

**ORSON WELLES' INTERMEDIAL VERSIONS OF SHAKESPEARE  
IN THEATRE, RADIO AND FILM**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

*In addition to being a key figure in the history of filmmaking, Orson Welles was an original theatre director and radio performer and producer. The aim of this thesis is to study Welles' achievements and failures in theatre, radio and film, as well as comparing his craft and techniques in each medium during his early career. Welles' adaptations of Shakespeare will provide the guiding thread of this intermedial exploration. Close reading of these texts will show the recurrence of intermediality in Welles' work, namely, the way techniques from one medium feed into the other two. Borrowing conventions and devices that are proper to other media and importing them into a target medium is his basic innovative strategy. This use of intermediality brings about innovative effects that favour agile and gripping storytelling, though it can also hamper the understanding of the piece.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Orson Welles has become a brand-name in film studies; his filmmaking is generally considered among the most innovative and daring in cinema history. His career, nonetheless, was littered with obstacles that got in the way of the production of his films and, in the worst cases, maimed them irrecoverably. The recurrence of these production problems earned him the label of ‘doomed director,’ which was no help when looking for funding to produce his films.

The biggest doom of his film career, however, would be that it overshadowed his successful beginnings as a stage and radio director. The renown and prestige he acquired in these two media granted him a spectacular passport to film—writing, directing, producing and acting in *Citizen Kane*, which apparently outshone his past achievements. His theatre career was redeemed by Richard France, among others, in his book *The Theatre of Orson Welles*, as well as the edition of the production scripts of *Voodoo Macbeth*, *Caesar* and *Five Kings*; other scholars who have written on his theatre include Andrea Nouryeh and Tatiana Jovicevic (see [Bibliography](#)). His radio career has scarcely been written on, except in articles and some short sections of his biographies; the main theme of these being most times the notorious broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*.<sup>1</sup> It is also notable that Welles continued working in theatre and radio after he started his movie career, though he never reached in either the levels of success of his youth.

What is most remarkable, and usually overlooked, is that there were periods in his career when he was working simultaneously in the three media. The influence of theatre and radio on his filmmaking has been indeed pointed out by many; only a few have actually

delved into that relationship and outlined the links between the different media. Rick Altman, in ‘Deep-Focus Sound: *Citizen Kane* and the Radio Aesthetic’, studies the characteristics and structure of radio broadcast in the 1930s, applying them to a minute study of the sound design in *Citizen Kane*. This is the only study to the best of my knowledge that does the type of research found in this thesis.<sup>2</sup>

Welles’ adaptations of Shakespeare in the three media evidence these relationships very well—he used Shakespeare’s original texts repeatedly during his career, from a high school production of *Richard III*, to the projected film version of *King Lear* at the time he died. Since Shakespeare recurs through time and media, it seems an appropriate topic to explore the relationships between theatre, radio and film in Welles’ work.

The fact that Welles used the original text, with pertinent adaptations, also makes them particularly suitable for a study across the media. For a start, their theatrical nature surfaces when adapted to radio or film. The text is also so ‘literary’ that some people regard Shakespeare’s plays as ‘books’, as texts that have to be read. At the time they were written, aural perception prevailed over the visuals of the performance—Hamlet says ‘We will hear a play tomorrow’<sup>3</sup>, not ‘watch a play’. The relevance of their aural composition seems therefore to be particularly suited to radio and its proper devices. On the other hand, Shakespeare’s powerful visuals have rendered memorable images, which for instance inspired pre-Raphaelite painters in the nineteenth century (such as John Everett Millais, *Ophelia* (1851-52); John William Waterhouse, *Miranda-The Tempest*, (1916) Frank

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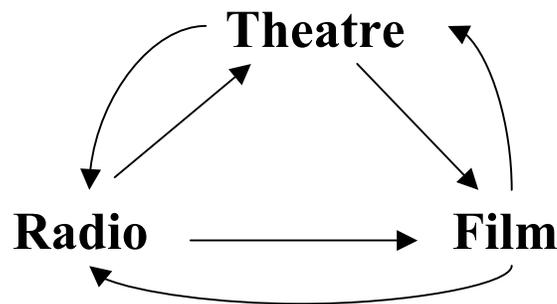
<sup>1</sup> See James Naremore, ‘The Man Who Caused the Mars Panic’, *Humanities*, Jul/Aug 2003; 24; *Humanities Module*, p 38-39. Also sections on the broadcast in Sterling and Kittross, Rattigan, and Hilmes (2002).

