of Marxist criticism and historical criticism as discussed in the theoretical framework.

It is here argued that unlike most Classical Hollywood films where the narrative is propelled by psychological causation, the narrative in *Citizen Kane* is propelled; along side these psychological goals by social issues like materialism and individualism which are enshrined in individuals’ psychological goals. Charles Forster Kane’s psychological goal is finding his lost youth. His mother denied him a happy childhood in a bid to send him to where he could be trained to handle money successfully. To her, life is incomplete without money and with money she thinks that there is no other challenge a man can meet. The study also analysed the use of style in *Citizen Kane* notably the use of deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting and elaborate set design. The study mainly analysed how these three elements of style enhance the theme of materialist fetishism in *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Film critics like Thomas Bordwell and Kristin Thompson in their book Film Art; An Introduction (2004), and Janet Staiger in Classical Hollywood Cinema (1985), have made analyses of *Citizen Kane* while paying attention to style and examining how the film conforms or fails to conform to the norms of Classical Hollywood Cinema. They all conclude that *Citizen Kane* does not fully conform to the norms of Classical Hollywood Cinema. These tenets of Classical Hollywood Cinema have it that; the narrative is clearly structured with discernable beginning middle and end. The narrative generally provides



comprehensive resolution at the end. The characters goals are usually psychologically rather than socially motivated, use of continuity editing and the assertion that space and time are unified, continuous and linear. They appear as a unified whole to match our perception of time and space in reality. This is for example achieved by the 180° rule or by the relative lack of jump cuts.

It is this non conformity to Classical Hollywood Cinema that I intend to investigate with a view of linking it to the criticism of materialist fetishism in the film. On watching the film, one can observe that through the use of deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting and the mise en scene, *Citizen Kane* critiques its social background. This challenges the popular view that “the characters in classical Hollywood films are causal agents motivated by psychological rather than social concerns” (David, Bordwell, Janet, Staiger, and Kristin, Thompson, 1-59).

It was the researcher’s intention to establish how counterpoint to Classical Hollywood films, *Citizen Kane* represents its society. After a critical viewing it was discovered that Orson Welles was propelled by society’s call to have the vice of materialist fetishism exposed. This reasoning is backed by W. S. Scott’s statement that; “Art is not created in a vacuum; it is a work not of a person but of an author fixed in time and space answering to a community of which he is an important and articulate part” (123).

The study further analysed how as a work of art, *Citizen Kane* is a representation of the 1941 American society that as earlier stated was largely characterised by individualism and materialism. The analysis of this view is backed by Bordwell’s view that “a narrative can be studied as a representation; how it refers to or signifies a world or body of ideas”

(qtd in Rosen, 1986: 17 – 34). Mr. Thatcher calls Charles Forster Kane a communist and at the union square he is called a fascist. The relationship between the two ideologies is their utmost concern for the social and economic well being of the proletariat. The significance of these statements is that they introduce us to an idealistic youthful Kane who sets out to fight for the rights of the poor. He vows to ensure “that decent hard working people are not robbed blind by a pack of money mad pirates.” However, this changes as he grows up and becomes a capitalist. As society is dynamic so is Charles Forster Kane. He evolves from rags to riches. Kane’s three faces according to Bernard F. Dick (2005) represent the three faces of America.

First he is a republican editor who delegates authority to his representatives; then he is the democratic leader, promising in his declaration of principles to be a champion of human rights; finally he is the imperialist, bald and gowned, an oriental living in splendour at Xanadu (357-8).

Orson Welles directed and acted in *Citizen Kane* to dramatize the effects of capitalism on the American society.

The use of deep focus photography, expressive high-contrast lighting, and elaborate set design enhances the theme of materialist fetishism by continuously locating Kane among material possessions. Kane’s materialism is often heightened either by contrastive lighting, depth of field or framing and costumes. Therefore, Orson Welles benefits a lot from the use of style in his attempt to disparage the false goals erected by a material-driven society by depicting the tragic rise and fall of one man ultimately driven by those goals.

### 1.3 Orson Welles the Film Director

George Orson Welles was born in 1915, in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and endured a difficult childhood. His parents, Richard and Beatrice, were prominent in their community, but Richard was also an alcoholic. They separated when Welles was four. Welles and his mother moved to Chicago, where he became the focus of her hopes and dreams. “Welles could do no wrong in her eyes, and he developed a precocious sense of his own abilities.” Beatrice died when Welles was nine, (Heyer, Paul, 1-5) leaving him in the custody of his father and of Dr. Maurice Bernstein, a pediatrician to whom Beatrice had grown close because of their shared love of classical music and opera. Michael Epstein’s documentary; *Battle over Citizen Kane* reveals that when Welles was fifteen, his father died and Welles became the sole ward of Dr. Bernstein. The instability of Welles’s childhood did not thwart his talents and ambitions, and when Dr. Bernstein sent Welles to a prestigious private school, the boy thrived. His interest in the theater led him to begin producing plays at school, and his talent for writing, acting, producing, and directing caught the attention of the local media.

When Welles graduated, Dr. Bernstein sent him to Ireland with the hope that he would forget the theater. Instead, Welles made his theatrical debut in Dublin, and then went on to appear in roles in England and America. In 1934, he made his New York theatrical debut, married Virginia Nicholson, directed his first short film, and made his first radio appearance. Around this time, Welles also met John Houseman a co-founder of the Mercury Theatre, who became his business partner and mentor. After working together for several years staging plays for the Federal Theatre Project, Houseman and Welles formed the Mercury Theatre in 1937 to produce classic plays and radio specials. From

this collaboration, Mercury Theatre came on the Air. On October 30, 1938, the Mercury Theatre gave its most famous broadcast, a production of *War of the Worlds*. According to Campbell, W. Joseph, (2010), by performing the play as if it were a newscast, Welles convinced many who tuned in that aliens were invading New Jersey. Barry Norman, 2003, says that the resulting panic made Welles the most talked about actor in America.

It is, according to Giannetti; Welles's notoriety that "caught the attention of Nelson Rockefeller, co-owner of RKO Studios in Hollywood. Rockefeller felt that Welles's theatrical genius could improve the quality of RKO's pictures and urged RKO president George J. Schaefer to lure him west" (216). In proof of the point that Welles was lured, Carringer, Robert, L, writes that "Schaefer made Welles an offer he could not refuse: a contract that gave him almost total artistic control over a project from starting to finishing" (1985). This kind of contract was unprecedented and is even more remarkable because major studios of this era controlled every aspect of their product. Welles couldn't resist. Joseph McBride writes that "Welles moved to Hollywood in 1939 and died on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1985 in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, USA of heart attack" (223).

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

Film critics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2004), Louis Giannetti (2006, 2010) Bernard F. Dick (2005) and Pauline Kael (1971) have made analyses of the style of *Citizen Kane* and its social themes, especially materialism and individualism. However, none of these critics has analyzed how style enhances the theme of materialist fetishism specifically in *Citizen Kane* (1941). This study has sought to establish how the theme of

materialist fetishism was reflected through selected elements of style like deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting and the use of mise en scene.

### **1.5 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the theme of materialist fetishism in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941). This study sought to analyse how the stylistic use of deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting and the mise en scene enhanced *Citizen Kane's* social contextuality. The researcher examined how the infusion of the three techniques portrayed an expressionistic presentation of the theme of materialist fetishism in *Citizen Kane* (1941).

### **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were to;

- i. Investigate the use of deep focus photography in the portrayal of Materialist fetishism in *Citizen Kane*.
- ii. Explore how high contrast lighting reveals how materialist fetishism leads to individualism in *Citizen Kane*.
- iii. Analyse the use of mise en scene in the portrayal of the negative effects of materialistic individualism on the individual, his colleagues and his society in *Citizen Kane*.

## 1.7 Research Questions

- i. How does deep focus photography express materialistic fetishism in *Citizen Kane*?
- ii. How does the use of expressive high contrast lighting reveal how materialistic fetishism leads to individualism?
- iii. How does the mise en scene portray the negative effects of materialist individualism?

## 1.8 Significance of the Study

- The research contributes to the existing literature on *Citizen Kane*, its relationship with Hollywood films of its production era and its deviation from the norms that guided Classical Hollywood Cinema.

Basing on André Bazin's description of *Citizen Kane* as "a discourse on method because of its encyclopedic technical range" (qtd in Louis Giannetti 536), the researcher expects the work to contribute to the elucidation on the style of Orson Welles' film.

This research will be a humble addition to film studies references that there are in the Kyambogo University Barclays Library.

### 1.1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study has used the sociological theory of literary criticism to analyse the film. According to Wilbur S. Scott, Sociological critics postulate that "the relations between art and society are vitally important, and that the investigation of these relationships may

organise and deepen one's aesthetic response to a work of art" (123). He goes on to assert that "art is not created in a vacuum; it is a work not of a person but of an author fixed in time and space, answering to a community of which he is an important and articulate part" (123).

In his article; "*Literature as an institution*" Harry Levin writes that; "...the relations between literature and society are reciprocal; Literature is not only the effect of the social causes but also a cause of social effects" (qtd in Scott; 126). This emphasizes the interdependence between literature and its society. For the sake of *Citizen Kane*, Levin's assertion applies to *Citizen Kane* both as a cause of social effects and an effect of social causes. It is an effect of social causes through its criticism of social vices like materialism and individualism. According to Austin Harrington, "sociological approaches generally possess a stronger sense of the material preconditions, historical flux and cultural diversity of discourse, practices and institutions of art," (31). Harrington argues that pieces of art can serve as "normative sources of social understanding in their own right," (207). As Harrington observes, there are several methods of regarding art from a sociological perspective, and considering the sociological element is essential because art is inevitably full of references and commentaries on the present day society. Sociological critics therefore look at exactly how such references and commentaries function within the work of art, so that codification of their method is possible. I personally would define sociological criticism as criticism that focuses on the social context that the literature is created in, analyzes social issues and uses the literature as a social commentary.

This research has been premised on the Marxist branch of sociological criticism. According to Terry Eagleton, a leading Marxist critic, the task of Marxist literary criticism "is to show the text as it cannot know itself, to manifest those conditions of its making (inscribed in its very letter) about which it is necessarily silent" (428). According to Georg Lukacs, (1963); "literature should reflect the real world" (70). He does not mean that it should be a mirror of society by for example giving detailed descriptions of its physical contents or its patterns of behaviour. His argument is that literature should represent the economic tensions as described in Marx's writings. Lukacs believes that literature might even distort in order to represent the "truth" about society. This rhymes with German expressionism in film criticism where directors created films subjectively to portray social reality. Sergei Eisenstein, a renowned film scholar and director was another supporter of Marxist ideas. For example he begins his article "*A Dialectic Approach to Film Form*" with the following quote: "According to Marx and Engels, the dialectic system is the only conscious reproduction of the dialectic course (substance) of the external events of the world" (45). The concept of dialectic (a method of examining and discussing ideas in order to find the truth, in which two opposing ideas are compared in order to find a solution that includes them both) that Eisenstein has in mind is not only a way of thinking but instead resembles or even reproduces the way the world really works. In other words reality is dialectical; a way of thinking that tries to grasp this reality therefore has itself to be dialectical too.

This study has also used the historical theory of both film and literary criticism which according to Bernard F. Dick "places the text within its time" (350). This was because the study has been interested in relating *Citizen Kane* to the society in which it was produced.



This society idolized material wealth. According to Joe, X, Kennedy and Dana Gioia (1995), this approach “seeks to understand a work of art by investigating the social, cultural, and intellectual context that produced it - a context that necessarily includes the artist’s biography and milieu” (1798). To them the key goal for historical critics is to understand the effect of a literary work upon its readers.

## **1.10 Review of Related Literature**

### **1.10.1 Literature review on Deep focus and Materialist Fetishism**

In common usage, materialism refers to the belief that material objects are important and valuable. Thus, a materialistic person is someone who values material objects highly and, shifting from a psychological to a sociological perspective, a materialistic culture is one in which most people value material objects highly. This is a neutral definition of the word's core meaning. Materialism has been defined as an orientation that reflects the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions (Belk, W. Russell, 291-297) and others have suggested that it is a manifestation of psychological traits such as envy, non-generosity, and possessiveness. However, Richins and Dawson (478-481) have argued that materialism is better characterized as a value that guides people's choices and conduct in a variety of situations. According to these researchers, it is the value that an individual places on the acquisition and possession of material goods that guides his/her choices and conduct in a variety of situations. Most recent studies, in addition to this work, have adopted the value concept of materialism over earlier trait-based concepts.

According to Belk W. Russell (1985), the three traits that best characterize materialism (envy, possessiveness, and non-generosity) bear weak to moderate negative correlations with happiness and life satisfaction (265-280). Using Belk's definition, Dawson has reported materialism to be negatively correlated with material satisfaction (363-384) and positively correlated with social anxiety (Schroeder and Dugal 1995) and measures of depression (Wachtel and Blatt 1990). Studies that have treated materialism as a value as opposed to a negative trait (e.g, Richins 1987; Richins and Dawson 1992) have generally yielded similar findings. Richins and Dawson (1992) define materialism as an organizing,

central value leading to value orientations of three types: acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success. Acquisition centrality occurs when people place possessions and their acquisition at the center of their lives. Acquisition as the pursuit of happiness suggests that acquisition is carried out for pleasure or self-satisfaction.

The Oxford Advanced Learners Encyclopedic Dictionary defines materialism, as “the obsession with material and bodily possessions while rejecting spiritual values.” It is a belief or theory that only material things exist. The same dictionary defines a materialist as any person who has an excessive belief and interest in material things. According to Karl Marx, “a fetish is any thing to which more respect or attention is given than is normal or sensible” (05) He goes on to define fetishism as “the perception of social relationships not as relationships among people but as economic relationships among money and commodities in the market place” (05). All these definitions of materialism, materialist and fetishism fit in well with the presentation of materialist fetishism in *Citizen Kane* because just like it is defined wealth is looked at as something of a supernatural bearing. For example Mary Kane believes that by training her son in the art of making and maintaining wealth, she would have bought him lifetime happiness. This reasoning is backed by Bernard F. Dick who writes that the narrative in *Citizen Kane* “encourages rags to riches optimism and places material values before spiritual ones” (357). This resonates with James Truslow Adams’ 1930 statement of the American dream in his The Epic of America that “life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of social class or circumstances of birth” (47).

Related to the materialist fetishism, which forms the core of the narrative in *Citizen Kane* Dick writes that “Charles Forster Kane was an heir to his mother’s belief that the purchasing power of money is infinite” (356). He sights a number of scenes in which Kane attempts to use money to buy things like love, happiness and even a musical career for his wife Susan Alexander Kane. As earlier quoted in this chapter, Scholars like Louis Giannetti and Bernard F. Dick state that Forster Kane becomes isolated the more he gets money. Their statements are in line with Frank Smith Pittman’s argument that “people who accumulate high wealth often have a special talent and are single-mindedly dedicated to its development and marketing, resulting in scant time for personal relationships” (461–472). This lack of time for personal relationships is reflected in *Citizen Kane*. Charles Forster Kane fails in his marriages. He marries twice and divorces twice. First his marriage to Emily Norton is soured by lack of time as seen during the breakfast montage. He spends too much time in the news paper printing room just because that is where his heart is. Susan Alexander Kane also divorces him for reasons related to lack of compassion and for selfishness. He forces her into singing just because he feels and thinks that the purchasing power of money is infinite. He thinks he can buy her a singing career when she actually had no talent.

Welles’ use of the three dimensional space helps him to depict Kane’s immense power as well as his limited choices. This is backed by film scholars Pramaggiore and Wallis (2006), who write that deep focus is the technique in which “objects remain in focus from positions very near the camera to points at some points from it” (128). They argue that directors like Wyler, Welles and John Ford composed in depth and that “deep focus

cinematography permits many planes to remain in focus to accentuate the interplay among several levels of meaning” (128).

### **1.10.2 Review on Individualism and Expressive High Contrast Lighting**

*Citizen Kane* highlights the struggle that often exists between the private and internal reality that makes up the essence of each individual, and its distillation in objective reality. The theme of individualism is largely underscored in the film to the extent that it is expressed as a result of materialist fetishism. In *Citizen Kane*, the more the protagonist yearns for more wealth, the more he becomes isolated and individualistic. According to Rothwell, J. Dan (2010),

Individualistic culture is a society which is characterized by individualism, not collectivism. The individualism-collectivism dimension is one of the most important of the value dimensions, which occur when varying degrees of importance are placed on those deeply felt views of what is right, good, and worthwhile, that distinguish cultures from one another (65–84).

In Rothwell’s argument, Individualistic cultures are oriented around the self, independent instead of identifying with a group mentality. They see each other as only loosely linked, and value personal goals above those of the group. Individualistic cultures tend to have a more diverse population, and are characterized by emphasis on personal achievements and a rational assessment of both the beneficial and detrimental aspects of relationships with others (ibid). In agreement with Rothwell, Pitman writes that; “people who accumulate high wealth often have a special talent and are single-mindedly dedicated to its development and marketing, resulting in scant time for personal relationships...” (461–472). The resultant challenge is that they become self centered as we see in the

character of Charles Forster Kane in *Citizen Kane*. Jedediah Leland says of the protagonist that he never listened to anyone except to himself.

Welles manipulated light with tremendous skill, and, though legend has it that Toland went round quietly after Welles and adjusted his set-ups, many of Welles' theatre designs for his 1936 *Macbeth* found their way into *Citizen Kane*, notably the lighting of the Thatcher Library, with its parallel bars of vertical light, and the side lighting in the Inquirers office which casts long gloomy shadows emphasizing the depressing mood in the office after Kane's election defeat. Shadows were also used to frame characters so that, for example, only Leland is visible in the audience for Kane's political rally; the rest of the crowd are obscured by shadows.

Lighting in *Citizen Kane* is predominantly done in many scenes by using high-intensity arc lamps, which according to Giannetti had been recently introduced for Technicolor production. Lighting is used by Welles to set the mood and reinforce feelings. "High-key lighting is used in scenes early in Kane's life, when he's still an idealist, while strong shadows appear as he ages and becomes more cynical". Bordwell and Thompson (2004), write that;

High key lighting is a form of lighting that found its place in cinema due to its suitability for the three point lighting system. High key lighting uses light in a way that creates a low amount of contrast between the brighter and darker areas of a particular shot. This type of lighting can be used in many different types of shots and for various purposes. There are usually very few shadows in a scene shot implementing high key lighting, especially on the principle characters or focus of the scene. (217)

Lighting in *Citizen Kane* was used to emphasize the social conditions of the film's production times. It is actually more fitting to theatre than film and it could have been used to enable the audience easily discern the director's motives.

According to Louis Giannetti (2006), "Lighting in *Citizen Kane* is formalistic, more appropriate for theatre than film. Many scenes are lit by high-intensity arc lamps, which had been recently introduced for Technicolor production." He goes on to write that "Lighting is used by Welles to set the mood and reinforce feelings. Giannetti emphasises the transition of Kane from childhood to adulthood. Kane moves from being an idealist to a cynic." One scene that uses lighting effectively; is in the newspaper's screening room; coupled with smoke, it looks like the depths of Hell. The most potent use of lighting however is in the Declaration of Principles scene. Half of Kane's face is steeped in shadow as he first reads and then signs the document, while his two friends, who realize the impossibility of his adhering to these principles, are in full light. The symbolism that Kane did not or was not about to honour his promise was obvious. The varied lighting makes it clear to the audience that Charles Forster Kane has got a side of his character that is not known to the rest of the world and the declaration of principles could be a sham. Kane himself later calls it an "antic" because he realizes he had failed to adhere to it.

Light often pours in from a single source, as at the Thatcher Library to make the manuscript which is the main object of interest more important than anything visible in the room. Also, while most films made at the time were lit from above, many scenes here are lit from below. This was necessitated by the use of extreme low angles, which helped in the presentation of bigger than reality characters like Charles Kane who towers over

every other character he shares the frame with. This would not be possible with high angle shots. According to Louis Giannetti (2010), *Citizen Kane* is the first film to feature ceilings. Also, the reporter's face is always steeped in shadow. This reflects both the fact that Thompson's search for Rosebud's identity would be in vain, and it is the quest, not the reporter himself, that is important. After all, if Thompson had been filmed in bright light, he might have become the film's protagonist.

*Citizen Kane* systematically employs contrasting levels of brightness within a frame to convey the nature of its characters' identities. Nowell-Smith reveals that; "The film's cinematographer, Gregg Toland, was celebrated for his recurrent application of chiaroscuro, or extremely low-key lighting, throughout the film" (262). Susan Hayward explains further "that the effect of contrasting light and dark within one shot can be used to signal character ambiguity" (17). When Kane first announces his "Declaration of Principles," his whole figure is hidden from the audience by shadow; notwithstanding he is the center of attention in the shot. This lighting technique serves as a warning to the active spectator of the protagonist's moral ambiguity. While Kane assures Bernstein that his promises will be kept, surely enough he later refers to the "Declaration of Principles" as nothing more than "an antique." This resonates with Laura Mulvey's assertion that, "By its very use of inconsistency and contradiction, the film warns the audience against any reliance on the protagonists as credible sources of truth" (222). To the active spectator, the distribution of light in context of the frame can signify character ambiguity, like the changes in Mr. Kane's identity throughout the film.



### **1.10.3 Review on the Effects of Materialistic Individualism and Mise en Scene**

Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* was used as a tool to disparage the effects of materialism to society. These effects include individualism which itself affects individuals in the film. For example it is as a result of individualism that Kane dies an isolated man. Mise en scene has been upheld in this study as the arrangement of everything that appears in the framing; actors, lighting, decor, props, and costume. It is a French term that means "placing on stage." The frame and camerawork also constitute the mise en scene of a movie. These effects were brought up through the elaborate set design or as used in this study, the mise en scene. According to Thomas Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2003), when applied to the cinema, "mise en scene refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement; composition, sets, props, actors, costumes, sounds, and lighting" (175).

Andre Bazin, a well-known French film critic and film theorist, describes the mise en scene aesthetic as "emphasizing choreographed movement within the scene rather than through editing" (qtd in Pramaggiore, Maria, and Tom Wallis, 132).

Jean Mitry and Christopher King aver that mise en scene is sometimes used to "represent a style of conveying the information of a scene primarily through a single shot; often accompanied by camera movement" (178). Almost all Film scholars seem to agree on three things; that mise en scene is concerned with the way the setting is designed and arranged and that it conveys the film director's message.

In *Citizen Kane*, the technique is used to emphasize the degree of materialism and finally portrays how an acute degree of materialism can add up to nothing leading to frustration, loneliness and disillusionment as seen in the life of Charles Forster Kane.

For purposes of this study, the definition of materialism by Richins and Dawson (1992) in 1.2.1 has been upheld. They define materialism as “an organizing, central value leading to value orientations of three types: acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success” (345). Acquisition centrality occurs when people place possessions and their acquisition at the center of their lives. Acquisition as the pursuit of happiness suggests that people’s drive to amass wealth is carried out for pleasure or self-satisfaction.

In *Citizen Kane*, the viewer sees the futility of the goals of materialism. First of all Mrs. Kane’s goal of buying happiness to her son Charles Forster Kane crumbles as the son dies before realizing the happiness that he expected to get from material acquisition. It is out of materialism that Kane fails in his two marriages; at the beginning we are introduced to Emily’s complaints about the much time that her husband spends at the newspaper offices. Consequently their souring relationship is seen through the distance between them during the breakfast montage. Louis Giannetti and Scott Eyman describe the film as “a peculiarly American story of how the goals of success, money and power pursued without defining reasons can turn rancid and destroy love” (218). *Citizen Kane* traces the life of Charles Forster Kane, inheritor of a mining fortune who grows up to become a flamboyant news paper tycoon. According to Giannetti and Eyman, the idea of the futility of money to bring happiness and success is brought by the fact that;

Kane is gradually alienated from romance, from love and from life itself by the ossifying blanket of his money and the will to power that it breeds. Kane becomes an artifact of his own fame and an increasingly remote speck of humanity adrift in the vast halls of his palatial home Xanadu (217).

Scholars have argued that materialism has got negative effects on a person's life. Deiner, for example, has also argued that "to a larger extent the high productivity associated with affluence involves little leisure time; people become increasingly prone to distress," (57) as economist Juliet Schor has described how the pressures to work, acquire, and consume tend to deplete personal energies (49). In *Citizen Kane*, such pressures break down Kane. In the ending scenes of the film, Kane is always shot alone in isolation and indeed as already discussed; it is the pressure to acquire that leads to Kane's death in seclusion. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has reasoned that "to the extent that most of one's psychic energy becomes invested in material goals; it is typical for sensitivity to other rewards, friendships, art, literature, natural beauty, religion and philosophy become less and less interesting," (823). This reasoning supports the plot of *Citizen Kane* in the way that in the film, Charles Kane lost all his friendships with Jedediah Leland, and his wives Emily and Susan Alexander as a result of materialism.

Jan Szczepanski (1985) defines individualism as wanting to be different; just to be different. He says that individualistic characters also tend to be greedy: each individual strives to get as big a slice of the social pie as he or she can generally with the result that others get less. Szczepanski sees capitalist America as a model of individualism, where everybody competes to get more for him or her self. This form of individualism has got negative effects on the society and the individual himself. This argument, for the

purposes of this dissertation, underscores the relationship between capitalistic America and *Citizen Kane*.

Critically, *Citizen Kane* underscores the failure of the American affluent society where there is massive unemployment, homelessness and frustration. The film reveals through mise en scene that all these social ills come up as a result of the astute belief in individualism and materialism. In The Good Society, (1991) sociologist Robert Bellah and his coauthors challenge Americans to take a good look at themselves. Faced with growing homelessness, rising unemployment, crumbling highways, and impending ecological disaster, their response is one of apathy, frustration, cynicism, and retreat into their private worlds. The social problems confronting them then, the authors argue, are largely the result of failures of their institutions, and their response, largely the result of their failure to realize the degree to which their lives were shaped by institutional forces and the degree to which they, as a democratic society, could shape those forces for the better. What prevents Americans from "taking charge" is, according to the authors, their long and abiding allegiance to individualism -- the belief that "the good society" is one in which individuals are left free to pursue their private satisfactions independently of others, a pattern of thinking that emphasizes individual achievement and self-fulfillment.

In agreement with Bellah, Steven Lukes, in his book Individualism (1973) expounds upon the topic of individualism. He defines individualism with words that appeal to self-interest and individual advancement. To Lukes, individualism is socially detached from the community and focuses only on individualism as it satisfies individual wants and needs (167). He claims these individual concerns must be addressed in order for a people

to truly be free. Any requirement or expectation that the individual would consider community concerns would decrease that individual's freedom. He claims that a person can be free only when he or she is completely left alone to do whatever he or she wants to do. On the other hand, John Dewey, in The Public and its Problems (1927), provides insight into the problems that individualism creates for a democratic society. Dewey contends that any society that advances individualism as a pillar of its political, economic or social philosophy is destined for trouble, as the doctrine of individualism is false. It is incorrect to conclude that because thought and action originate with the individual, then the subject of the thought and action only concerns the individual. Dewey further stated that: "Nothing has been discovered which acts in entire isolation" (22).

While Social Darwinists argue that it is not nature's way for people to help the less successful members of society, Dewey argues that people exist naturally in relation to, and in association with one another. It is not the natural state of humans to live as individualists (95). Dewey believes that it is not the conflict between individual and group interests that pose problems for people in society, but rather the conflict individuals feel among their own various group interests. People are unable to balance the interests of the several groups they may belong to, and so they retreat to the individual level so that they do not have to take any responsibility for the direction and activities of the groups (147). Dewey concludes that people are determined to create this conflict between individualism and community interests. This view further promotes the idea that individualism is on the side of democracy and community interests are on the side of some dark and sinister socialist ideal. In response to this notion, Dewey argues that the community supports the mission of democracy in ways that individualism just cannot.

Specifically, Dewey states that the democratic values of fraternity, liberty and equality are impossible without community (149). Dewey believes that things can at once be individual and social, and that the antithesis between these two states of being is an artificial construct. We must get past this antithesis and accept that all things individual are defined by their relationship to other things (e.g. a tree stands alone but must be rooted in the soil) (186).

Democracy requires the group as a whole to know its needs, its goals and its plan to achieve them. When people live a purely individualist existence, the dialogue does not exist to meet this requirement. Democracy requires community life: “In its deepest and richest sense a community must always remain a matter of face-to-face intercourse” (211). Along these same lines, Herbert Croly, in “Progressive Democracy”, argues that the individual can only “be effective as a member of a party” (qtd in Merriam 418). The existence of the individual and his rights is supported by the success and advancement of society as a whole. When living under a democratic system, one must appreciate and respect the role of the group and necessity of group and community participation for the democracy to thrive. When individualism is promoted as a social ideal, and people are discouraged to help others and to withdraw into their own world, democracy begins to malfunction. Designed to represent the majority will, democracy begins to represent only the interests of those who participate. It can certainly be argued that those who still choose to participate are not representative of the majority of the people.

Individualism as an economic ideal, or capitalism, creates an economic system that rewards only a portion of the participants. It is for this reason that materialist fetishism in

*Citizen Kane*, its effects and how these effects are manifested through film style underlines the excesses of capitalism and addiction for staff.

#### **1.10.4 Definition of Terms**

##### **Materialist**

A materialist in this study is a person who believes in material acquisition with a total disregard of cordial interpersonal relationships. This study will uphold The Oxford Advanced Learners Encyclopedic Dictionary's definition of a materialist as any "person who has an excessive belief and interest in material things." (245)

##### **Materialism**

The study upholds The Oxford Advanced Learners Encyclopedic Dictionary definition of materialism, as "the obsession with material and bodily possessions while rejecting spiritual values. It is a belief or theory that only material things exist". (245)

##### **Fetishism**

The study upholds Karl Marx's definition of Fetishism as the process of according abnormal respect more than is normal to material things. According to Marx, "a fetish is anything to which more respect or attention is given than is normal or sensible" (05)

##### **Deep focus Photography**

In this dissertation, deep focus is defined as the technique in which objects remain in focus from positions very near the camera to points at some points from it. The foreground, mid ground and the back ground are all visible. Louis Giannetti and Scott Eyman describe deep focus photography as "a technique which permits all distance planes to remain clearly in focus, from close-up ranges to infinity" (587).

### **High Contrast Lighting (Chiaroscuro)**

Chiaroscuro is the use of strong contrasts between light and dark, usually bold contrasts affecting a whole composition. Chiaroscuro is also a technical term used by artists and art historians for using contrasts of light to achieve a sense of volume in modeling three-dimensional objects such as the human body. Similar effects in the lighting of cinema and photography are also often called chiaroscuro.

### **Mise en scene**

In this dissertation, mise en scene refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement composition, sets, props, actors, costumes, sounds, and lighting.

Andre Bazin, a well-known French film critic and film theorist, describes the mise-en-scene aesthetic as “emphasizing choreographed movement within the scene rather than through editing” (qtd in Pramaggiore, and Wallis, 132). According to Jean Mitry; Christopher King, the term is sometimes used to “represent a style of conveying the information of a scene primarily through a single shot—often accompanied by camera movement” (178).

#### **1.11.0 Research Methodology**

This was a library based research conducted in Kyambogo University Barclays library and Makerere University’s main libraries. The researcher used qualitative research design because the research was more concerned with presenting and analyzing views in the film text. The researcher analysed how style; mainly deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting and the mise en scene enhanced meaning in the film as it is structured in the procedure of the study below.



### **1.11.1 Sources of Data**

The study used Orson Welle's film; *Citizen Kane* as the primary source of data. Secondary sources of data were Thomas Lennon and Michael Epstein's 1996, documentary; *Battle over Citizen Kane* and works on sociological criticism like Terry Eagleton's (1976) Marxism and Literary Criticism, (1983) Literary Theory: An Introduction, Peter Demetz's (1959) Marx, Engels and The Poets: Origins Of Marxism Criticism. The study also relied on historical critics like Robert E Spiller's (1967) The Cycle of American Literature; An Essay in Historical Criticism. The study also upheld David Forgacs' "Marxist Literary Theories" In *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction* (1983). For the sociological interpretation of the film, the researcher read Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis' (2006) Film: A Critical Introduction and Bernard F. Dick's (2005) Anatomy of Film. Lastly, the researcher used Wilbur S. Scott's, (1962) The Five Approaches of Literary Criticism.

### **1.11.2 Data Quality Control**

The study used both literary and film theories to guide the researcher through a critical viewing and analysis of the film *Citizen Kane*. This was to ensure that the data collected was valid and dependable in relation to the research topic by emphasizing the tenets of sociological criticism. As already discussed in the theoretical framework, these theories included Sociological criticism, Historical and Marxist criticism.

### **1.11.3 Data Analysis Techniques**

Data in this study was analyzed qualitatively using document analysis technique. Data was collected in three categories; that pertaining to deep focus photography and how it

expresses a culture of materialistic fetishism in *Citizen Kane*. The use of expressive high contrast lighting and the ways through which it reveals how materialistic fetishism breeds individualism and lastly the data that concerned with how the negative effects of materialistic individualism are portrayed through the technical use of the mise en scene. In analyzing this data, Aumont Jacques and Michele Marie's (1988) Iconic analysis also known as the picture and sound approach which seeks to understand how different images, sound and pictorial elements convey the meaning of film was used.

#### **1.11.4 Procedure of the Study**

In analyzing primary data, the researcher made; a focused critical viewing of *Citizen Kane*, and then Epstein's *Battle over Citizen Kane*, then critically read literature related to Sociological, Marxist and the Historical schools of literary and film criticism and then proceeded to do a sociological analysis of the film. The researcher grouped data in three categories each under its sub title as follows; the expression of the theme of materialistic fetishism in *Citizen Kane* through deep focus photography, the expression of how materialist fetishism leads to individualism through expressive high contrast lighting and the portrayal of the negative effects of materialist individualism through the mise en scene.

#### **1.11.5 Limitations to the Study**

During the process of the study, the researcher anticipated the following challenges;

- i. Interference in watching the film and access to the internet due the rampant electricity load shedding.
- ii. The ever increasing price of stationery.

- iii. Lack of sufficient related literature both in the two libraries and on the internet as most of the scholarly journals require initial subscription to be accessed.
- iv. Lack of enough funds to travel to other libraries to look for related literature.
- v. Lack of enough contact time with my research supervisor due the distance between the university and my area of residence.

#### **1.11.6 Tentative solutions to the problems**

- i. The researcher made DVDs of the films that he needed to watch so that he could use both a computer and a TV screen to watch the films at his convenience. The computer (Laptop) was important during times when there were power blackouts.
- ii. For the unstable prices of stationery, the researcher stocked enough stationery materials when the prices were low and bought a moderate priced printer to reduce on the cost of printing.
- iii. The researcher bought an internet modem and subscribed to some of the scholarly journals for example “Jstor” and “PubMed” so as to rectify the challenge of the lack of sufficient literature related to his work.

#### **1.11.7 Chapter breakdown**

##### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study**

This chapter looks at biography of the Orson Welles, the director of *Citizen Kane*. Attention was paid to his early childhood, his family and his life as an actor and film director. The chapter also contains the synopsis of *Citizen Kane*, its production and critical reception in America upon its release in 1941. The chapter comprises of statement

of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, review of related literature, definition of terms and research methodology.

### **Chapter 2: Deep Focus and the Expression of Materialist Fetishism**

This chapter investigates the theme of materialist fetishism and how it is expressed through the technical use of deep focus photography in *Citizen Kane* (1941). The investigation of the theme of materialist fetishism in this chapter was further grounded into the use of the contribution of other elements of cinematography which are closely linked to deep focus photography. These included the use of long takes and close-ups. The analysis of deep focus considered shots done with a camera that allowed everything within the film frame, whether in the fore, middle or background, to be in focus.

### **Chapter 3: Lighting and the revelation of Materialist Fetishism and Individualism**

This chapter comprises of the ways in which expressive high contrast lighting is used to reveal how materialist fetishism leads to individualism in *Citizen Kane* (1941). In the analysis of this theme, the study concerns its self with life of the protagonist; Charles Forster Kane who is isolated from all that is near him including his parents because of the need for the acquisition of material wealth or the protection of material wealth. The chapter further concerns itself with the investigation of how the director brought out the theme of individualism through the use of expressive high contrast lighting in the film. Orson Welles did a great job of using this colour scheme to his advantage by displaying ingenious lighting moments. He presents many scenes or characters in shadows and others in light to give messages about both plot and characters.

#### **Chapter 4: Mise en scene and the Portrayal of the Negative Effects of Individualism**

This chapter contains the investigation of the negative effects of materialistic individualism in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*. The investigation is centered on the effective use of mise en scene and how it helps to reveal the effects of individualism. The chapter further concerns itself with the investigation of the use of the elements of the mise en scene such as setting, props and costumes and figure placement and movement. The chapter is concluded with the findings on how the selected elements of mise en scene help to reveal the effects of individualism as dramatized in the *Citizen Kane*.

#### **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This chapter sets out the findings of the study which was based on Orson Welles' 1941 film *Citizen Kane* which mirrored and critiqued the social and economic situation in the United States of America at the time. The chapter also discusses how the study critically analysed how materialist fetishism and its subsequent effects like individualism were satirized through the use of elements of style like deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting and the use the mise en scene. Under mise en scene, attention was paid to framing, costumes and figure placement and movement.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 DEEP FOCUS AND THE EXPRESSION OF MATERIALIST FETISHISM

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the theme of materialist fetishism and how it is expressed through the technical use of deep focus photography in *Citizen Kane* (1941). In analyzing this theme, the chapter was further grounded into the investigation of the contribution of other elements of cinematography which are closely linked to deep focus photography. These included the use of long takes and close-ups. The analysis of deep focus considered shots done with a camera that allowed everything within the film frame, whether in the fore, middle or background, to be in focus. According to Fabe Marilyn (2004), deep focus photography coupled with Welles' use of long takes, permits that;

Our eyes have the same freedom to wander around the screen image as we have in the theater. We can focus on the actor who is speaking or instead watch the actor who is listening. Our eyes can move around the frame focusing on whatever we choose (84-85).

This means that the deep focus shots were heavily detailed, with people, objects and action shown simultaneously in all three grounds.

#### 2.2 Charles Forster Kane's Childhood

According to the Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges; "there are shots with admirable depth, shots whose farthest planes are no less precise and detailed than the closest in *Citizen Kane*" (12). In nearly every scene in the film, the foreground, background and everything in between was all shot in deep focus. One important scene shot in deep focus occurs early in the film, in the Kanes' cabin. Mrs. Kane is signing papers allowing her son to leave home and be raised by the bank in figure (2:1)

Figure 2:1 (00:09-1:55)



We see Mrs. Kane and Thatcher at the right foreground, Mr. Kane at the left middle ground and young Charlie Kane playing in the snow in the center background, of the screen. This shot introduces to the viewer the idea of materialist fetishism. First, the gist of the meeting was to formalise the send off of young Charles Kane to learn the art of accumulating and managing wealth. Secondly, under normal circumstances where spiritual values are considered ahead of material ones, it would be unheard of for a parent to forsake the upbringing of his/her child all in the name of learning the art of making and managing wealth. Her actions echo Bernard F. Dick's argument that the narrative in *Citizen Kane* "encourages rags to riches optimism and places material values before spiritual ones" (357). Dick is very correct because through the close-up on the face of Mrs. Kane, it becomes evidently clear that much as she is making an attempt to buy happiness for her son, she herself is not happy. Her face is sad and resigned compared to the young Charles Kane who is seen through the window playing happily. The contrast is made possible by having the whole scene in focus at the same time. Another spectacular

thing about this scene is Mr. Kane's reactions. From the beginning of the shot he has been bitter with the idea of sending their son to the banker. The feeble protests of Jim Kane against the imminent departure of his son, to be raised as a ward of the bank represented by Thatcher, collapse completely when Thatcher mentions that the couple will be entitled to \$50,000 a year for the rest of their lives. "Well, let's hope it's all for the best," Jim Kane sighs in acquiescence. Best as it was, nobody seemed to smile. The viewer is able to judge that if the agreement did not accord any material benefits to Mr. Kane then the whole scene would be violent because by the body language, Jim Kane appeared to be preparing to grab the agreements that Thatcher and Mrs. Kane were signing. When his rage subsides he too like his wife begins foreseeing a golden future for his son. He tells Charles Forster Kane that he probably would one day be the world's richest man. Everything in this shot emphasizes the glorification of materialism for example young Kane is shot alone playing in the coldness of the snow without any human company. The only company he has is that of his most adored sledge. The sledge is also a material object.

As already discussed, deep focus photography brings all shots in focus therefore giving the audience a chance to choose what to view. At the congressional investigation scene, all the nineteen faces are in focus. Figure 2:2 is an illustration of this shot.