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Rick Altman ‘Deep-Focus Sound: *Citizen Kane* and the Radio Aesthetic’, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, v. 15 (3), pp. 1-33

<sup>3</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II.ii.530

Dicksee, *Romeo and Juliet* (1884), to name but a few). Besides, Shakespeare's short scenes and rapid changes of location also appear to fit into the way cinema can change the setting through editing, which makes his texts also extremely appealing for film adaptation. Thus different aspects inherent to the original texts can take advantage of the proper characteristics in every medium.

Bearing all these facts in mind, my thesis approaches Orson Welles' work in theatre, radio and film, by studying the influence of each on the other two. This influence can be tracked in a series of devices imported from one media into another. A model of media reciprocity implies a more elaborate vision of the corpus, taking the linear model of influence one step beyond what other studies have done.



Such a pattern of exchange among media amounts to an experimental method, and Welles considered an essential part of artistic creation was experimentation. In fact, I argue that experimentation is the main source of innovation in most of his oeuvre. When André Bazin asked him whether he considered television 'a synthesis of film and radio'; the answer was:

I am always looking for synthesis. It's work that fascinates me because I have to be sincere to what I am, and merely an experimenter. My sole value in my eyes is that I don't dictate laws but am an experimenter. Experimenting is the only thing I'm

enthusiastic about. I'm not interested in art works, you know, in posterity, or fame, only in the pleasure of experimentation itself. It's the only domain in which I feel that I am truly honest and sincere. I'm not at all devoted to what I do. It truly has no value in my eyes. I'm profoundly cynical about the act of working on material. It's difficult to explain. We professional experimenters have inherited an old tradition. Some of us have been the greatest artists, but we never made our muses into our mistresses. For example, Leonardo considered himself to be a scientist who painted rather than a painter who was a scientist. Don't think that I compare myself to Leonardo; I'm trying to explain that there is a long line of people who evaluate their work according to a different hierarchy of values, almost moral values. So I don't go into ecstasy when I'm in front of an artwork. I'm in ecstasy in front of the human function, which underlies all that we make with our hands, with our senses, etc. Our work, once it's finished, doesn't have the importance that most aesthetes give it. It's the act that interests me, not the result, and I'm only taken in by the result when it reeks of human sweat, or of a thought.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore experimentation and synthesis of media seem to be the basis both in his creative process and his appreciation of artworks. Synthesis, however, seems to oversimplify the way media combine in Welles' work. It also seems to go beyond multimediality, which would be the use of different media to make a narrative. Welles also did multimedia work, when he provided illustrations for Roger Hill's editions of Shakespeare plays for high-school students, or when he planned that the first act of the play *Too Much Johnson* would be a film projected on the stage, and the following two acts would be performed. In the works that I am studying here, however, the different media are assembled to make a complete, hybrid whole, which characterises these works as intermedial.

Intermediality refers to the process of importation from other media, which was recurrent during Welles' career, particularly in his adaptations<sup>5</sup>. In this process, some formal or stylistic device proper to one medium was used in another, thus creating an innovative effect in the target medium. The result goes beyond the combination of two

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with André Bazin, and Charles Bitsch, 1958, in Estrin, 45.

<sup>5</sup> It must be noted that most of Welles' works were adaptations of previously written works.

media into one, the outcome being something different, an intermedial work. An intermedial work enriches the medium with the integration of devices from other medium/a, aiming at enlarging the devices and potential conventions of the target medium.

The difference between multimediality and intermediality can be established depending on the degree to which the different media are interdependent of each other. In a multimedia artefact, each medium is used separately, either in sequence (e.g. narration and music in Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*) or sharing the same space (e.g. an illustrated book, or a news website with text, photos and videos). The message of each medium complements each other, but one can stand without the other. Conversely, intermedial narratives integrate all media inextricably from each other in the target medium; for example, text and music go together in opera, as drawings and words in comic books.