Figure 2:2 (00:07:01)



The depth in the shot helps the viewer to analyse the relationship between Thatcher and his friends. Having all the faces in focus, the viewer is able to see the larger extent to which each of the investigators agreed with Thatcher's characterization of Kane in his final statement that;

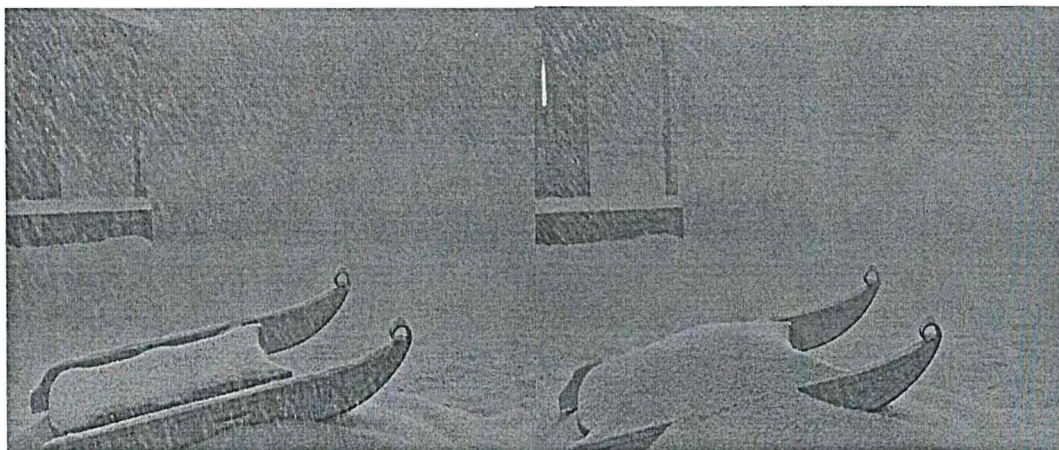
Charles Forster Kane, in every essence of his social belief and by the dangerous manner in which he has consistently attacked the American traditions of private property, initiative and opportunity for advancement is nothing more or less than a communist.

This statement is a manifestation of James Truslow Adams' 1930 statement of the American dream in his The Epic of America that "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of social class or circumstances of birth" (47). According to Thatcher, Kane should stop the awakening of the masses to claim their economic rights. At a distance from Thatcher, the viewer is able to see all the members in the shot heartily laughing at Thatcher for having brought up such an *enfant terrible* (a young successful person who behaves in a way that is shocking but also amusing). They remind him of how the young

boy personally attacked him in the stomach with a sledge. The deep focus in this shot reveals that all these people who are actually a representation of the materialistic American society believe that Kane was against materialism and individualism which were and still are the key tenets of capitalism. In the first place the meeting had been convened to discuss the character of Kane and the danger he was posing to the companies that dealt with extortion of money from the masses. This scene would also be better equated to the description of capitalists and capitalism in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Devil on the Cross and Petals of Blood. The rich men like Chui, Kimeria and Mzigo in Petals Of Blood and Kihaahu Wa Gatheca, Kimenderi Wa Kanywangi in Devil on the Cross are united to devour the flesh of unsuspecting low class peasants whom Kane called the decent hard working people that he set out to see that they were not robbed blind by a pack of money mad pirates.

At the Colorado home, Charles Forster Kane leaves his sledge in the snow. The deep focus shot shows the sledge being fully covered by snow as seen in figure (2.3)

Figure 2:3 (00:23:38)



The shot covers an expanse of space that is virtually empty save for the piling snow to indicate the seeming emptiness of Kane's background. To emphasise this depth, Welles used a long take in which the old sled dissolves out and the sledge which had been given by Thatcher as a Christmas gift dissolves in. The importance of this scene is that it shows how the young Kane was unimpressed by the new sledge which was a symbol of his newly acquired status of wealth and power. The shot emphasizes the amount of material objects that surround the two people; a bigger than life Christmas tree and through the windows, magnificent buildings are seen. What was covered by the snow (the old sled which symbolized Kane's humble background), was the only thing that made the young boy happy. Kane's cynical face as seen through a close-up shot is a clear dismissal of his mother's belief in the purchasing power of money to the extent of dreaming that it could buy happiness. This shot proves that Dawson (1988) was right to argue that "materialism is negatively correlated with material satisfaction and happiness" (363-384.) Still in Thatcher's memoirs, when Kane had turned twenty five years and was, therefore, to receive full ownership of his property from Thatcher and company, the shot is taken in deep focus. This depth helps the viewer to see the importance attached to material things. The two men are shot amidst material objects which in a way dwarf them. The carpet is classy the walls seem to be so near and this creates a rather claustrophobic atmosphere. Through the windows, one could see a number of buildings which are a symbol of wealth. This is not a surprise as the meeting had been organized to hand over the full management of Kane's holdings to Charles Forster Kane himself and to initiate him into the club of billionaires.

### 2.3 Charles Forster Kane the Newspaper man

In the scene in Kane's news paper office in the morning on which Mr. Carter is fired, the human characters are shot surrounded by material things. Everything remains in focus. Mr. Kane himself is almost overshadowed by the contents of his table including jars, plates and cups. The breakfast itself seems to be too much for a single person to eat. Behind Kane, there are items like carpets which are yet to be put to use or seemingly have no use in that office as illustrated in figure (2:4)

Figure 2:4 (00:35:02)



This echoes Frank Smith Pittman's characterization of the acquisition based materialism in which he says that "people who accumulate high wealth often have a special talent and are single-mindedly dedicated to its development and marketing, resulting in scant time for personal relationships..." (461-472). Keeping true to Pittman, Kane's goal was to accumulate more wealth but not actually to accumulate what he could probably put to use just as all capitalists as are. One would wonder why the news paper office looks like a museum. This resonates with Belk, W. Russell, who suggested that "materialism is a manifestation of psychological traits such as envy, non-generosity, and possessiveness"

(291-297). Kane had become so possessive that he intended to own everything that was within his reach.

At the party that Kane throws to celebrate the acquisition of the *Chronicle* staff, almost a dozen faces are in focus. See figure (3:5)

Figure 3:5 (00:40:43)



The depth in this shot helps the viewer to choose what he or she wants to see. Welles effectively used deep focus to reveal how everybody was happy and that Kane was the happiest. Kane's happiness is as result of acquiring the most craved for asset. He adores the *Chronicle* to such levels as would make it fall in Karl Marx's definition of fetishism as any thing to which more respect or attention is given than is normal or sensible" (05). The materialistic acquisition of the *Chronicle* staff, which according to Kane, is going to boost the circulation of the *Inquirer* is in line with Richins and Dawson's categorization of materialism into three types: acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success (203-207). Charles Forster Kane acquired material wealth to be happy as seen in this shot and consequently believed that possession

was synonymous with success. From the faces of all the staff, it is evident that they were happy. Their happiness just like their master's was propelled by the acquisition of the *Chronicle* staff which they believed would go a long way in improving the sales of the *Inquirer*. They are also pleased by the lavish party that had been thrown by their boss.

So far, the sales had drastically improved. Charles Forster Kane and his staff had admired the circulation of the *Chronicle* news paper at 495000 copies and when they finally took over the *Chronicle* staff, the *Inquirer's* circulation rose from 26000 copies to 684132 copies. This long take which is shot in depth of field shows that there is serious belief that success is defined by the acquisition of material wealth. Kane himself supports the scene's meaning when he says:

Six years ago, I looked at a picture of the world's greatest newspapermen. I felt like a kid in front of a candy store. Well, tonight, six years later, I got my candy, all of it. Welcome, gentlemen, to the *Inquirer*. Make up an extra copy of that picture and send it to the *Chronicle*, will you please? It will make you all happy to learn that our circulation this morning was the greatest in New York, 684,000.

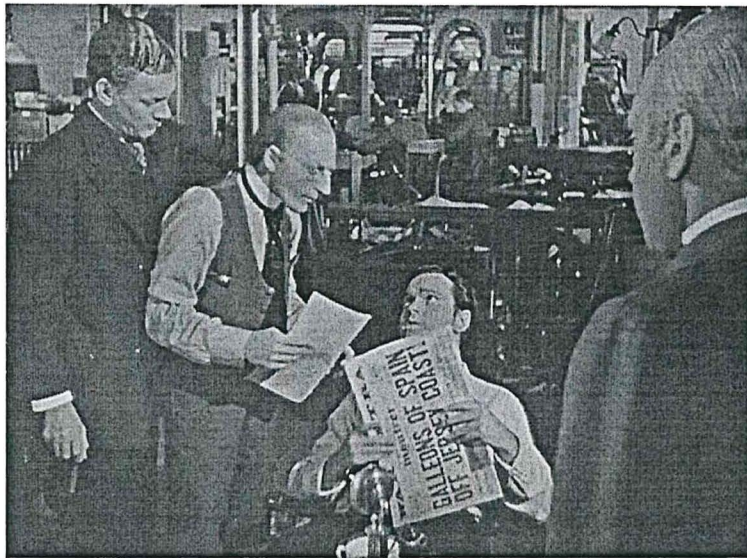
Bernstein corrects: "684,132!" Kane has successfully built up the best-selling newspaper company in the city.

At the celebration party held in the city room of the *Inquirer*, a long narrow table is covered with champagne bottles surrounded by newspaper staff. At Kane's end of the table, an initial "K" sculpture stands - frozen inside it is a front-page headline that welcomes the new staff. At the other end of the table, there are two carved-ice busts that are caricatures of Leland ("Broadway Jed" Leland) and Bernstein ("Mr. Big Business" Bernstein), and the three frame the screen as Kane talks to everyone. In this shot, Kane appears to tower over every other character and he dominates everyone in the shot. His power is as a result of his material strength. Kane banters to the staff about his upcoming

vacation to Europe and his fetishistic penchant for acquiring and collecting artwork - in particular, statues which symbolize the people that Kane possessed and controlled. These included his employees like Leland and Bernstein. The statues almost occupy the whole space and the humans appear to be engulfed by these material objects. Bernstein tells Kane that there were more pictures and statues in Europe he had not bought and Kane comically agrees to buy but then reminds Bernstein that people had been making statues for two thousand years and Kane had been buying for five years. This exposes Kane's hunch for material acquisition to the extent of being thought of as a person who was willing to buy all the art work in the world. For the record, most of the statues that Kane acquires are never opened at all. The employees seem to be aware of their master's penchant for statues and pictures. Because of the depth of focus in the shot, it becomes easy for the viewer to see Bernstein and Leland whispering something after which Bernstein tells their master to buy the statues and pictures he had not bought in Europe.

The scene in the newspaper office when Thatcher had come to ask Kane about the *Inquirer* project that was costing him \$1m dollars a year is also shot in deep focus. The viewer is able to see Thatcher and Kane as well as Leland and Bernstein who come in with the mail from Wheeler. The distant members of staff who seem to be attracted by the argument between their master and Thatcher are also visible. Thatcher's facial expression is tough because he feels his wealth is in jeopardy due to Kane's critical news paper. As seen in the figure (2:6) below

Figure 2:6 (00:25:48)

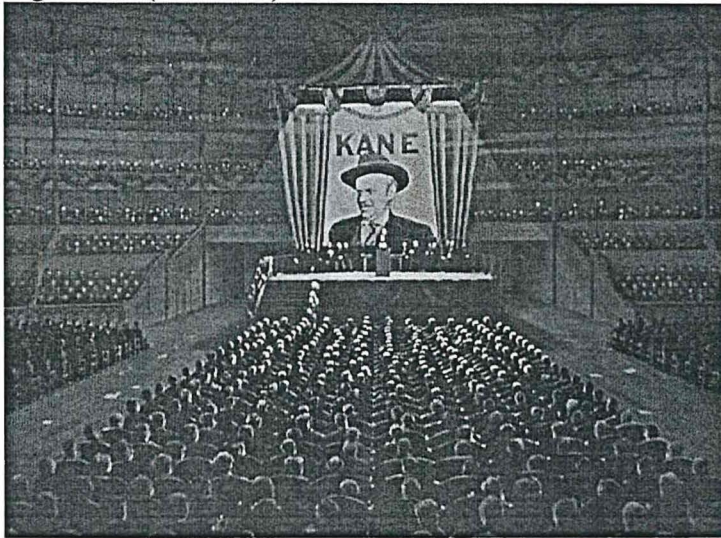


The use of deep focus in this shot highlights the power that Kane now wields over all other people including Thatcher himself. This is a result of two main things; Kane is placed in the center of the shot and he is shot in full light where as the rest of the occupants of the frame are in a semi shadow and the camera locates him in the background therefore making him the major focus on the frame.

At the political campaign, Kane's image is first brought in focus. It is magnificent and self imposing- a replica of the man of means; the self acclaimed champion of the poor, the under paid and the under fed. However the camera zooms and covers the whole hall bringing everybody present in focus as illustrated in figure 2:7 below



Figure 2:7 (01:01:06)



The effect of this zooming is that candidate Kane is presented as smaller than his image. The materially powerful man Kane is overshadowed by his own image despite the mountains of wealth he has accumulated. Through out this scene, deep focus helps Welles to make Kane's image dwarf the real life personality who believed in the power of money. In the end, it becomes evident that wealth alone does not make a man powerful. The use of extreme low angles which project Kane's image bigger than the real life Kane just expresses the notion that the original man remains, despite the mountains of wealth a man may possess. This image/ sequence is powerful and ironic in that it shows the difference between the image Kane has created himself and the real man (small and lonely). The ironic face of this image is the sequence that follows Kane; when he is caught involved in the love scandal with 'singer' and later his failure to win the elections.

#### **2.4 Kane's marriages**

In Leland's flash back on Kane's first marriage with Emilly Norton, the depth of field helps to highlight how their marriage disintegrated due to Kane's adoration of material wealth. The failure of their marriage is in line with Deiner F. Edward's argument as

earlier quoted that “to a larger extent the high productivity associated with affluence involves little leisure time; people become increasingly prone to distress” (57). The longer the physical distance between Kane and Emily, the more the material objects appear on the table between the two. In this scene, Orson Welles uses a combination of dialogue, facial expressions and clothing to represent a troubled marriage all in the course of one breakfast montage. As the scene progresses the appearance of Emily changes.

Figure 2:8 (from 00:52:23 to 00:54:22)



Initially, she is wearing a revealing dress, representing her youthful love and naivety, but in every scene after, she covers herself bit by bit until the final scene, when we find her in a dress that gives off a dull and secretive appearance. Throughout their discussion, Welles’ applied effective continuity editing to reveal how their facial expressions change with their emotions, and depict the troubled marriage over time. Editing is very important as it helps the viewer to see what transpired in six breakfasts over the years in just a matter of minutes. When they had just married, they would always talk with eye contact, and they would kiss and smile, and in general, look happy. This resonates as earlier quoted with Frank Smith Pittman’s argument that “people who accumulate high wealth

often have a special talent and are single-mindedly dedicated to its development and marketing, resulting in scant time for personal relationships” (461–472), as time passed, Kane and Emily lose their precious eye contact, and barely looked at each other at all. They stop smiling and laughing, and they stop kissing. In the last shot in the breakfast montage, the most body language shown is a quick glance at each other and then continuing what they are doing. All of these actions show a marriage that is losing the passion and love that it was founded on. All forms of expression through wardrobe and body language are seen to depict this. Their paradise-breakfast turns into a business deal, missing all emotion and taking on a more formal nature. In this scene it is evident that the breakfast montage had two sides; the happy and the unhappy one which leads to the disintegration of the marriage. As seen from the facial expressions and from what Emily complains about, all their problems accrue from Kane’s lack of time for his family. He instead spends most of the time in the newspaper office because to him that is what matters. This awareness of Charles Forster Kane’s materialistic behaviour that disregards love, relationships and family as seen in the montage was ably criticized through focusing on a whole scene in depth. The deep focus photography reflects Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (1999) argument that “wealth, like many good things, is beneficial in small quantities, but it becomes increasingly desired and ultimately becomes harmful in large doses.” The viewer can simultaneously see Kane’s facial expression and juxtapose it with his wife’s. The shot covers the couple when they are close and intimate. When the distance between them enlarges, it still covers the two and the length of the table in between them is clear. The variation between the closeness emphasises the rift between the couple’s relationship which was caused by materialism as already discussed in the

previous chapter. When the marriage reaches hard times, the couple is framed each reading a different news paper. Emily reads the *Chronicle* which is her husband's rival news paper as Kane reads the *Inquirer*.

Welles uses deep focus to portray Kane's fetishistic treatment of material wealth through Susan's first operatic presentation in her newly established Chicago Municipal Opera House. The scene shows that Kane values the strength of material wealth to the extent of thinking that wealth can help him undo the rules of nature and buy a musical talent for his untalented wife. Because of such traits, Dick argues that "Charles Forster Kane was an heir to his mother's belief that the purchasing power of money is infinite" (356). He felt that money would arrest the situation. It was due to materialism that his friendship with Jed Leland was ended just because he perceived that Leland had attempted to sabotage his master's business by reporting objectively about Susan's poor singing. His intense desire to make Susan Alexander Kane famous, recognized and loved by the people, urged him to manipulate the reviews written about his wife's opera performances. With his political career going nowhere after losing the election for governor, Kane attempts to use his wealth, influence and patronage to make his newly wed wife a compensatory success. As they drive away in the carriage, the headline "KANE BUILDS OPERA HOUSE" dissolves into the view of the \$3 million Chicago Municipal Opera House. The front page headline dissolves into a close-up of Susan's fear-stricken face during the final moments of backstage preparation for her debut in *Salammbô* as an opera singer on the Chicago new opera house. Terrified by the grandiose preparations, Susan is given last minute instruction by her Italian voice - trainer who screams: "No, no, no, no, no" because Susan is not singing right. In the absurd scene, final arrangements are

hurriedly being made: props are set, Susan's costume is readied, and other players move back and forth to their positions. When the opera begins after an overhead cue light has snapped on, the curtain shadow rises and Susan's pathetic diva voice sings to the audience. Susan's career has become a test not of her own singing or talent, but of Kane's own power and deluded judgment. His attempts fail miserably when, presenting her at his own theater in a lavish, over-embellished production, the debut performance is depicted as a miserable disaster. Kane enters the door of the dark offices of the *Chicago Daily Inquirer* following the performance. He overhears the staff editors gloating to Bernstein over the self-aggrandizing, favorable, "swell" and "enthusiastic" reviews that have been written about Susan's performance. One of the editors tells Kane that they have obediently covered all angles except one notice that is still to come: "Everything has been done exactly to your instructions, Mr. Kane. We've just two spreads of two pictures..." Without the use of deep focus photography, which according to Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis 2006, makes "objects remain in focus from positions very near the camera to points at some points from it" (128), the shot would never have conveyed its meaning of expressing Kane's materialism. The use of deep focus photography helps the viewer to make a social critique of Kane's character that is riddled with materialism and individualism. Kane expectantly wants to read Leland's review of the dramatic merits of Susan's debut. Kane finds a drunken Jedediah Leland, now the Chicago dramatic critic, slumped over his typewriter, the unwritten review still in the typewriter. Bernstein reads what Leland wrote about Susan's operatic debut performance, before he passed out in an inebriated stupor from a bottle of whiskey:

Miss Susan Alexander, a pretty but hopelessly incompetent amateur, last night opened the new Chicago Opera House in a performance of - I still can't pronounce

that name, Mr. Kane. "Her singing, happily, is no concern of this department. Of her acting, it is absolutely impossible to..."

Kane rips the review out of the typewriter and dictates what would be the natural, scathing conclusion to what Leland has already written in his critique: "...say anything except that in the opinion of this reviewer, it represents a new law. The performance, as a whole, was..." Kane finishes Leland's notice by usurping his identity and ordering a typewriter: "I'm going to finish Mr. Leland's notice."

A close-up of large letters appears on the screen: "W-E-A-K" as the four letters are pounded into the paper. The entire rewritten review follows:

...weak and incomprehensible. While it is true that a wealth of training has been expended on the voice of Miss Alexander, the result has been pathetic in the extreme, in as much as she lacks tonal purity, volume, and the nuances of enunciation so important for the grand opera diva.

The sound of Kane's typewriter is heard in the background as Leland revives in the inner office and raises his head off his typewriter. Bernstein informs Leland that Kane is finishing Leland's review in the spirit in which the critic had started it: "Mr. Kane is finishing your review just the way you started it – he is writing a bad notice like you wanted it to be. I guess that'll show you." But Leland wrongly assumes that Charlie is fixing it up. He walks into the outer offices and finds Kane pounding away on a typewriter, writing the conclusion to his own review. All these developments are presented simultaneously through deep focus photography. The viewer is able to see Kane on the type writer, the seemingly sleepy Leland and the fear stricken Bernstein all in a single shot.

In the remarkable follow up deep-focus scene, Kane is shot on the left side of the screen facing the camera as he taps on the keys of the typewriter. Jed staggers toward him from a distance, approaching him through the entire length of the newsroom. Kane shows his awareness of his associate's presence behind him with a roll of his eyes signifying his material importance over his subordinate. Leland responds to Kane's greeting ("Hello, Jedediah") with: "Hello, Charlie. I didn't know we were speaking." Kane moves the typewriter carriage to the right margin, and he answers: "Sure we're speaking, Jedediah - you're fired!" He accentuates his words with a noisy carriage return to the left margin. This marks the inevitable end of Leland's friendship with Kane. The depth of this scene helps Welles to show the amount of material power in terms of wealth that Kane exuded over his subordinates and the lack of humanity he exhibits as long as the question of wealth and its protection came into his awareness.

In another scene singer Matiste tries to make Susan a some what better singer, the two of them are shot in a close up. Next to the door stands Kane. Though Kane appears to be at a distance, the costume and stage arrangement which frames him in the center makes his image imposing. The expensive suit in which Kane appears portrays his financial prominence and power and framing him in the center makes him the pivot around which the action of the scene rotates. Kane's appearance in this scene is also enhanced by low angles. He stands like a real master; a power behind all that is going on with his hands in his pockets. The confidence he exudes is synonymous with his belief in the purchasing power of money just like he was brought up. This is best expressed when he is shot near the camera and his image towers over the three. Matiste tries to object to the training and tells Kane what people will think but he is not allowed to finish his statement. Just like he

told Emily, Kane tells Matiste that he had authority on “what people will think”. By this statement, Kane still believes that his material possessions can brighten his star regardless of his wife’s lack of talent. According to Kane, all the authority is enshrined in wealth and since he is wealthy, he has authority over all characters and situations in the film. This authority is as a result of his material possession and the belief that wealth was something, more useful and powerful. Kane worships wealth and believes that it is the only way and tool with which he will control the world. Of course, by the time of this rehearsal, Kane has already built the Chicago municipal opera house at a cost of three million US Dollars.

Another memorable use of the deep focus shot involves the scene when we see Susan Alexander lying in bed with a container of drugs beside the bed as illustrated in figure (2:9) below

Figure 2:9 (01:35:12)



As Charles Kane ran into the room, we clearly see Kane and the drugs deeply in focus. Kane is shot standing behind the drugs. Susan Alexander, on the other hand, is but a mere shadow in relation to the drugs and Kane. The use of the deep focus shot created a relationship between the container of drugs and Kane as if they were the same entity.



Deep focus shooting in this scene reveals that Susan Alexander Kane attempts to commit suicide because of the immense pressures from her husband. The deep focus shot further emphasises Kane's role in the suicide attempt. He is the sole reason as to why his wife wants to commit suicide because he tells her that "she will continue with her singing" just because he does not want to appear ridiculous before the public. The involvement of Kane and the bottle containing drugs highlights the reason behind the attempted suicide; Susan was protesting her husband's prideful materialistic ambition of forcing her into singing. That was probably the reason why Susan who was supposed to be an important figure in this shot is actually in the shadow. Welles' use of deep focus photography coupled with extreme low angles helps Welles to portray Kane as a towering figure. Every time he is shot with other characters, the capturing of the background, foreground and even the ceiling makes him appear like he is reaching the ceiling. The camera angle is low and makes Kane bigger than in reality.

### **2.5 The lonely Xanadu**

At Xanadu, the use of extreme deep focus photography helps to express the level at which material things like statues and pictures are glorified. In the scene when Susan seems to be tired of staying at Xanadu and wants to go to New York, she is overshadowed by statues. Generally, the shots inside of the Xanadu house have a very claustrophobic and intimidating quality to them. See figure 2:10

Figure 2:10 from 01:39:26 to 01:40:13)



In the two shots at Xanadu in which Susan exudes extreme boredom and wants to get out of Xanadu in particular, she is towered over by large, inanimate objects that simply sit over and surround her while Kane himself watches from his ‘throne’. The deep focus photography and use of a long shot heightens the claustrophobia by making the space feel huge, yet the low angle and minor view of the ceiling makes it feel limited and enclosed at the same time. The objects themselves are of great beauty and importance, yet when collected and amassed in such a way, they lose the initial (if any) fulfilling quality that Kane had purchased them for. A similar effect is achieved with the composition of this shot. The frame is interrupted by a statue on the right, and just like the last shot, the statues that surround them enhance the cold, isolated tension that being trapped in Xanadu instills in Susan and Kane. The deep focus shooting at Xanadu is resonant with Pittman’s argument that,

“Wealth is addictive. It enticingly offers happiness, but it cannot provide satisfaction, so those who attain some of it keep thinking more of it will provide satisfaction.... Those who have become addicted to it... can experience severe withdrawal when they can’t get it, withdrawal from wealth and the hope of wealth can be terrifying” (470).

By the end of the scene at Xanadu, Charles Forster Kane suffers from all that Pittman writes about. He is addicted to wealth and he never gets the much craved for satisfaction;

he withdraws himself from the rest of the world and hides in the false security of Xanadu where he dies a lonely man.

Another example of deep focus photography is in the two concluding shots at Xanadu.

Figure 2:11 (01:54:42 to 01:55:51)



The first one is when the staff is inspecting and sorting the items at Xanadu most probably to get what is important and to burn the junk as seen in the last shot. The extraction of Kane's items reveals the extent of his great material wealth. The use of high angle shots minimize everything in the frame, long shots make the editing continuous; the massive amounts of stuff that Kane had collected over the years and how they create a labyrinth that's surrounds the people working on the extraction. With all the money in the world and the power to "buy things", as Kane would put it, in an unlimited quantity, how could Kane be as unhappy as he was? The answer to such a question lies in economist Schor Juliet's earlier cited argument that "the pressures to work, acquire, and consume tend to deplete personal energies" (49). Just like Schor says, the pressures to acquire and to consume depleted Kane's energies in the end. In the last image in the mirrors, he looks a tired man. There were other historical reasons for this particular 'lesson' in 1941 isolationist sentiment with regards to World War II come to mind, but on a general level, the film is commenting negatively on a very 'American' individualist notion of material

happiness and consumption. Kane's appetite for consumption ultimately distances and destroys his ability to connect with the outside world. Kane's social disconnection comes about as a result of materialist fetishism which according to Csikszentmihalyi has a highly negative correlation with social sensitivity. He argues that; "when one's psychic energy becomes invested in material goals; it is typical for sensitivity to other rewards to atrophy; friendships, art, literature, natural beauty, religion and philosophy become less and less interesting" (823). This disconnection redefines Kane as the objects that he collects and consumes – this is especially evident in the News on the March segment where great pleasure is taken in describing Xanadu despite the entrapping quality that Susan and Kane felt within it. With his power to buy things, Kane had bought quite a number of objects in the name of buying happiness but all to no avail. Despite the worship he renders to his material acquisition, he dies an isolated man. It is this senseless attachment of too much value to material things and acquisition that this study refers to as fetishism.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Through the use of deep focus photography, Orson Welles was able to make a social critique of the tenets of the American dream which at times could be a night mare. Indeed, commenting about *Citizen Kane*, Bernard F. Dick earlier quoted writes that "the American dream can at times become a nightmare" (355). This corroborates the argument of Louis Giannetti and Scott Eyman that the film was "a peculiarly American story of how the goals of success, money and power pursued without defining reasons can turn rancid and destroy love" (218). The concluding credits of the film exactly show to the viewer how the acquisition of mountains of material wealth does not in any way correlate

with the social well being of a human being. Kane had wealth that was enough for ten museums and had the biggest private zoo since Noah. This notwithstanding, there is no single shot in the film that shows Kane as a happy man because of all this wealth. He indeed dies in self imposed seclusion in Xanadu.

Deep focus photography further helps in the understanding of the protagonist Charles Forster Kane. Because he is frequently shot in focus all the three traits of his character are clearly portrayed. Kane's three faces as earlier quoted according to Bernard F. Dick represent the three faces of America.

First he is a republican editor who delegates authority to his representatives; then he is the democratic leader, promising in his declaration of principles to be a champion of human rights; finally he is the imperialist, bald and gowned, an oriental living in splendour at Xanadu (357-8).

Orson Welles directed and acted in *Citizen Kane* to dramatize the effects of capitalism on the American society. These effects of capitalism like the worship of material wealth which was a subject of discussion in this chapter were properly relayed through deep focus photography. Through the use of deep focus photography, Welles was able to show that alongside being extremely rich and influential, Kane acquired power. By means of this power, he did almost everything and had anything he desired. But then, again, as Wole Soyinka avers in Kongi's Harvest, "power tends to corrupt and, absolute power corrupts absolutely." He wanted to do things only based on his terms. Just as Susan said, "Everything was his idea." With regard to love, he even wants the people around him to love him on his terms. In the end, Kane had everything and nothing at the same time. He even says, "... if I hadn't been very rich, I might have been a really great man." Kane's life is characterized by lost innocence, filled with regret, broken marriages and

friendships, and failed political ambitions. Kane found himself alone and miserable. Until the end, all he yearned for was love. Undeniably, wealth and power are not the ones that could make a person feel complete, loved and cared for. There's more to life than being a man of great influence on society and fellow human beings.

Finally, *Citizen Kane* is effective enough to convey through deep focus photography not only political messages but also life's lessons. It portrays the media, particularly the newspaper, as an agent of political socialization, the risks involved with having power, the limitations of being influential and the significance of family and friends. Deep focus photography reveals Kane's materialism and how it plays a vital role in sending him down the drains. The use of deep focus photography filters Kane's story from rags to riches but the riches do not reach the desired end result which, according to Kane's mother in particular and the broader America in general, is happiness.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 LIGHTING, MATERIALIST FETISHISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates how expressive high contrast lighting is used to reveal how materialist fetishism leads to individualism in *Citizen Kane* (1941). In the analysis of this theme, focus is mainly put on the protagonist Charles Forster Kane who is isolated from all that is near him including his parents because of the need for the acquisition of material wealth or the protection of material wealth. It further investigates how the director brought out the theme of individualism through the use of expressive high contrast lighting in the film. Orson Welles did a great job of using this color scheme to his advantage by displaying ingenious lighting moments. He presents many scenes or characters in shadows and others in light to give messages about both plot and characters. In this study, materialism is understood as the excessive desire to acquire and consume material goods. It is often bound up with a value system which regards social status as being determined by affluence as well as the perception that happiness can be increased through buying, spending and accumulating material wealth. In order to contextualise the concept of individualism and lighting in *Citizen Kane*, it is imperative that we consider various scholars' views on the relationship between wealth and individualism, and on how lighting in film develop plot and reveal characters. J. Dan, Rothwell writes that;

Individualistic cultures are oriented around the self, independent instead of identifying with a group mentality. They see each other as only loosely linked, and value personal goals above that of the group. Individualistic cultures tend to have a more diverse population, and are characterized with emphasis on personal achievements, and a rational assessment of both the beneficial and detrimental aspects of relationships with others. (65–84)

Rothwell writes that highly individualistic cultures include the U.S., Australia, Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Italy. This becomes very interesting as the film under study is an American cultural film.

Lighting is an incredible tool used by creators of films to reveal emotional and situational states of the participants in the narrative of the film. In Orson Welles film *Citizen Kane*, he is limited by the fact that it is all in Black and White coloring. Orson Welles did a great job of using this color scheme to his advantage by displaying ingenious lighting moments. He presents many scenes or characters in shadows and others in light to give messages about both plot and characters. This page is devoted to exploring these many moments throughout the film. Film scholars agree that the use of lighting helps in the thematic development of the film as seen in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*.

### **3.2 Kane's Business Life**

According to James Monaco, "light was used by Classical Hollywood film makers to create a natural effect and so developed a system of balanced key lights and fill lights that are thorough but not an overt illumination and therefore presented a minimal barrier between the observer and the subject" (162). Monaco agrees with Nowell Smith who writes that;

*Citizen Kane* systematically employs contrasting levels of brightness within a frame to convey the nature of its characters' identities. The film's cinematographer, Gregg Toland, was celebrated for his recurrent application of chiaroscuro, or extremely low-key lighting, throughout the film (262).

Federico Fellini, an Italian film maker and critic believes that lighting is everything in film. He says that; "it expresses ideology, emotion, colour, depth and style. It can efface, narrate and describe." With the right lighting, he goes on, "the ugliest face, the most



idiotic expression can radiate with beauty or intelligence” (qtd in Bordwell and Kristin 191).

According to Joseph Turner, “Welles uses light in *Citizen Kane* to represent things and people that are good, and darkness or shadow to represent those that are bad, evil, or who have poor intentions” (58). In agreement with Turner, in his book the making of *Citizen Kane*, Robert Carringer writes that;

The lighting of *Citizen Kane*, in its simplest form, can be broken down into two parts. The first part of the story is dominated by high levels of lighting and crisp images revealing few dark shadows. As a result, Kane is seen as a self-starter, an idealist, a reformer, a figure of dynamic energy, a traditional type “the hope of the future embodied in a genuine American titan, the entrepreneur tycoon (84).

Carringer avers that because of light, Kane is perceived as a man of his word and one who is capable of being trusted to stand by his ideals. Kane vows to fight for the common man and not bow down to the greedy tycoons with whom he is now in direct competition. The lighting effects help to portray him as the idealist that he is and one fully capable of and unafraid, to obtain the lofty goals he has set for himself. Carringer continues that; “In direct contrast with his earlier idealism, the latter part of *Citizen Kane* is filled with the harsh lighting and deepening shadows, after he has betrayed his promise and become a petty and ruthless tyrant.” (84)

The lighting suggests his betrayal of the earlier enthusiasm he held for his ideals and morals. Later in life, Kane becomes the merciless tycoon who will stop at nothing to get to get wealthier and wealthier regardless of whether he affects any person on his road to material affluence ironically this is the one thing he had vowed to fight. Thomas Bordwell and Kristin Thompson believe that in film, “lighter and darker areas within the frame help create the over all composition of each shot and this guides our attention to

certain objects and actions. They go on to state that a brightly illuminated patch may draw our eye to a key gesture while a shadow may conceal a detail or build up a suspense about what may be present” (191). In *Citizen Kane*, it is often the use of shadows that help the viewer to make opinions about the film as already discussed in the preamble to this chapter, dark lighting forms negative opinions about Kane’s materialistic behaviour while the high key lighting emphasises his earlier idealism. Whenever Kane is to perform an individualistic act, his image is cast in darkness.

At the union square, there is a contrast of light between the mammoth crowd and the speaker. The shot is brightly lit and then lights fade out, the shot of the speaker appears in high key lighting as the crowd is diminished by low key lighting. The contrast helps the viewer to know how the speaker (perhaps the trade union leader), much as he appears to be fighting for the common man; is fighting for his own individualistic goals. By the time he brands Kane a Fascist, he is alone in a brightly lit shot. In the social setting of the film, fascism was abhorred because of its all inclusive politics; the belief that the proletariat was something to reckon with. In defence, Kane interjects; “I am, have been and will be only one thing- an American.” The interesting part of this shot in relationship with its lighting is that Kane’s image together with his friends are in high key lighting but by the time he makes the pronouncement, the frame goes dark and the statement is just written in words on a dark screen. This contrast helps to tell the audience that only Kane knows what he means by his statements and that the meaning is always deeper than an ordinary eye can see. When the statement is over, the shot shifts back to light and the men are clapping their hands but the viewer already knows that they are clapping out of their ignorance of what Kane meant. The frame immediately becomes totally dark before the

omniscient narrator tells us that for all those years, Kane covered most of those he was. Kane was not only one thing as he claimed; he was a socialist idealist, a capitalist and a fascist as well.

On his return from Europe where he had gone on a business trip in 1935, a group of journalists led by Mr. Bowles interview Mr. Kane. He is asked questions ranging from his personal business and how he found it in Europe to political questions like the chances of war in Europe. It is this last question that reveals to the viewer the individualistic trait of Kane. He tells the journalists that he was going to talk to the responsible leaders not embark on the project that could mean the end of civilization. The use of high and low key lighting helps to deliver the message. By the time Kane utters the statement; “it will not be intelligent to embark on a project which would mean the end of civilization as we now know it...” a half of his face is covered by a shadow of his hat as illustrated in figure 3:1

Figure 3:1 (00:11:51)

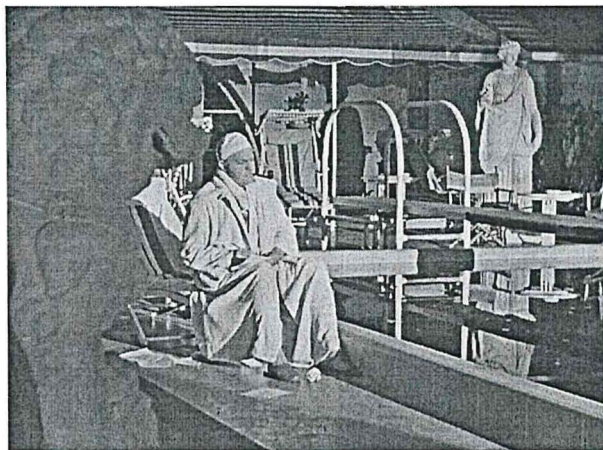


The implication is that most of what Kane says is not what the reporters think but his own individualistic motives which relied on the multiplication of his fortune uninterrupted. This is in direct agreement with John Alton who says that; “Orson Welles used light and

shadow not as a necessity but to give scenes a certain meaning and atmosphere; Welles used lighting expressively to inject viewers with desired emotions” (87). For example the ordinary eye may interpret Kane’s civilization to mean social transformation but the shadow which enshrouds his face as he mentions civilization reminds the audience that he meant his own business as was the case during the first year of the great depression. The shadow also relates with the one that covers his Kane’s face during the declaration of principles. “As we now know it...” implies a learnt lesson by a specific group of people (the owners of wealth) that he is among.

Immediately after the shot discussed above, Kane is seen seated in a white chair and donned in white robes like a monarch.

Figure 3:2 (00:12:38)



His image is shot in high key lighting while on his right, brightly illuminated is a huge dark coloured statute of a lion. Far on his left, a white statute of Venus is also shot in high key lighting. The fact that there are no other people in the scene, and that the whole scene is shot in high key lighting shows that the only time Kane appeared to be happy was

when he was in the company of his inanimate objects; especially the statues he so much adored. These are the statues that so much alienated him from the comfort of being around human beings. His love and adoration for wealth distances him from the love for people. High key lighting helps the viewer to see how the protagonist had become too much of an individual rather than a member of society. High key lighting exposes the materialist fetishism that makes Kane identify with material acquisitions. Throughout the film, this shot is one of the very few scenes where Kane is uniformly lit with the occupants of the frame. The sad thing is that he shares this scene with statues and not human beings.

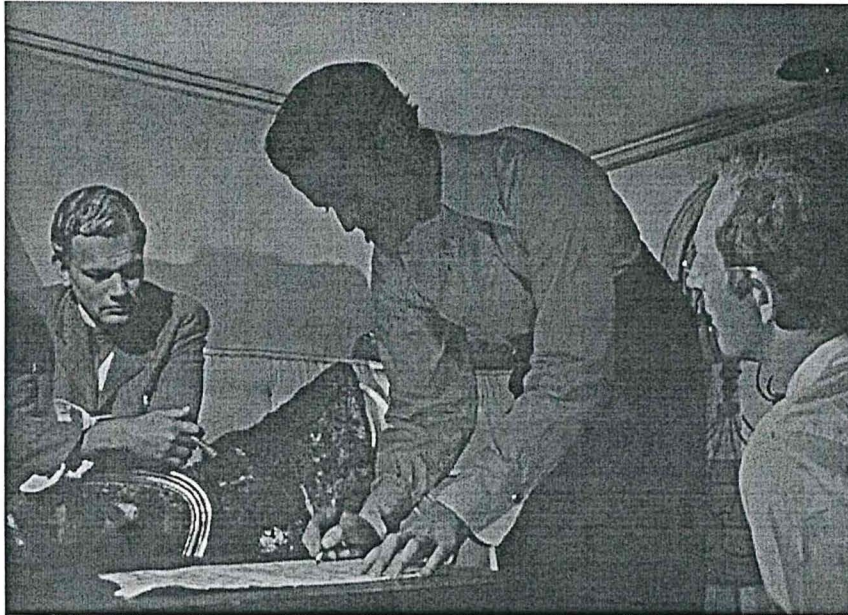
The use of lighting helps to convey meaning at the beginning of *Citizen Kane*. After witnessing the newsreel about the death of the fictional character Charles Foster Kane, the camera suddenly pans to the people behind that newsreel. The single source of lighting in this scene comes from a window. It is the only way by which any light shines on, or even outlines, any of the media characters. As a result, the characters are indistinct; at best a silhouettes. This is quite effective because it provides multiple insights into the film. This corroborates with John Mosher's review of *Citizen Kane* to *The New Yorker*, in which he expressed his thought that there was too much shadow that the film ought to have been performed in darkness. Mosher writes that; "Welles blots out the faces of the speakers and voices come from limbo when it is what is being said and not how people look that is important" (qtd in Stanley Kauffmann 410). First, by using shadows to hide the faces of the media men, Welles causes the viewer to put a lesser importance on these characters. Naturally our eyes are drawn to lit objects. In a sense, Welles makes us as viewers think that the table with food carries more importance in this story than the men

of the media. This idea carries throughout the film because Thompson's face is hardly visible all through the interviews that he conducts. As Mosher says, what is said is more important than what can be visualized in this scene. The subject is the mystery of Kane's dying word- Rosebud. Because of the reporters' failure to know what rosebud actually meant, the viewer gets to know how individual and mysterious Kane had been all through his life. None of his friends, employees or wives knows about his enigmatic last word. John Alton writes that "A scene like this can be shot in numerous ways and still have the same meaning but Welles chose to use light and shadow to specifically tell the audience what to focus on" (87). By shooting this scene in chiaroscuro lighting, Welles was able to make the story more important than the reporter. This can be backed by John Alton and Laura Mulvey, who write that;

By using a very strong backlight, Welles put these characters in shadow. All we could see was their silhouettes and the outline of the hands moving. Painting with light helped Welles tell the audience not to focus on these reporters and who they are. The focus here did not change from Charles Foster Kane to the reporters with the end of the newsreel, but stayed on Kane (52).

After purchasing the newspaper company, Kane is seen in a room discussing the first production of the *Inquirer's* Kane era. After turning off the gas light, he informs Jedediah that he intends to write a "Declaration of Principles" on the cover of his first publication. The lighting used here shows Kane in the light. As he begins to read his declaration, about promising to bring "honesty" his face is masked from the light.

Figure 3:3 (00:38:36)



This, as in the past lighting scene, casts a shadow, not only on his face, but on the promise that he is making. At this moment, as viewers, we subconsciously become mistrusting of Kane and of his ability to follow through with his promise to bring his readers an honest newspaper. Finally, after Kane signs this "declaration", Jedediah stands next to him. The lighting in this shot shows Kane as dark and Jedediah as light. This contrast becomes a foreshadowing of their roles in the film. Jedediah becomes the conscience of Kane even to the point where he asks if he has become the old "school mum." Kane on the other hand makes unethical individualistic dubious moves with his newspaper and eventually never lives up to his promises in the declaration of principles. All of this is foreshadowed by Welles' use of lighting when the declaration is read and signed by Kane. This echoes Susan Hayward explanation in her Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts that "the effect of contrasting light and dark within one shot can be used to signal character ambiguity" (17).

Another scene where Welles effectively used the shadow and light is in Thatcher's written reminiscences. Thatcher has come to visit Kane at the *Inquirer* to question him about his motives for attacking Thatcher's business interests. Whereas Kane is shot in bright light, Thatcher is in a shadow throughout the scene. The contrast in lighting helps the viewer to see the difference between the two. High key lighting presents Kane's socially idealistic views as good intentioned while Thatcher's capitalistic ideas are deemed evil because of the darkness. Turner says that; "Welles uses light in *Citizen Kane* to represent things and people that are good, and darkness or shadow to represent those that are bad, evil, or who have poor intentions" (58). The viewer is able to understand that the intention of Thatcher's visit is to make Kane behave in an individualistic style just like his guardian as Bernstein describes Kane in his flashback that;

He never knew there was anything in the world but money. That kind of fellow you can fool every day in the week - and twice on Sundays! The time he came to Rome for Mr. Kane's twenty-fifth birthday... You know, when Mr. Kane got control of his own money... Such a fool like Thatcher - I tell you, nobody's business!

However, Kane responds to Thatcher;

I am the publisher of the *Inquirer*. As such, it is my duty - I'll let you in on a little secret, it is also my pleasure - to see to it that decent, hard-working people of this city are not robbed blind by a group of money - mad pirates because, God help them, they have no one to look after their interests! I'll let you in on another little secret, Mr. Thatcher. I think I'm the man to do it. You see, I have money and property...

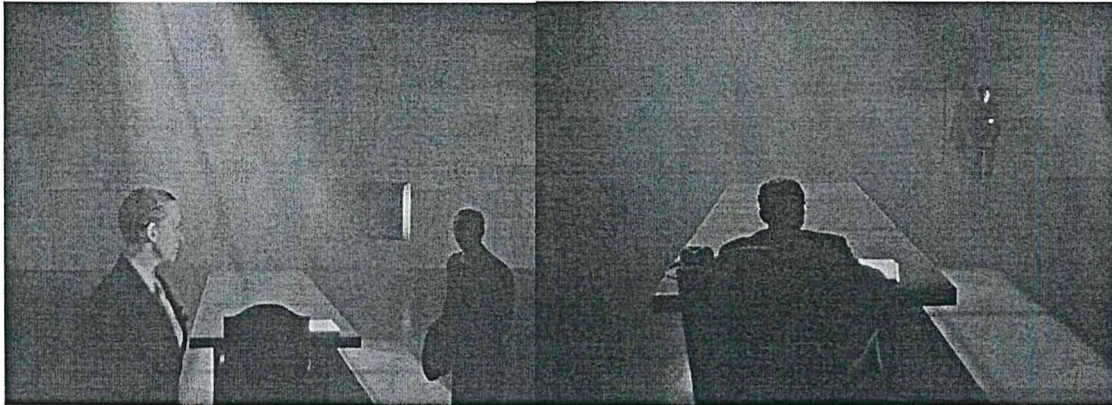
Kane has set himself up as a man of the people, even though in social and economic terms he is much closer to Thatcher than he is to the masses. Kane still thinks of Thatcher as a pirate because of the way Thatcher took him from his mother, even though Thatcher has always looked after Kane's business interests. Kane understands that what Thatcher cares about most is money, so he uses his newspaper to attack Thatcher's financial interests. Kane's actions also damage his own interests, but this is less important to him



than hurting Thatcher. Thatcher can not understand why Kane acts the way he does, as Bernstein later notes. In a way, Thatcher's bewilderment is easy to understand because he was merely doing what he had been contracted to do when he took young Kane into his custody. He can't fathom why Kane should resent him. At the same time, and in the same scene, Kane is fomenting a war that will certainly have a detrimental effect on the same people he purports to protect. However, this war will bolster Kane's finances by increasing his newspaper's circulation. The statement that he was fighting for the poor attests to Kane's characteristic self-delusion, an affliction that surfaces showing how he perceives his relationship with the masses and elsewhere in his relationship with Susan Alexander. In Kane's arrogance, he never considers that he might not be any more qualified to look after the interests of the American people than Thatcher is. While Thatcher's goal may be to protect the money of those who are already rich, Kane's goal is to control public opinion and the political climate for his own business and egoistic interests. Kane is not as altruistic as he likes to think he is. Thatcher understands that and points it out to Kane, as does Leland later in the film when he brings to Kane's attention that his newspaper empire is as much a monopoly as Thatcher's financial business trusts ever were.

When Thompson enters into the Walter Parks Thatcher Library to read the manuscript written about Kane, he is confined in the room and a light from above descends down upon the manuscript. This form of lighting renders the rest of the room dark with the exception of the manuscript, which is the point of attention in this scene.

Figure 3:4 (00:18:38 - 00:18:51)



The singling out of this manuscript which contained the information about Kane expresses the extent to which Kane was part of society- he lived as an individual contrary to earlier idealism of being the champion of the poor and the under privileged. Much as the high lighting of the manuscript highlights the importance of its testimony, the presentation of the rest of the scene in a shadow partly makes the manuscript a symbol of the enigmatic Kane.

Kane's individualism is further expressed in the scene where he is relinquishing his shares in the *Inquirer* to Thatcher. Both Bernstein and Thatcher are shot in high key lighting while Kane is alone in the shadow and at a distance. Even when he gets close to the camera, and much as he is in the middle of the two men, he remains in a semi shadow. The contrast in lighting here helps the viewer to characterise Kane as a loner; one who can never associate with the rest of the people just as Leland describes him as some one who never believed in any one except Charlie Kane. All that he wants is to sign the agreements and go home. A related scene appears earlier in the film at the Colorado home where Kane is about to be taken by Mr. Thatcher. The three adults are indoors save

Charles Kane whom we see playing alone in the snow, and a short time later, the camera isolates him between his mother and Mr. Thatcher as they plan to separate Kane from his home. He is still alone, but no longer happy. We next see Kane seated by himself in the center of a room ringed with dark-suited men, who watch him as he opens a gift from Thatcher. Kane's isolation follows him into adulthood, where we see him sitting on his own in his newspaper office amid a celebration in his honour. The camera locates Kane between Bernstein and Leland but at a distant angle as the two men discuss Kane's increasingly depraved tactics. The three men may be in physical proximity, but the nature of Bernstein and Leland's discussion and the way the shot frames Kane mark him as an outsider. Eventually Leland leaves Kane, and Kane barricades himself in his fortress with Susan. But Susan too leaves Kane, and in the end he dies alone, never having formed a lasting bond with anyone.

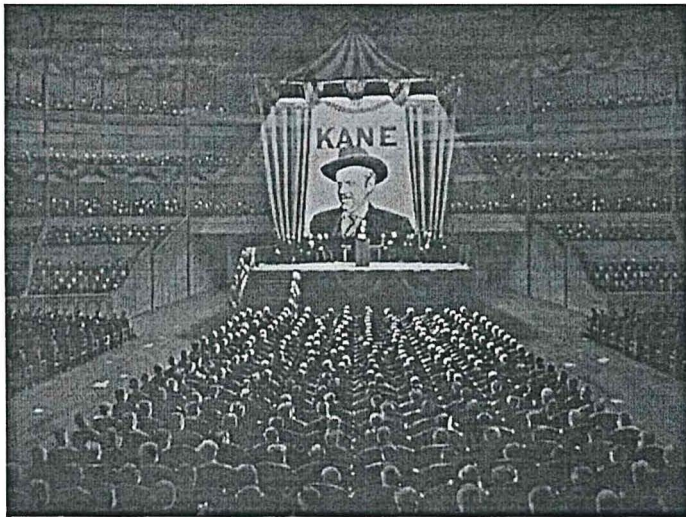
At the party organised by the employees of the *Inquirer* to welcome Kane from his trip abroad, Charles Forster Kane's aloofness is effectively brought into focus by contrastive lighting. Kane bursts through the door to the office into a crowd of his welcoming employees dressed in a white suit. The suit itself deserves notice, as it is contrary to everything else he has previously worn in the film, and is in stark contrast with the dull browns and grays of his employees. In a way, Kane emerges through the doorway as a metaphorical knight in shining armor, at the height of his day, a hero to be admired and revered. The lighting in this scene shows the viewer that much as Kane appears to be part of the *Inquirer*'s staff, he is completely independent and he only has time for his business not the workers. He does not wait to listen to the speech that Bernstein is about to give, and he almost leaves the gift that had been prepared for him; he just grabs it from the

bearer. Kane's actions enhance the theme of individualism in the film. Kane minds only the things that matter to him. Like in this scene, he is single mindedly focused on the impending wedding. He even tells off his employees;

All of you - new and old - You're all getting the best salaries in town. Not one of you has been hired because of his loyalty. It's your talent I'm interested in. That talent that's going to make the "Inquirer" the kind of paper I want - the best newspaper in the world!

At the political campaign, when candidate Kane is giving his speech and particularly how he is going to rid the people of boss Jim Gettys the physical Kane dissolves from the frame, every other character in the hall is cast into the shadow and the only thing that is the huge canvas image of candidate Kane is illuminated as in figure (3:5)

Figure 3:5 (01:01:05)



The image is illuminated when candidate Kane is describing Jim Gettys' method of work; "I come in this campaign with one purpose only; to point out the dishonesty, the down right felony of boss G. W. Gettys..." and when he concludes his speech and makes the final promise;

It is no secret that I entered upon this campaign with no thought that I could be elected Governor of this state! It is now no secret that every straw vote, every independent poll, shows that I will be elected. And I repeat to you - my first official act as Governor will be to appoint a special District Attorney to arrange for the indictment, prosecution and conviction of...

The contrast in lighting in this shot helps the viewer to single out Kane's message about the protection of the masses against Gettys' political machine. The expressive high contrast lighting of Kane's image in the political poster is a clear explanation that whatever the candidate promises is not what he means. This is the reason why the audience is cast in darkness; for they do not know Kane's motives, and Kane himself is replaced on the screen by his gigantic image. The image becomes bigger than the man and the man cannot therefore effect what the image represents because it very much dwarfs him. The lighting in the scene further enhances Kane's individualism as it relates with Susan's opera show where Kane continuously claps until he is left on stage alone and finally fades into darkness signifying his individualism when it came to opinions. In the same way, in this scene, when it comes to matters of opinions pertaining to the well being of the decent hard working Americans as he refers to them in his speech. Where contrastive lighting is used, Kane is either cast in a shadow and the rest of the people in lighting the lighting or the rest of the people are in shadow and Kane in light. Nowell Smith earlier quoted writes that; "contrasting levels of brightness within a frame convey the nature of its characters' identities..." (262). Lighting in this scene helps the viewer to know Kane's identity; he is not the liberal or the friend of the working man as he claims. If he was, then, he would be shot at the same angle and the same lighting with the masses. Contrasting Kane from the rest of the people in the hall makes him an individual who holds his opinions and wears a public image just to hoodwink the voters.

### 3.3. Kane's Broken Marriages and Interpersonal Relationships

At El Rancho night club where Thompson is meant to have his first interview with Susan Alexander, the use of contrasting light as seen in figure (3:6) locates Susan Alexander in the center and very much distinct from the rest of the characters in the frame.

Figure 3:6 (00:15:33)



This helps the viewer to understand the individualistic life that Kane had lived by isolating Susan Alexander who is the source of the story. Susan is shot in high key lighting while the rest of the characters are in low key lighting. She reminds Thompson to mind his own business as she was minding hers. When the reporter goes outside, he ironically drifts into darkness compared to Susan and her attendants who are in full light inside the house. The effective use of lighting helps the viewer to predict the unfathomable depth the reporter is attempting to navigate in looking for facts about Kane. Symbolically, the high key lighting in this shot represents the characters who very well knew Kane and his individualism while darkness symbolizes those who did not know the man and were still trying to get the missing piece on the jig saw puzzle.

In the scene in which Emily finds out about Susan Alexander, Emily is dressed in white and is well lit, suggesting her purity and betrayal by Kane as seen in figure (3:7)

Figure 3:7 (01:05:45 to 01:05)



Throughout the entire scene, Kane is dressed in black and never receives more than partial lighting. After Emily finds out about Susan Alexander, she and Kane travel to Susan's apartment. The shadows on the door and on the maid suggest Emily is still uncertain about the whole situation. Walking up the stairs, one finds Susan's apartment to be filled with light, almost as if Susan is living in a fantasy and is unaware of what she has got herself into. A thin ray of light introduces Boss Gettys at the door and the entire scene hereafter is a contrast of lights and shadows. As Mrs. Kane and Gettys discuss Kane's future, he is shown to be engulfed in complete darkness. The lighting is in direct contrast to an earlier scene at the boarding house where Kane's fate was previously decided. In that scene, the lighting is bright, and Kane is shown outside on the bright snow, suggesting innocence not yet shattered. Back to Susan's apartment, we see once

again the dark figure of Kane and get the sense of things falling apart for our protagonist. In this scene, Kane is viewed as a man of immense mystery whose motives and intentions are being questioned by his potential rival and his wife. Rothwell's defines individualistic characters as being characterized by the emphasis on personal achievements, and a rational assessment of both the beneficial and detrimental aspects of relationships with others (65-84). The immense mystery about Kane is his belief in personal achievements and the benefits he foresees in his relationship with Susan Alexander.

Another scene in which contrastive lighting helps to reveal individualism in *Citizen Kane* is when Kane receives an envelope from Jed Leland containing a torn up check, and a copy of the original declaration of principles. As Kane begins to tear up the declaration, his emotions slowly build until he proceeds to tear it up at a frantic pace. Meanwhile, Susan complains all the time about the negative review Jed Leland wrote about her, and yet she is bathed in full light, to the point of having a halo around her head. Susan proceeds to tell Kane she is through with her singing and declare her independence. The lighting helps to portray just how serious she really is. The lighting further enhances her sincerity. She is honest about her incapability to sing. All this is seen through the use of full light. Kane tells her she will continue singing because he does not propose to have himself made ridiculous. As Susan confronts him on this, Kane casts her face completely in shadow. It is almost as if Welles is saying to the audience that Kane overpowers everyone else in his life. Gradually, Susan's face becomes half in shadow and half out of shadow implying that Susan can be manipulated and commanded, but only to a certain point. Even though Kane is an immensely powerful man, his influence cannot completely control her life.

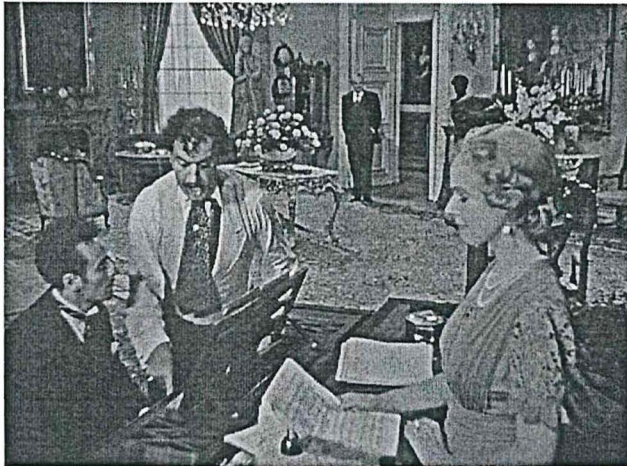


Another similar key scene in *Citizen Kane* that is visually striking is after Susan Alexander Kane performs terribly in the opera. Kane then stands up and claps his hands. Again the use of shadow is very significant. At first he claps his hands like everyone else out of respect for the performer but when he stands up and continues clapping, he's alone and lurking in the shadow and all we see is his silhouette. The use of the shadow here is very expressive in that it shows that Kane does not care if he is the only one giving a standing ovation since it is all about him. Welles saw the potential of what could be achieved with light and how light can affect the viewers take on what he or she just witnessed. Related to this scene Mulvey explains that; "exploiting light and shadow this way was revolutionary at that time and people were confused rather than impressed. It wasn't till years later that people looked back, appreciated, and used lighting to affect viewers the same way *Citizen Kane* did." (101)

The use of expressive lighting of *Citizen Kane* was revolutionary at the time and very much affective on the side of the viewer of the time.

During Susan Alexander's musical rehearsal with her voice trainer Matiste, Kane who appears from the door is contrasted with the two by lighting. Susan and Matiste are shot in high light while Kane appears in a shadow. Importantly, Kane shares this shadow with at least six visible statues; two statues appear on his right, three on the left and one statue is seen behind him as illustrated in figure 3.8 below,

Figure 3.8 (01:26:43)



Light helps the viewer to understand that Kane was more at ease when in the company of his possessions like these statues. Much as his focus is on the singing of Susan, the chiaroscuro lighting of the scene expresses his individualistic motives. He is a dictator who believes and listens to only one person- Charles Forster Kane. The contrast in lighting further shows that only Kane knew what he wanted. All the other characters did not know. Bernstein tells Thompson:

He knew what he wanted, Mr. Kane did, and he got it! Thatcher never did figure him out. He was hard to figure sometimes, even for me. Mr. Kane was a genius like he said. He had that funny sense of humour. Sometimes even I didn't get the joke...

### **3.4 Kane; an Individualistic Old man**

At the beginning of the film, the “NO TRESSPASS” sign is shot in high key lighting while the rest of Xanadu is in low key lighting. The purpose was to express the loneliness that characterised Kane’s mansion. High key lighting helps the viewer to ascertain the importance of the “no tress passing” sign. It heightens Kane’s individualism. He lives alone and whoever makes an attempt at infiltrating into his private life is deemed an intruder and trespasser.

At Xanadu, the contrast between low and high key lighting expresses Kane's individualism. It is so surprising that an extremely rich man such as Kane lies in his mansion alone surrounded by mountains of his material possessions. At his death bed, Kane is alone and shrouded in darkness. The only light that streams in comes through the window and shines only on his middle part leaving the head in total darkness. Even the nurse's head is the dark. This shows that even at the time of Kane's death, as Leland says in the film Kane does not give away anything about himself to any one.

He never gave himself away; he never gave anything away. He just left you a tip. He had a generous mind. I don't suppose anybody ever had so many opinions. That was because he had the power to express them, and Charlie lived on power and the excitement of using it - but he didn't believe in anything except Charlie Kane.

Contrast is made in the film where Jedediah Leland's nurse knows a lot about her patient. She, for example, knows that Leland needed to do away with smoking to live longer. It should be taken note of that during the interactions with Leland and his nurse, the scene is shot with high key lighting unlike that of Kane and the nurse which is punctuated with shades of light and darkness. Kane's individualism is further heightened by the partial shooting of his body. The shot of his body is shown in bits and this symbolizes the limited information the people around him have about him. For most of his life, Kane lived as an individual always surrounded by his wealth. In the shot, light first appears on Kane's lower body, and then there is a close up of a hand holding a snow globe followed by a close up of the lips and finally the hand that releases the snow globe. The lonely manner in which Kane dies reflects the words of Deiner F. Edwards, who argued in his article "Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index" that was published in *American Psychologist* (2000) that "to a larger extent the high productivity associated with affluence involves little leisure time; people become

increasingly prone to distress” (57). In the same vein, Economist Schor Juliet agrees with Deiner and she states that “the pressures to work, acquire, and consume tend to deplete personal energies” (49). Csikszentmihalyi reasoned that “when one’s psychic energy becomes invested in material goals; it is typical for sensitivity to other rewards to atrophy”. In that case he reasons that “friendships, art, literature, natural beauty; religion and philosophy become less and less interesting” (823). Charles Forster Kane becomes a victim of all the above material driven consequences of individualism.

During the congressional investigation sequence, Thatcher is shot with high key lighting. This makes him more visible than any other person in this shot. Contrastive light in this shot helps to understand the gist of Thatcher’s message which is more or less an individualistic one. Light makes him the center of attention and when he pronounces himself to Kane, he is the only person in light and his testimony is authoritative. The viewer gets to know that Kane is a highly individualistic man who believes in material acquisition and its maintenance. Thatcher calls Kane (the earlier idealist) a communist because he had consistently attacked the American traditions of private property.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

On the whole, Orson Welles’ use of lighting and shadow helps to make *Citizen Kane* one of the first movies to depict the American Dream as anything less than desirable. As a child, Kane is extremely happy as he plays with his sledge in the snow outside the family’s home. Kane has no playmates but is content to be alone because peace and security are inside the walls of the house. When Thatcher removes Kane from this place,

he is given what seems like the American dream; financial affluence and material luxury. However, Kane finds that those things don't make him happy, and the exchange of emotional security for financial security is ultimately unfulfilling. The American dream is hollow for Kane. As an adult, Kane uses his money and power not to build his own happiness but to either buy love or make others as miserable as he is. Kane's wealth isolates him from others throughout the years, and his life ends in loneliness at Xanadu. He dies surrounded only by his possessions, poor substitutions for true companions.

Expressive high contrast lighting isolates Charles Forster Kane from the rest of the characters. This form of isolation supports the theme of individualism that runs through the film. Kane repeatedly finds himself isolated from the world around him, whether he is young or old, happy or unhappy, alone or surrounded by others, which suggests that his final isolation is inevitable. Kane is either in a shadow when the rest of the characters are in full light or in full light when the rest are in a shadow.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 MISE EN SCENE AND THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUALISM

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the negative effects of materialistic individualism in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*. The analysis centers on the effective use of mise en scene and how it helps to reveal the effects of individualism. The study concerns itself with the exploration of the use of the elements of the mise en scene such as setting, props and costumes and figure placement and movement.

Mise en scene has already been explained in this study in (1.2.3) as the arrangement of everything that appears in the framing – actors, lighting, decor, props, and costume. It is a French term that means “placing on stage.” The frame and camerawork also constitute the mise-en-scène of a movie. These effects were brought up through the elaborate set design or as used in this study, the mise en scene. Film makers have borrowed the term and have extended the meaning to suggest the control the director has over the visual elements within the film image” (Bordwell & Thompson, 175). Four aspects of mise-en-scene which overlap the physical art of the theatre are setting, costume, lighting and movement of figures. Control of these elements provides the director an opportunity to stage events. Using these elements, the film director stages the event for the camera to provide his audience with vivid and sharp memories. Directors and film scholars alike recognize mise-en-scene as an essential part of the director's creative art. Andre Bazin, describes the mise en scene aesthetic as “emphasizing choreographed movement within the scene rather than through editing” (qtd in Pramaggiore and Wallis, 132).

According to Jean Mitry and Christopher King, the term is sometimes used to “represent a style of conveying the information of a scene primarily through a single shot often accompanied by camera movement” (178). Almost all Film scholars seem to agree on three things; that mise en scene is concerned with the way the setting is designed and arranged and that it conveys the film director’s message. In *Citizen Kane*, the technique is used to emphasize obsession with materialism and finally portrays how an acute degree of materialism can lead to frustration loneliness and disillusionment as seen in the life of Charles Forster Kane.

On the other hand, Individualism is the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that emphasizes the moral worth of the individual. Individualists promote the exercise of one's goals and desires and so value independence and self-reliance and advocate that interests of the individual should achieve precedence over the state or a social group, while opposing external interference upon one's own interests by society or institutions such as the government. Steven Lukes in his book Individualism defined (1973) with words that appeal to self-interest and individual advancement. According to Lukes’ view; individualism “has no emphasis on the community and focuses only on individualism as it concerns individual wants and needs” (167). He claims that individual concerns must be addressed in order for a people to truly be free. Any requirement or expectation that the individual would consider as community concerns would decrease that individual’s freedom. He claims that a person can be free only when he or she is completely left alone to do whatever he or she wants to do.

The word 'individualism' itself was first used in 1820, in a pejorative sense, by the French conservative thinker Joseph de Maistre (Curry and Goodheart, 1991), but was applied to America by Alexis Tocqueville, who used it to describe the self centered culture that had been growing for some time. The situation in *Citizen Kane* in which the ideals of family are ignored as we see Mary Kane sending away her only son to stay with a banker all in the name of mastering the art of building wealth rhymes well with Tocqueville, who observes that America was one country in the world where the precepts of Descartes were least studied and most followed. He writes that in their common assumptions Americans sought "to evade the bondage of system and habit, of family maxims, class opinions, and, in some degree, of national prejudices to accept tradition only as a means of information, and ... to seek the reason of things for oneself, and in oneself alone" (1-2). In short, each American appeals to the individual exercise of his own understanding alone. This view is resonant with the framing of *Citizen Kane* which emphasises loneliness in personal endeavours. Figure placement also enhances Tocqueville's views because through out the film, Charles Forster Kane is shot either in isolation or at a distance from the rest of the characters. For example at the Colorado home Charles Kane is seen through the window in a distance from his parents and Mr. Thatcher.

The term 'individual,' as seen in *Citizen Kane* where Kane believes in his autonomy and self importance reflects the words of Norbert Elias. Elias points out, "the primary function of the term 'individual' is to express the idea that every human being in the world is or should be an autonomous entity, and at the same time that each human being is in certain respects different from all others" (156).



## 4.2 The use Framing

The use of effective framing reveals that Kane's actions are always motivated by whatever grabs his fancy and by whatever serves himself, disregarding the rest of the world. Jan Szczepanski (1985) defines individualism as “wanting to be different just to be different.” He says that individualism also tends to be greedy: each individual strives to get as big a slice of the social pie as he or she can generally with the result that others get less or nothing at all. Basing on Szczepanski and Lukes’ characterization of individualism, *Citizen Kane* becomes a good example of individualism and its subsequent negative effects. Charles Forster Kane is the purest individual that one can find. He is not dependent on anyone and never was. He was removed from his family, he never had any real friends, and he was never dependent financially on anyone. His independence comes not merely from his wealth, but rather his circumstances. Kane’s desires to be a newspaper mogul and the governor of New York are motivated by a desire to be loved by the people cleverly rationalized by himself to be for the people. Both his wives were ignored by him until he wanted attention which they are expected to gratify immediately. Like anyone whose only motivation in life is satisfying his own desires, Kane is alienated by his choice and their choice, (the self-centered person is of course angry at the rest of the world for not fulfilling their desires). Kane spends his last days alone in his own palace surrounded by his many possessions. All that great art as seen at Xanadu has to be owned by Kane and it cannot be shared with anyone else. This form of individualism is revealed through figure placement in the frame. Kane is always screened surrounded by material objects as seen at Xanadu when he is alive and later after his death when the

departing Xanadu staff extract and display the material wealth to sort out what was valuable from the junk.

The best example where Welles used the *mise en scene* to expose the negative effects of individualism is through framing/figure placement at the beginning of Thatcher's memoirs. Kane is shown in the background of the scene while in the foreground; his parents and Mr. Thatcher discuss his future. Kane appears visually trapped within the frames of the window, revealing the way in which he is being 'trapped' into Mr. Thatcher's guardianship. Figure (4:1) illustrates this entrapment;

Figure 4:1 (0:09-1:55)



During this scene, a close up of Kane's indignant expression fades out slowly to reveal the sledge he happily played with moments before. Having unwillingly left his simplistic home for the riches and supposedly assured success Thatcher can offer him, the sledge is all that remains, abandoned in the foreground and covered in snow. According to Mulvey, Laura, Snow in itself bears "connotations both of burying the past and freezing this idealized memory in Kane's mind" (54). Kane is never again shown against a pure white background. This suggests that his childhood (and implicitly his innocence) was

wrested from him in this instant, left behind with his sledge, all for the sake of trying to guarantee that Kane's future is a 'successful' one. Although Thatcher later gives Kane another sledge, it is too late; Kane's defiant rejection of the sledge demonstrates the way in which it is not so much the sledge, but his previous childhood happiness that he longs for. In this scene, Kane's mother is always shot in the foreground signifying her dominance in the affairs of her son. She very much believes in individualism and that is the reason why she sends her son to live with the banker who would help him learn the art of acquiring and keeping wealth. According to Pramaggiore and Wallis; "the prominence of Mary Kane underlines her position of authority" (73). She makes the decision to send her son Charles Forster Kane away to grow up as Thatcher's ward believing that she is acting in his best interests. Ironically, as already noted, there is no single psychological need of Kane that this individualistic move addresses. Instead it drowns him into a sea of psychological torment due to his lost childhood and happiness.

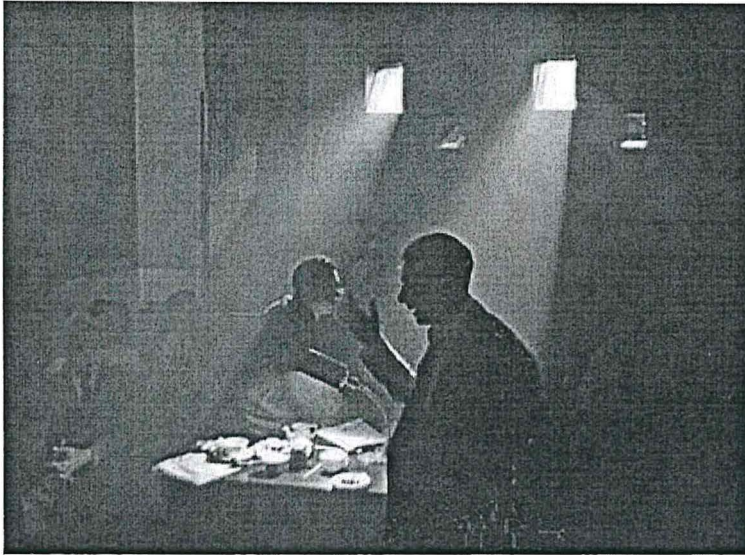
Another scene is at the congressional investigation where journalists are interviewing Thatcher on the subject of Kane's behaviour. The framing of the scene reveals the characters as wealthy as they are filmed sitting in what would pass for a business board meeting with Thatcher at the head of the table. The costumes also enhance the extent of the wealth of the characters. All of them are donned in suits and neck ties. Based on Thatcher's characterization of Kane, the viewer becomes aware that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss how to arrest the bad situation in which Kane was throwing their businesses with his newspaper campaign against capitalism. Framing is another aspect of the *mise en scene* that enhances materialism and individualism in this very scene. There are at least a dozen people in this shot but by the time Thatcher makes the pronouncement

that Kane is a communist; he is left alone on the screen. This scene is similar to the following shot at the union square where, before the speaker brands Kane a fascist, the speaker is framed alone on the screen despite the multitudes he is addressing. This setting of the scenes help the viewer to see that it is Thatcher and the union square speaker that are individualists as the framing alienates them from their respective audiences. The only way to show the extent to which society rejects the behaviour of individualism was to cause a screen rejection of the views that were propounded against Kane. The irony in the whole scene is that the two social movements that he is named after concern themselves much with the plight of the masses. They are against capitalism which is embodied in Thatcher's own words;

Charles Forster Kane, in every essence of his social belief and by the dangerous manner in which he has consistently attacked the American traditions of private property, initiative and opportunity for advancement is nothing more or less than a communist. The American traditions of private property as advanced for by Thatcher are a good example of individualistic thinking. (qtd from the film; at 07:31 minutes.)

At the beginning of the quest into the private life of Charles Forster Kane, not much is known about the iconic newspaperman. To show how Kane lived as an individual with out any social interference just like the "NO TRESSPASS" tag on his Xanadu mansion, Welles cast the newspaper office scene in darkness to emphasise the negative effect of individualism. The figure (4:2) illustrates the darkness that shrouds Kane's life.

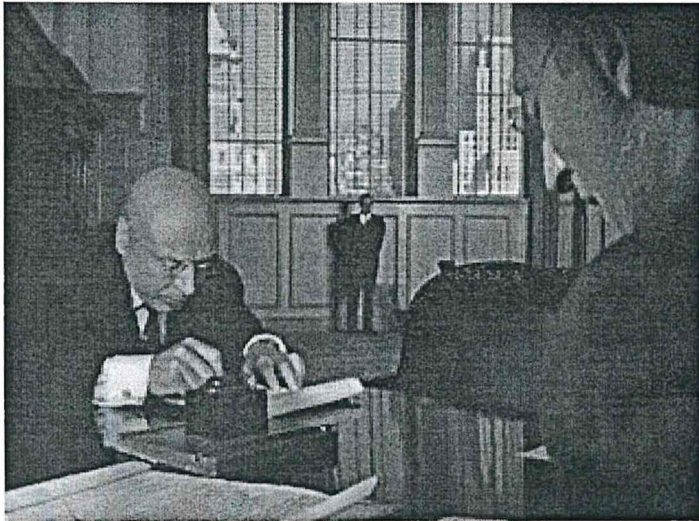
Figure 4:2 (00:13:34)



Despite the social clout that Kane had got, he is just as oblivious as any ordinary American. Rawlston wonders; “this is a man who could have been president, who was loved and hated and as talked about as any man in our time...but by the time he dies, he has only one word on his mind; Rosebud...” Rawlston’s statement exposes the extent to which individualism had socially alienated Kane. Despite his seeming popularity, Kane remained an unknown figure before the public which is represented by the press in this scene.

During the relinquishing of powers of the *Inquirer* during the great depression, the screen is framed in a way that Thatcher and Bernstein are shot in the foreground and Kane in the background to isolate and make him a disillusioned and lonely individual as seen in figure (4:3)

Figure 4:3 (00:28:28)



The creation of the distance between Kane and his business companions is a clear indicator of how he makes his decisions as an individual. Kane only wants to sign the documents and go home. This scene is important in emphasizing his ignominious fall and subsequent dependency, Kane interrupts the reading while walking away into the distant background in the middle of the shot to stand before what first appears to be a normal-sized window. He acknowledges that the newspaper is bankrupt when he says; "which means we're bust." In a deep-focus, shot that fools the eye about the size and scale of the window in view, Kane stands under the huge, high window with his back to the proceedings in his cavernous office; his diminished size symbolizes his great loss. The shot recalls another scene earlier in the film, when young Kane is seen through the distance in the outdoor snow, and his mother signs an agreement with Thatcher inside their cabin. From his facial expression, Kane is viewed as a man who is lonely and frustrated. When Kane stands under the window, he is very much over shadowed by his image which shows that the mighty man has ceased to be the economic giant that he had always been. A clear reading of this scene shows that individualism can lead to self

deception. For example, when Kane finally appears to sign the document to relinquish his control of the newspaper to Thatcher, he still thinks that he is powerful. His image is cast towering over the other two and looking over them. It is only individualism; the belief in self worth that drives him to continue with this behaviour.

In the scene when Thompson interviews Bernstein; the framing helps to reveal how individualism facilitates an individual's self importance to the extent that other characters are strangely subordinated and the individualistic character appears like a god. In this scene, Thompson leans forward to interview Bernstein in his New York City office in front of the hearth. Kane's portrait above the mantle dominates the scene. Bernstein is seated in a flat, high backed leather chair with his arms folded on his shiny polished desktop, reflecting his image. His eyesight is failing, evidenced by a large magnifying glass in front of him. He is also free of self-importance: "Who's a busy man, me? I'm chairman of the board. I've got nothing but time." The overshadowing of Kane's image over Bernstein is a clear indicator of how even in death; Kane still over shadows his subordinates. Another important point to note in this shot is the expression of the relationship between individualism and material possessiveness. Szczepanski (1985) notes that "individualistic tend to be greedy: each individual striving to get as big a slice of the social pie as he or she can generally with the result that others get less," Kane's possessiveness is manifested through the placement of his image amidst a collection of items just above the warm fire while Bernstein and Thompson are left on the other side of the room in an empty walled and seemingly semi cold room. Bernstein's lack of self importance shows the difference between him and Kane who never has time for anything other than making money. The best example of Kane's lack of time for friends is when he

just grabs the present that had been prepared for him by the staff of the New York *Inquirer* on his return from business trip in France on.

Crèvecoeur, J. Hector, in *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* says:

Thus this man devoid of society learns more than ever to centre every idea within that of his own welfare. To him, all that appears good, just, equitable has a necessary relation to himself and his family. He has been so long alone that he almost forgot the rest of mankind, except when he carries his crops on the snow to some distant market (260).

By constantly shooting Kane amidst good and expensive material possessions and donning him in expensive suits all the time unlike other characters in the film, Kane becomes a representation of this American farmer who centers every thing good around himself like in the scene where Susan Alexander Kane is rehearsing for her musical presentation in Salamambo, the set is arranged in such a way that it portrays Kane's towering importance over any other person and his belief in the purchasing power of money. In a remarkable mise en scene shot in the vast room, a piano is positioned in the foreground, with Matisti gesturing and instructing on the left and Susan singing off-pitch on the right. In the far background, Kane enters the room through a door and watches the lesson undetected, exerting his domineering presence over the scene. Her music teacher believes she is devoid of talent: "Some people can sing. Some can't. Impossible! Impossible!" Forcefully exerting his will over her lessons, Kane approaches behind Matisti and speaks abruptly: "It's not your job to give Mrs. Kane your opinion of her talents. You're supposed to train her voice Signor Matisti, nothing more." Matisti fears being "the laughing stock of the musical world," believing Susan's shrill and off-key voice cannot be trained. The effects of Kane's egoism which leads him to disregard Matisti's advice on his wife's musical talent are far reaching. Reacting as if it is he who is



personally humiliated as indeed he is, Kane is startled when he overhears someone's criticism of Susan's singing: "Perfectly dreadful." The finale, in which Susan falls back on cushions, is greeted with scant, weak applause from a bored audience. Kane stands and applauds loudly for her in a one man standing ovation long after everyone else has ceased. Had he listened to Matisti, he would have saved himself from such a humiliation. It is important to note that all this was reached at through the effective use of the setting, figure placement and costumes.

During the great breakfast montage, the variation of the actors' demeanors and placement, the progression of costumes, and the use of lighting subtly support the presentation of a deteriorating marriage, and furthermore, of Kane's inability to sustain a successful, lasting relationship due to his individualism. The mise en scene and technical devices used in the montage are by no means limited to this portion of the film. In fact, they are found in numerous scenes throughout the movie to reveal other relationships that have fallen apart as a result of Kane's profession, such as his friendship with Jed Leland and romance with Susan Alexander. The actors' attitudes in each sequence in the montage and their placement in relation to one another are each examples of the mise-en-scene portraying Charles and Emily's feelings toward each other as time passes in their marriage. The introduction to the montage shows the viewer two individuals playfully flirting after a long night of parties. Charles even plays the role of a butler as he serves his wife. Emily on the other hand, giggles and smiles as she begs her husband to stay home with her a little longer before he goes to work. As each successive sequence passes; Emily becomes reprimanding as her husband begins to spend more time at work, scornful when he insists on putting Mr. Bernstein's gift in the nursery and when he insults the

president in his newspaper, and eventually sad as she sits at a silent breakfast table reading the rival newspaper of her husband's. After Kane has lost the election, he is shot in the newspaper room, where he is sharply contrasted from Leland by placing his figure at a low angle near the camera. The effect is that he appears to be bigger than in reality. The implication is that he is not at the same level with the working man. Leland reminds him that the working man has some thing called his rights not Kane's gift. The bigger than normal image emphasises the crumbling weight of materialism in *Citizen Kane* because not even the wealth could buy a political career for Kane. Despite all the riches Kane has, he is unable to influence the voters of his country to vote for him. Bruce F. Kavin observes that this "scene emphasises the extent of Kane's loss." Kavin writes; "the mise en scene in the scene when Kane has just lost the election is full of props that pertain to the campaign, notably, "Kane for governor" signs and piles of spent confetti. The clutter of the confetti suggests the failure of the campaign, a mess of jubilant expectations that now in the absence of victory is just a mess" (106). Kavin further argues that this loss was Kane's own making because he had ways of avoiding it if at all he had listened to his wife. Because of his egocentricity, he does not accommodate any other view apart from his. Kane individually goes into the election and loses. He loses largely because of his arrogance and pride. Gianneti (2006) gives an alternative title of *Citizen Kane* as "*The Arrogance of Power*" his supposition is premised on the view that; "Welles was attracted to themes traditionally associated with classical tragedy, and the epic, the down fall of a public figure because of pride and arrogance, power and pride, power and wealth are corrupting and the corrupt devour themselves." (561)

The ruined campaign is also the end of his friendship with Leland, who severs his personal ties to the man whom he blames for betraying a serious commitment to political reform in favour of satisfying personal whims. Kane feels close to Leland, and he tries to hold him as a friend. But Leland is too disillusioned, and he asks to be transferred from New York to Chicago. In the interview with Thompson he says about Kane; "As far as I was concerned, he behaved like a swine. Maybe I wasn't his friend. But if I wasn't, he never had one..."

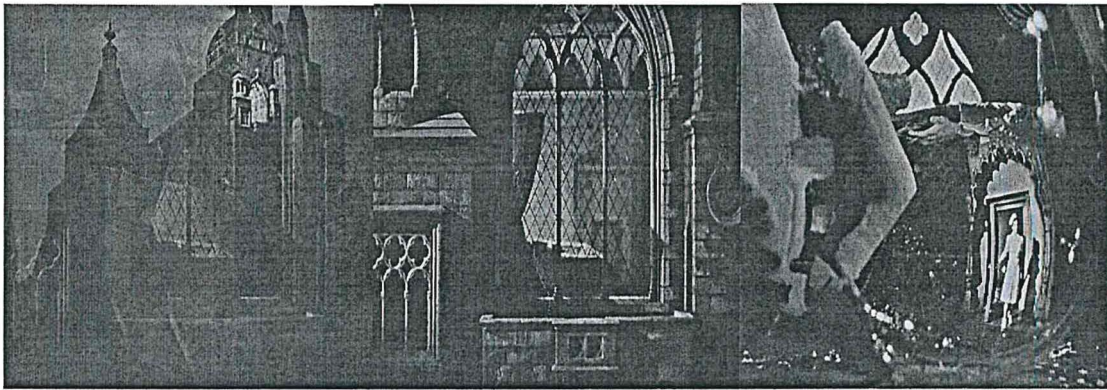
The loss of the relationship between Kane and his childhood friend Leland is a major break in Kane's life. It could have been the occasion for a thorough self-examination, and a critical review of the goals to which he had dedicated his life and fortune until then. He might have wondered about the nature of his relation to other people, about his obsessive drive to accumulate warehouses full of art at which he never looked, and about the ultimate sense of acquiring ever more newspapers, factories, ocean liners, and whatever else seemed advantageous for his ever expanding empire. The general crisis in his affairs may have made him re-evaluate his life but because of his individualism, he never did.

In his book Understanding Movies, (2006) Louis Gianneti writes that "almost all the compositions in *Citizen Kane* are intricate and richly textured, at times baroquely ornate." He goes on to state that "the visual complexity is not mere rhetorical ornamentation. The images are designed to reveal maximum information; often in an ironic manner" (542). This is best seen in the scene of Susan's attempted suicide, the way figures are arranged emphasise the effects of individualism. At the time of the suicide attempt, the viewer can

ably tell the reason behind it; Susan does not want to sing any more because as she tells Thompson, it was never her idea. However Kane's responsibility in this suicide attempt is manifested through both the setting and the arrangement of the scene. By the time Kane crashes through the door and enters, only his figure, the glass with a spoon in it and the poison bottle are in focus. Susan Alexander, on the other hand, is but a mere shadow in relation to the drugs and Kane. The composition of this shot creates a relationship between the container of drugs and Kane as if they were the same entity. Based on this interpretation, we can say that Susan Alexander's attempted suicide was as a result of Kane's selfish insistence that Susan had to continue singing. Kane cannot allow himself to be ridiculed. Kane is determined to enjoy fame and adoration by being a great patron of the arts and the companion of an illustrious diva. He finances costly productions for Susan to star in, and he builds an entire opera house to command the attention of high society and the art world. He does all this with a total disregard of his wife's views about the very subject. Susan's attempts to stop singing fall on a dead rock.

At Xanadu, Kane lies alone on his bed with a snow globe in his hands. There is no one near him. The room is bigger than the man occupying it as illustrated in figure (4:4)

Figure 4:4 (00:01:46 to 00:02:25)



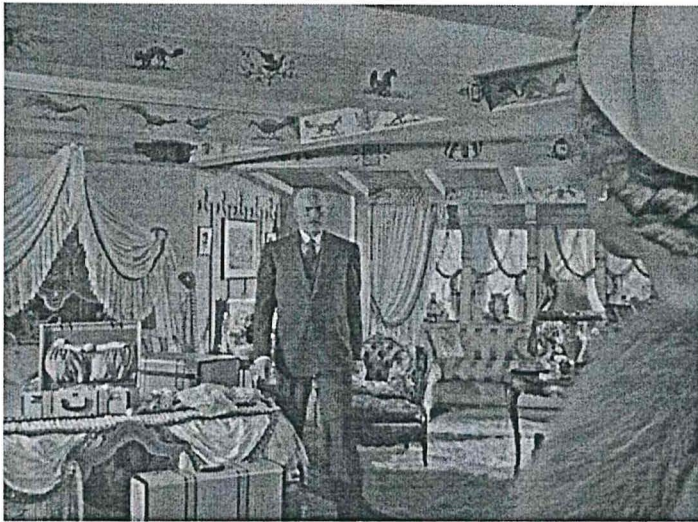
A clear reading of this scene shows that Kane's individualism had led to his loneliness. It is individualism that distanced all his close friends like Jedediah Leland from him and even the divorce of his wives was as a result of stinking individualism. The emphasis of Kane's loss as a result of his optimization of his individualistic goals in the words of Giannetti as earlier quoted that:

Kane is gradually alienated from romance, from love and from life itself by the ossifying blanket of his money and the will to power that it breeds. Kane becomes an artifact of his own fame and an increasingly remote speck of humanity adrift in the vast halls of his palatial home Xanadu (217).

As Giannetti states Kane's individualism cost him the love of his friends like Leland and his two wives.

In the scene where Susan is walking out on Kane, the billionaire is physically placed amidst the collection of material objects at Xanadu. He is dressed in a dark suit symbolizing the grim future that awaits him as portrayed in figure (4:5) below;

Figure 4:5 (01:44:19)

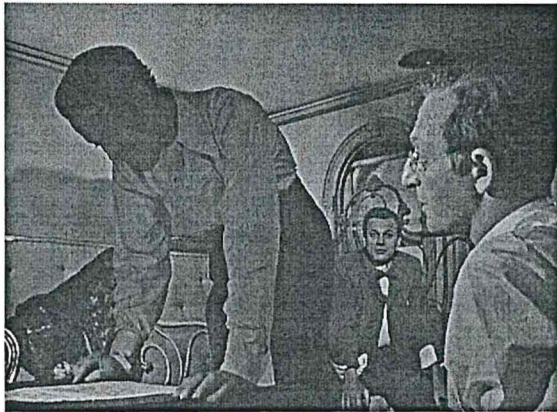


When Susan is reminding Kane of his individualism, Kane's figure is cast near the camera and at a low angle which makes him dominant. The low angle enlarges Kane's image to a point near the ceiling which gives him control over the rest of the characters in the scene. The jewelry and expensive furniture in the scene emphasises the attachment that Kane gave to inanimate objects like the statues. This event constitutes a time of crisis in Kane's life. His marriage is emotionally dead; his wife refers to it later as a "distasteful episode in my life that I'd rather forget." It seems likely, indeed, that for Kane the union had never been just a matter of romantic affection, but also a stepping-stone to the realization of his social and political ambitions. He realises the importance of people when it is too late. Susan continues and leaves him alone in his palatial residence at Xanadu.

Of all the characters in the film, it is Leland who shows too much skepticism in Kane's pro people propaganda. This is best revealed through framing, which for example casts

Leland in the background to distance him from the declaration of principles as seen in figure (4:6)

Figure 4:6 (00:38:05)



Like an old friend of Kane's, he already knows that all that Kane does must have selfish interests intended at gaining benefits to him. Leland's skepticism is plainly justified, for Kane had already demonstrated his willingness to lie to his readers by publishing such false reports as "Spanish Armada off the coast of New Jersey" ...as part of his campaign to maneuver America into a war with Spain. Kane had also engaged in such journalistic practices as enhancing the weight of certain news items by printing ridiculously fat headlines. "If the headline is big enough, it makes the news big enough," he tells one of his editors who had seen no reason to run a trivial story just because it appealed to the sensationalist appetite of tabloid readers. As it becomes increasingly clear, Kane's media empire has relatively little to do with disseminating the truth, but very much with accumulating economic might and the manipulation of public opinion. With the bitterness of his disappointed idealism, Leland says later on: "Well, Charlie was a bad newspaper man even then. He entertained his readers, but he never told them the truth." Leland, in other words, brings across that there was not just a dark side to the publisher's figure, but

that the whole figure was rather a fraud. In each of the scenes where Kane tells selfishly intended lies, he is always contrasted with other characters like in the first one Wheeler sends him a cable that there was no war in Cuba, Leland's facial expression and position in the shot emphasise his disbelief compared to Bernstein who is excited at Kane's aptness in giving the answer; "Dear Wheeler, you provide the prose poems and I will provide the war" Kane's interest is to make high sales for his newspaper and to make personal gains. The next scene where Kane tell a lie is when he is forcing Mr. Carter to produce a headline about the death of Mr. Silverstone's wife. Still in this shot, Leland is partially removed from the scene by a shadow so that Kane and Carter dominate the scene. Lastly during the signing of the declaration of principles, Kane dominates the scene as he is shot while standing compared to Leland and Bernstein who are seated. The shot expresses Kane's domination of the general opinion of the masses. Socially, Kane's individualism costs his society in terms of values and truth. He cannot tell the truth if it is deemed in any way to jeopardize his business empire.

The use of framing helps the viewer to understand how Kane replaces human relationships with statues. Through out the film Kane's image is always cast amidst statues. Supposedly, he feels at ease with these statues which he can ably dominate with out any opposition just like the one he meets from Susan and Leland. For Kane, the statues were replacements for real people. Kane was raised by Mr. Thatcher to think single-mindedly and that ultimately brought Kane to his downfall. Due to Kane's lost childhood, he had trouble, throughout the entire movie, connecting with other people. Ideally he feels he is in control of all of them because of his money and power. This created his obsession with statues because he had full control over these inanimate



objects. In a very short scene, towards the end of the newsreel segment, Kane sits in a chair wearing a white robe with statues surrounding him. The statues become evident due to the use of the composition of the set and the arrangement of figures. The statues in the front and in the back trap Kane and eventually his own fantasy suffocates him and kills him.

### **4.3 The Use of Costumes**

One of the more prominent places people see costumes is in theatre, film and on television. In combination with other aspects, theatrical costumes can help actors portray characters' age, gender role, profession, social class, personality, ethnicity, and even information about the historical period/era, geographic location and time of day, as well as the season or weather of the theatrical performance. Often, stylized theatrical costumes can exaggerate some aspect of a character.

The use of costumes is another way in which the effects of individualism are expressed in *Citizen Kane* (1941). During the early days of the inquirer when Kane is still an idealist; a champion of the cause of the poor, the under fed, the un privileged and under paid; when the members of the business community like Thatcher look at him as a communist and a fascist because of his pro people views, he is always dressed in white shirts and suits and the setting is always brightly lit to emphasise the gaiety of the mood in each scene. This is better illustrated through figures (4:7)

Figure 4:7 (00:25:55)



However, when Kane evolves and becomes a ruthless “money mad pirate” both the lighting and the costumes change from bright to dark thus creating a gloom atmosphere. The example of these scenes includes his marriage with Emily. When the distance between the couple is widened, even the clothes change; they now wear heavy and dark clothes which symbolize their unhappy relationship. Their marriage has gone sour just because of Kane’s individualism. Kane fails to accord enough time to his family and instead concentrated on his newspaper. As a result there is a marriage breakdown. Much as there seems to be another contributing factor in this divorce as unfaithfulness with Susan Alexander, Kane’s individualism must come into question. Emily might have thought that Kane had been having an affair with Susan through out the early days of the inquirer when he used to work till it was late. Secondly Emily’s pleas to go home with Kane fall on deaf ears as Kane has resolved to stay at Susan’s residence. Kane does this because he cannot imagine himself being advised by his wife or working according to the directions of Jim Gettys. It should be noted that Emily’s white gown during this scene is significant of her purity and innocence compared to the rest of the characters in the scene who are donned in dark colours.

#### 4.4 Figure Movement

The scene that clearly shows Kane's narcissism is after the departure of Susan, Kane's figure is placed in the middle of a large room at his palace at Xanadu walking alone. His image is duplicated in the multiple mirrors that are in the room. In essence, the whole room is now filled by one man; Kane. This is a representation of Mr. Kane as a shattered man, a man who sees only himself, and a man drowning in loneliness. It also represents Mr. Kane's reflection on his own life. His walking is burdensome. He looks dejected, devastated, disappointed and finally defeated. This is a reward for materialistic worship which has now left him alone in his expansive mansion that is now devoid of human presence. Still at Xanadu, Susan is seen with a jigsaw puzzle on the floor in front of a large fireplace at Xanadu, an enormous castle-like mansion Kane has built for them on 49,000 acres in Florida. The camera focuses on Susan's puzzle as it changes from one scene to another, indicating the passage of time. When Kane asks her how she knew she had not done the puzzles already, she replies that "it makes a whole lot more sense than collecting statues." Kane answers that she "may be right, I sometimes wonder, but you get into the habit." The construction of this scene expresses the boredom that Susan experienced at Xanadu just because Kane keeps her as a "pet". All that her husband is concerned with is collecting statues, not that he loves them but to fill a void because he feels that every good thing must be owned by him.

In view of Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Individualism is the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that emphasizes the moral worth of the individual" (06). He goes on to argue that

individualists promote the exercise of one's goals and desires and so value independence and self-reliance and advocate that interests of the individual should achieve precedence over the state or a social group, while opposing external interference upon one's own interests by society or institutions such as the government (06).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Individualism in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* results into psychological and social isolation. In all the scenes where the mise en scene is applied, Charles Foster Kane repeatedly finds himself isolated from the world around him, whether he is young or old, happy or unhappy, alone or surrounded by others, which suggests that his final isolation is inevitable. The camerawork in *Citizen Kane* emphasizes this isolation. For example, we see Kane as a happy child playing alone in the snow, and a short time later, the camera isolates him between his mother and Mr. Thatcher as they plan to separate Kane from his home. He is still alone, but no longer happy. We next see Kane seated alone in the center of a room ringed with dark-suited men, who watch him as he opens a gift from Thatcher. Kane's isolation follows him into adulthood where we see him sitting on his own in his newspaper office amid a celebration in his honour. The camera locates Kane in a triangular shot between Bernstein and Leland as the two men discuss Kane's increasingly depraved tactics. The three men may be in physical proximity, but the nature of Bernstein and Leland's discussion and the way the shot frames Kane mark him as an outsider. Eventually Leland leaves Kane, and Kane barricades himself in his fortress with Susan. But Susan too leaves Kane, and in the end, he dies alone, never having formed a lasting bond with anyone.

Isolation as developed in the film through mise en scene leads to loneliness. As it has already been discussed, *Citizen Kane* was one of the first movies to depict the American Dream as anything less than desirable. As a child, Kane is fully happy as he plays in the snow outside the family's home, even though his parents own a boarding house and are quite poor. He has no playmates but is content to be alone because peace and security are just inside the house's walls. When Thatcher removes Kane from this place, he's given what seems like the American dream; financial affluence and material luxury. However, Kane finds that those things don't make him happy, and the exchange of emotional security for financial security is ultimately unfulfilling. The American dream is hollow for Kane. As an adult, Kane uses his money and power not to build his own happiness but to either buy love or make others as miserable as he is. Through framing where Kane is always placed in the middle of inanimate objects and costumes which make him appear different from the rest of the characters, it becomes clear that Kane's wealth isolates him from others throughout the years, and his life ends in loneliness at Xanadu. He dies surrounded only by his possessions, poor substitutions for true companions. All this is achieved through the continuous placement of Kane's image amidst material objects which he believes in more than human beings.

Materialistic individualism as discussed above breeds breakdown of relationships and separation. These breakdowns are revealed through figure placement as in the breakfast montage where Kane's relationship with Emily deteriorates and at the *Inquirer* where he fires Leland and therefore loses the friendship. Through out the film, Kane loses his counterparts due to practices of the politics of control in which he does not listen to any view contrary to his. When Kane's staff celebrates the fact that Kane has stolen the entire

editorial staff of their rival newspaper, Leland, for the first time, openly questions whether the end justifies the means and whether loyalty can be bought. Several years later, Leland has the same disagreement with Kane, which leads Leland to request for a transfer to Chicago. He feels he can become an ethical, objective reporter only if he can escape Kane's suffocating control. Just like the women in Kane's life, Leland must leave Kane to save himself.

Despite his doubts and criticisms, Leland attempts to maintain his integrity without destroying his friendship with Kane, and he sustains his faith in Kane longer than any other character in the film, with the possible exception of Bernstein. When Kane builds his wife Susan an opera house in Chicago, the city where Leland now works as the drama critic for a Kane newspaper, Leland must choose loyalty or the truth after Susan's horrendous opening night. The events in this scene leading to the separation of Kane and Leland are revealed through framing. Different characters like Bernstein and Leland and later Kane are placed in the frame to predict what is about to happen. For example Bernstein and his colleagues have fear stricken faces at the imagination of what Kane would do to the drunken and sleeping. Leland on the other hand is framed sleeping on the typewriter where he was writing a negative review of Susan's performance, but passes out, drunk, before he can finish it. Kane arrives at the office and indignantly finishes writing the review himself to show Leland that he can be an honest man, but when Leland wakes up, Kane bluntly fires him. Leland has little reason to think that any integrity or goodness lurks within Kane, but nonetheless he mails Kane the "Declaration of Principles" Kane signed so many years ago. The gesture is a rebuke, but it is also a way of suggesting it's not too late for Kane to change. Kane tears it up, effectively slicing

Leland out of his life forever. It is Kane's pride that leads him to the loss of his long time friend.

Charles Kane marries Susan Alexander as a way of getting to his individualistic goals. Through framing the viewer is able to see the congestion caused by the journalists who want to know Kane's next step in his development. Before he could reach even reach home with his bride, he has already started contemplating building an opera house and make Susan a great opera star. This shot emphasises the prominence of Kane right from its beginning up to when it dissolves into a headline, KANE BUILDS OPERA HOUSE. The placement of Kane's figure at the center of everything makes him more important than the wedding and marriage. Everything is all about him. The framing of the scene at Susan Alexander's home enhances materialism in *Citizen Kane*. At first she's playing piano for him in a shabby rooming house, and in the next shot, while Susan is still playing; the rundown furniture has been replaced by elegant furnishings. In this way, we are visually clued in to the fact that Susan has become Kane's mistress and a kept woman.

This transition takes place when Susan mentions her interest in singing. Kane is placed amidst material objects and the scene is full of inanimate objects all through Susan's singing. The framing of this last part of the shot reveals that Kane has foreseen himself as a sponsor of a great artist. He marries her purely for selfish reasons. Charmed by her lack of self consciousness, Kane believes he has found someone who will love him unconditionally. When Susan's true nature emerges, Kane willfully ignores it. She grows bitter when he pressures her to become someone he believes is more suited to his station.

Kane tries to force others to see her as he does, which nearly drives her to suicide. Kane's attempts to completely control her almost rob her of her identity, and the only way she can save herself is to leave him. Susan leaves Kane and Kane counts his second divorce. The most interesting factor in these divorces is that both are orchestrated by Kane's larger than life ego. When Susan finally leaves him, Kane feels the loss he felt when his mother left. He trashes Susan's room and finds the snow globe, which brings back long-repressed memories of his childhood. Kane has no one now that Susan is gone and nothing to hold onto but the past. All this is technically brought out through the set design in which it is finally Kane and his material possessions at the end. He finds no comfort in his possessions and longs for human companion which he cannot get at this time.

Individualism further leads to emptiness in personal endeavours. Kane's materialism and individualism were largely aimed at filling the missing part of his life- his lost childhood and happiness but Kane's rampant materialism and consumption is consistently shown in the film form as claustrophobic and ultimately unfulfilling – a point best illustrated in the scene where the Xanadu workers are extracting Kane's items. It reveals the extent of his great material wealth. Through figure placement and setting, these shots show the massive amounts of material stuff that Kane had collected over the years and how they create a labyrinth that surrounds the people working on the extraction. With all the money in the world and the power to "buy things", as Kane would put it, in an unlimited quality and quantity, how could Kane be as unhappy as he was? At a general level, the film is commenting negatively on a very 'American' individualist notion of material happiness and consumption. Kane's appetite for consumption ultimately distances and destroys his ability to connect with the outside world. This disconnection redefines him



as the objects that he collects and consumes; this is especially evident in the News on the March segment where great pleasure is taken in describing Xanadu despite the entrapping quality that Susan and Kane felt within it. After his death, all that seems to be left of Kane are a mess of objects and a word that, as revealed to the audience, seems undeniably tied to an object. When people live as individuals driven only by material possessions at the expense cordial inter personal relationships, Welles seems to argue that they end up in self oblivion.

On a whole, the use of framing, costumes, figure placement and movement helps in the understanding of the theme of individualism and how it impacts on individuals. In this chapter, these elements helps to reveal isolation, break down of marriages and personal relationships and loneliness.

## 5.0

## CONCLUSION

### 5.1. Introduction

This study was based on Orson Welles' 1941 film *Citizen Kane* which mirrored and critiqued the social and economic situation in the United States of America at the time. The study critically analysed how materialist fetishism and its subsequent effects like individualism was satirized through the use of elements of style like deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting and the use the mise en scene. Under mise en scene, attention was paid to framing, costumes and figure placement and movement.

### 5.2 Main findings and conclusions

#### 5.2.1 Deep focus photography and materialist fetishism

The study found out that Welles used deep-focus photography to depict the entire detail of a scene in one wide shot, rather than being limited to the traditional focus zone of earlier cameras and film. Thus, Welles' camera framing tends to be wide, relying on the action itself to draw the attention of the viewer, rather than camera movements. *Citizen Kane* being largely a social commentary, this style is important, as it serves to engage the viewer in the active interpretation of the message. The opening newsreel footage further serves this purpose, by lending authenticity to the underlying plot through repetition. Technically the unprecedented use of deep focus is helpful in that in nearly every scene in the film, the foreground, background and everything in between are all in sharp focus.

The study found out that the use of deep focus photography was helpful in the disparagement of materialist fetishism in *Citizen Kane*. Charles Forster Kane faces the

effects of being isolated because of his material possessions when Susan leaves him. Immediately Kane embarks on a rageful destruction of Susan's bedroom at Xanadu, in response to her leaving him. Left alone and feeling completely isolated, Kane leaves the room and we see a crowd of his servants massed outside the door, peering inside. But as Kane walks away, the crowd seems totally uninterested in him, and instead remains transfixed on the open door. This serves to solidify the feeling of total isolation that the now decrepit Kane is suffering. The most intriguing image of the film follows as Kane carries himself down the hallway: Walking through a double set of facing mirrors inset in the hallway, Kane's reflection is repeated infinitely through them into the distance. The large mirrors are themselves encased within an ornate frame, the pattern which is likewise reflected. This serves to illustrate the main premise of *Citizen Kane*, in that Kane has become trapped within and surrounded by his own wealth and material monuments. But as Kane walks past the camera and off into the hallway, so too does his reflection vanish signifying the contention that immortality is derived from human companionship, rather than materialistic ownership.

In this study, deep focus photography helped to enhance the view that *Citizen Kane* is a clear manifestation of how excessive love for material wealth leads to loss of humanness and filial relationship. Scenes are continuously shot in depth to emphasise materialism at the Kane's cabin where Charles Forster Kane is given away to Thatcher. The Kane's give up the custody of their only son in order for him to learn the art of making money and at one time to become (as Jim Kane assumes), one of the richest men in America. This belief in material affluence makes it clear that the film socially criticizes the 1941 American society that was riddled with materialist fetishism as seen in the incurable love

for wealth that Charles Forster Kane develops. Throughout his life, money is Kane's substitute for the genuine feelings he never develops. Money's abstract power replaced direct emotional human relationship and a truly personal presence. Because fate had made Kane rich enough to buy everything he wanted he had no incentive to develop a genuine self or a real life; money was always a readily available substitute. In a rare moment of self-recognition, when he was stripped of his control over much of his fortune because of the economic crash of 1929, Kane remarked to Bernstein and Thatcher: "I may have become a great man if I had not been so wealthy. I have always gagged on that silver spoon."

It was found out in this study that the film impresses it upon the viewers through deep focus photography that there was a serious worship of material wealth in the 1941 American society to the extent that whoever was deemed to be a threat to such values as the individual acquisition and protection of wealth regardless of whether one has exploited the masses or not, would be dealt with immediately. The best example is the way in which Thatcher emphatically brands Kane a communist and he is farther called a fascist at the union square just because he is seen as someone fighting some of the tenets of the American dream. The deep focus shot at the union square helps the viewer to observe how majority of the American society believe in materialism since they had come to listen to a capitalistic speech.

Through a deep focus shot at Xanadu in which Kane is screened minding his material wealth other than the wives he lives with, the study further found out that materialistic fetishism does not only affect the believers in materialist fetishism but also has diverse

effects on the innocent people that may be caught up in the wrath of the wealth making pirates. The study capitalized on Susan Kane's attempted suicide because of her dislike for the singing career which her husband never wanted her to quit, because he would appear ridiculous. This was also premised on the reasons for Susan's divorce which include boredom at Xanadu. Through a deep focus shot, Susan is screened seated alone in an expansive hall at Xanadu playing with the jig saw puzzle.

Deep focus shots during Kane's early and idealistic life, and later after his change of character, point to the fact that fetishistic materialism is responsible for the change in the character of Charles Forster Kane. These shots include his dialogue with Thatcher in the office of the *Inquirer* and later in the newspaper room when he is signing the declaration of principle and finally the deep focus shot at the political campaign rally. It was Kane's voracious drive to appropriate everything for himself that perverted even his most altruistic and idealistic pursuits. The *Inquirer* was called "The People's Newspaper" by Kane, and for a while he did indeed do battle with Wall Street and powerful corporations whenever his reporters uncovered financial swindles and high-level corruption. But he was not really the man of the people that he pretended to be, and at times he was fully aware of his ambiguous role. In an argument with Thatcher he once announced:

I am the publisher of the *Inquirer*. As such it is my duty... I'll let you in on a little secret, it is also my pleasure to see to it that decent, hard-working people of this city are not robbed blind by a group of money-mad pirates because, God help them, they have no one to look after their interests! I'll let you in on another little secret, Mr. Thatcher. I think I'm the man to do it.

This is the sort of talk that makes Thatcher, through a deep focus shot; say that Kane was "nothing but a Communist." But Thatcher was too narrow-minded a conservative to

understand the twist that Kane gave to his role as defender of working class interests. For Kane continued his seemingly altruistic declaration by pointing out the angle of self-interest in his noisy crusade against big money: "You see I have money and property. If I don't defend the interests of the underprivileged, somebody else will; maybe somebody without any money or any property, and that would be too bad." Kane, in other words, is willing to defend certain interests of the underprivileged in order to defend the property and privileges of the upper classes against some truly radical reformers, reformers that may want to abolish property and privilege altogether. According to Callow Simon, in Orson Welles: The Road to Xanadu, "like President Roosevelt, whom Orson Welles generally admired in the days of the New Deal, Kane is a far-sighted defender of the capitalist system, not a shortsighted one like the conservative Thatcher" (218). But Kane is by no means a radical who wants to see the underprivileged take their fate into their own hands. For that he likes too much his own role as big boss.

### **5.2.2 Lighting and the revelation of Materialist Fetishism and Individualism**

The study found out that expressive high contrast lighting as it was used in *Citizen Kane* helped to reveal how materialist fetishism plays a great role in the breeding of individualism among characters in particular and society in general. The use of light and shadow enhances Kane's individualism because he is always framed different from the rest of the characters. As already discussed in the previous chapters, when Kane is shot in a shadow like at the famous declaration of principles, the rest of the characters are in full light. Expressive high contrast lighting isolates Charles Forster Kane from the rest the characters. This form of isolation supports the theme of individualism through the film.

Kane repeatedly finds himself isolated from the world around him, whether he is young or old, happy or unhappy, alone or surrounded by others, which suggests that his final isolation is inevitable. The lighting in *Citizen Kane* emphasizes this individualism. Kane is either in a shadow when the rest of the characters are in full light or in full light when the rest are in a shadow.

The study found out that Orson Welles use of shadows In *Citizen Kane*, helps the viewer to make opinions about the film as already discussed in chapter three, dark lighting forms negative opinions about Kane's materialistic behaviour while the high key lighting emphasises his earlier idealism. Whenever Kane is to perform an individualistic act, his image is cast in darkness.

High key lighting helps the viewer to ascertain the importance of the "no tress passing" sign. It heightens Kane's individualism. He lives alone and whoever makes an attempt at infiltrating into his private life is deemed an intruder and trespasser. At the beginning of the film, the "NO TRESSPASS" sign is shot in high key lighting while the rest of Xanadu is in low key lighting. The purpose is to express the loneliness that characterised Kane's mansion. Still at Xanadu, the contrast between low and high key lighting expresses Kane's individualism and the futility of materialism. It was found so surprising that an extremely rich man such as Kane lies in his mansion alone surrounded by mountains of his material possessions. At his death bed, Kane is alone and shrouded in darkness. The only light that streams in comes through the window and shines only on his middle part leaving the head in total darkness. Even the nurse's head is in the dark. This shows that even by the time of Kane's death, as Leland says in the film Kane does not

give away anything about himself to any one. In all these scenes, the contrastive use of light reveals the greatest level of individualism that Kane reveals the cost of materialism.

It was found out that high key lighting helps the viewer to view how the protagonist had become too much of an individual rather than a member of society. High key lighting exposes the materialist fetishism that makes Kane identify with material acquisitions.

Contrastive lighting in *Citizen Kane* was used to reveal Kane as an egomaniac who rarely looks at himself. He does not understand how others see him. He avoids self-knowledge by busying himself with the control and manipulation of the things and people around him. It is by being excessively preoccupied with external matters that he fails to have a genuine life. By portraying Kane as a stand-in for America, the makers of *Citizen Kane* venture a statement about a whole culture, about a way of life. Like Socrates they suggest that in spite of external successes things are in a bad way in the country, that something significant is amiss. Even if those who enjoy wealth and power do not think so, and even if the masses are taken in by the bread and circuses that their leaders procure for them, the value of all the external successes reveals itself to be dubious once one begins to take a close look at such a life. The philosophical scope of the film makes it clear that this message concerns not just a single self-destructive individual, but the dominant culture of an age.

Chiaroscuro lighting helps the viewer to read the difference between socialistic forces represented by Kane at the beginning and the capitalistic forces represented by Thatcher. This takes place early in the scene where Thomson is in the Thatcher memorial library. High key lighting presents Kane's socially idealistic views as good intentioned while



Thatcher's capitalistic ideas are deemed evil because of the darkness. This corroborates with Joseph Turner statement that; "Welles uses light in *Citizen Kane* to represent things and people that are good, and darkness or shadow to represent those that are bad, evil, or who have poor intentions" (58). Thatcher has come to visit Kane at the *Inquirer* to question him about his motives for attacking Thatcher's business interests. Whereas Kane is shot in bright light, Thatcher is in a shadow throughout the scene.

It was further found out that contrastive lighting helped the makers of *Citizen Kane* to express Kane's individualism in the scene where he is relinquishing his shares in the *Inquirer* to Thatcher. Shooting Bernstein and Thatcher in high key lighting while Kane is alone in the shadow and at a distance helps the viewer to characterise Kane as a loner; one who can never associate with the rest of the people as Leland describes him as "some one who never believed in any one except Charlie Kane". At the Colorado home where Kane is about to be taken by Mr. Thatcher, the use of light and shadow isolates him between his mother and Mr. Thatcher as they plan to separate Kane from his home. The three adults are indoors except Charles Kane whom we see playing alone in the snow. Chiaroscuro lighting was used in the proceeding shot where Kane seated by himself in the center of a room ringed with dark-suited men, who watch him as he opens a gift from Thatcher. Kane's isolation follows him into adulthood, where we see him sitting on his own in his newspaper office amid a celebration in his honor. The camera locates Kane between Bernstein and Leland but at a distant angle as the two men discuss Kane's increasingly depraved tactics. The three men may be in physical proximity, but the nature of Bernstein and Leland's discussion and the way the shot frames Kane mark him as an outsider. Eventually Leland leaves Kane, and Kane barricades himself in his fortress with

Susan. But Susan too leaves Kane, and in the end he dies alone, never having formed a lasting bond with anyone. In summary, the use of chiaroscuro lighting played a huge role in the presentation of individualism and how its relationship with materialist fetishism in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941).

### **5.2.3 Mise en scene and the negative effects of individualism**

The study concluded that the negative effects of materialistic individualism in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* were brought out through the effective use of mise en scene. The study investigated the use of the elements of the mise en scene such as setting, props and costumes and figure placement and movement in the film.

Figure placement also enhances Tocqueville's views that Americans sought "to evade the bondage of system and habit, of family maxims, class opinions, and, in some degree, of national prejudices to accept tradition only as a means of information, and ... to seek the reason of things for oneself, and in oneself alone" (1-2). Through out the film, Charles Forster Kane is shot either in isolation or at a distance from the rest of the characters. For example at the Colorado home Charles Kane is seen through the window in a distance from his parents and Mr. Thatcher. The way the figures are placed in the frame reveals individualism and its effects in the film. Kane does not only leave his home behind but he leaves behind all the happiness and parental comfort that a child needs.

The study found out that individualism in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* results into psychological and social isolation. In all the scenes where the elements of mise en scene is applied, Charles Foster Kane repeatedly finds himself isolated from the world around

him, whether he is young or old, happy or unhappy, alone or surrounded by others, which suggests that his final isolation is inevitable. It is the placement of figures in *Citizen Kane* that emphasizes this isolation. Kane is seen as a happy child playing alone in the snow, and a short time later, the camera isolates him between his mother and Mr. Thatcher as they plan to separate Kane from his home. He is still alone, but no longer happy. Kane is next seen seated by himself in the center of a room ringed with dark-suited men, who watch him as he opens a gift from Thatcher. Kane's isolation follows him into adulthood, where we see him sitting on his own in his newspaper office amid a celebration in his honor. The camera locates Kane in a triangular shot between Bernstein and Leland as the two men discuss Kane's increasingly depraved tactics. The three men may be in physical proximity, but the nature of Bernstein and Leland's discussion and the way the shot frames Kane mark him as an outsider. Eventually Leland leaves Kane, and Kane barricades himself in his fortress with Susan. But Susan too leaves Kane, and in the end he dies alone, never having formed a lasting bond with anyone because of his individualism that accrued from fetishistic materialism.

It was found out that materialistic individualism as discussed in this study breeds breakdown of relationships and separation. This was done through the framing where Kane always screened towering over the rest of the characters. Through out the film, Kane loses his counterparts due to practices of the politics of control in which he does not listen to any view that is different from his. By the time Leland is fired, Kane is screened dominating the screen while Leland appears from the hall way in a small picture to emphasise the social gap between him and his master. It is because of this behaviour that Kane loses Leland because the latter does not believe in the in the way Kane does his

business. When Kane's staff celebrates the fact that Kane has stolen the entire editorial staff of their rival newspaper, Leland, for the first time, openly questions whether the end justifies the means and whether loyalty can be bought. Several years later, Leland has the same disagreement with Kane, which leads Leland to request for a transfer to Chicago. He feels he can become an ethical, objective reporter only if he can escape from Kane's suffocating control. Like the women in Kane's life, Leland must leave Kane to save himself. It is very important to note that Leland does not leave Kane but runs away from Kane's individualistic beliefs and control mechanisms.

Through the framing of the scene where the Xanadu workers are extracting Kane's items the study found out that individualism leads to emptiness in personal endeavours. Kane's materialism and individualism were largely aimed at filling the missing part of his life; his lost childhood and happiness but Kane's rampant materialism and consumption is consistently shown in the film form as claustrophobic and ultimately unfulfilling. The extraction shot reveals the extent of Kane's great material wealth albeit he dies an unhappy and lonely man.

It was found out that during the great breakfast montage, the variation of the actors' demeanors and placement, the progression of costumes, and the use of lighting subtly support the presentation of a deteriorating marriage, and furthermore, of Kane's inability to sustain a successful, lasting relationship due to his individualism. The mise-en-scene and technical devices used in the montage are by no means limited to this portion of the film. In fact, they are found in numerous scenes throughout the movie to reveal other relationships that have fallen apart as a result of Kane's profession, such as his friendship

with Jed Leland and romance with Susan Alexander. The actors' attitudes in each sequence in the montage and their placement in relation to one another are each examples of the mise-en-scene portraying Charles and Emily's feelings toward each other as time passes in their marriage. This marriage breakdown is further revealed through the effective use of costumes. The more the marriage gets stale the more the darker and heavier Emily's costumes become. It was discovered that framing played a big role in revealing Kane's deteriorating marriage because even the failure of his marriage with Susan Alexander is revealed through framing at Xanadu. Kane enters the house but there is a huge space between him and his wife who is seated on the extreme left bored and playing the jigsaw puzzle. Kane's movement suggests that he is no longer very much concerned with the marriage and the two do not communicate effectively as Susan has to repeat each question to her husband. In the end when the marriage is over, the movement of Kane emphasises the loss he had just incurred in losing Susan as a wife. His rageful destruction of her bedroom attests to this loss.

The setting/framing reveals the characters that dwell in each set. There is the aforementioned Kane cabin, with its spare, functional furnishings, and Xanadu's expansive, empty chamber, with its walk-in fireplace, echoing the vacuous lives led by Kane and Susan. Most telling is the transitional scene, indicating a passage of time, when Kane and Susan meet. At first she's playing piano for him in a shabby rooming house, and in the next shot, while Susan is still playing; the rundown furniture has been replaced by elegant furnishings. In this way, we are visually clued in to the fact that Susan has become Kane's mistress and a kept woman.

The effective use of the elements of style discussed in this study help to represent Charles Foster Kane as a rapacious collector. At one point, in a newspaper office so filled with statues that the employees can barely move around, Bernstein notes that they have multiple, duplicate statues of Venus (the goddess of physical beauty). Kane obsessively fills his estate with possessions, and at the end of the movie the camera pans across massive rooms filled with crates to show that he never even unpacked many of his purchases. Kane's collecting is not that of a discriminating connoisseur; he buys art objects so fervently that his behavior more closely resembles the ravenous actions of a predator. After his disappointments in the political arena and with Susan's opera career, Kane builds his estate, Xanadu, to isolate himself and Susan from those who rejected his attempts at manipulation, and he fills the castle with inanimate objects. He wields complete control over the world he has created, and nothing can challenge his authority in this realm. Through his materialism which is expressed through deep focus photography, lighting and mise en scene, Kane attempts to ameliorate the insults of the real world, where he could not control his mother's abandonment, Susan's failed attempt at opera, the failure of his political career, and the souring opinions of his friends but vanity prevails. Kane ends up at Xanadu alone, with his possessions as his only companions. By purchasing so many extravagant goods, Kane attempts to fill a void created by all the people who left him throughout his life. Yet the only two possessions that carry meaning for Kane on his deathbed are; a simple snow globe and Rosebud, the sledge he remembers from his youth.

*Citizen Kane* redefines the spectator-screen relationship with cinematographic techniques that enhance the audience's perception of the characters. The film takes advantage of its greater depth of field to present a multiplicity of interacting planes of action within the frame. Bazin asserts that deep focus differs from montage in that it preserves ambiguity of meaning, leaving the audience to decode its intended message through analysis of visual cues. Cinematographer Gregg Toland's calculated use of chiaroscuro provides a commentary on character identity, as Kane's dubious nature is sometimes suggested by his dimly-lit figure. Also, visual metaphors and symbolism such as the endlessly mirrored image of Mr. Kane offer further elaboration on the moral foundation of the characters. *Citizen Kane* achieves its visual complexity and character expression by combining composition in depth, high-contrast lighting, and visual symbolism, accordingly augmenting the role of the active spectator.

#### **5.2.4 Recommendations**

This study examined Orson Welles' portrayal of materialist fetishism in *Citizen Kane*. The findings revealed that through the use of specific elements of style namely; deep focus photography, expressive high contrast lighting and mise en scene Welles was able to disparage the effects of materialism such as individualism, isolationism, and family and relationship breakdown. There is room for further investigation on how the director used the varied sound track to enhance the theme of materialism.

This study has not examined the correlation between materialism as expressed in *Citizen Kane* and the materialism that is rampant today where people are often times than not compelled to offer their children and other blood relations in the name of getting wealth.

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