The devices borrowed are integrated into the target medium, in an effort to expand its communicative possibilities. Thus the result is a seamless, unified whole, which is the novelty and attractive in this research. The devices are undisguised; in fact, the origins are recognised and identifiable. For example, Welles wanted to use radio sound in his theatre production of *Julius Caesar*, and asked radio technicians to record it; both the films *Macbeth* and *Chimes at Midnight* were immediately preceded by stage versions of the same texts, with most of the same cast. Often we will find that the importation is overt and intentional, as in Welles' radio work, which he declared to be related to novelistic storytelling. Other times the relationship is not so evident, because it is so well embedded into the target medium that it is naturalised into it. This is the case with Welles' versions of *Julius Caesar* in theatre and radio, where multiple references to contemporary news are made evident through different devices. The stage version showed the actors in fascist-like

uniforms, whereas in radio H. V. Kaltenborn, a radio news commentator on European affairs, was an integrated narrator of the play.

The devices deployed in Welles' intermedial work are proper to the source medium, and are familiar and understandable to the audience. By transferring a device to another medium, it becomes an innovation, at times even renovating its impact by changing its context. For example, we will see how Welles used first person narration in radio as a new narrative device, while the predominant convention at the time was dramatic performance. First person narration is probably the oldest mode in written prose; using it in 1930s radio, however, was such a novelty it was the main feature of Welles' shows, becoming the title in the first run of his first radio series.

The integration of devices from one medium into another leads us to the concept of remediation, and the dichotomy immediacy/hypermediacy as Bolter and Grushin define them.<sup>6</sup> Remediation is the process by which a medium is reframed into another, transforming its original nature without completely losing it. Thus, a comic that has been scanned and published on the web has been remediated; in the case of Welles an example would be his Shakespeare films, i.e. plays that become movies. Remediation is more than adaptation, since it implies carrying one medium into another, and the possibility of being able to identify the original medium. For instance, the theatrical origins of these Shakespeare adaptations can be traced back in the language of the plays, or in the theatrical gestures and delivery of the actors. Remediation usually takes place in new media, which tend to imitate the conventions of previous media until they develop their own. Thus, silent

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<sup>6</sup> Bolter and Grushin, *Remediation*. They do not provide quotable definitions of the three terms, but define them through the whole book in different media. These are my summary of the three concepts in the book.

cinema tended to imitate the tableaux of nineteenth-century theatre, and 1930s US radio drama borrowed the language of stage drama.

The main issue of the following chapters is how Orson Welles pushed the limits of every medium he worked in through remediation. In his radio work, he followed a different model to remediate (novel instead of theatre), whereas in film he brought some of his avant-garde spatial design from theatre, and the aural narration of radio. Conversely, through the use of devices from radio and film, he revitalised and made an aesthetic update in theatre. At the same time, there were devices that he tried in every medium, such as overlaps in the transitions from one scene to the next; transitions that he refined and complicated in every media iteration. Welles' experimental method was based on trial-and-error, and he would not give up trying a device even if it had already failed. For example, he pre-recorded the soundtrack of his film *The Magnificent Ambersons* in 1942. This plan had to be discarded for technical reasons, but he tried prerecording again in his cinematic version of *Macbeth* six years later.

The extent to which the medium calls attention to itself defines the difference between immediacy and hypermediacy. Hypermediacy is the use of multiple media in the target medium, in order to reinforce the message(s) to be transmitted. It is usually a way for a new medium to follow the communicative conventions of previous media. Highlighting the remediation that takes place, as well enhancing the communicative possibilities of the target medium, are ways in which a media artefact becomes hypermediated. Immediacy, on the other hand, is a way to efface the medium by not calling attention to itself as channel for the message, the medium thus becoming 'transparent' (Bolter and Grushin's term). *Citizen Kane* would be a hypermediated work, since it calls attention to its narrative

structure, filmmaking and cinematography, while *The Stranger* tends somewhat more to Hollywood style and therefore tends to immediacy.

The paradox involving immediacy and hypermediacy is that making the medium transparent requires making the best of its devices, which may end up calling attention to themselves and therefore making the work hypermediated. At the same time, hypermediation makes communication more effective by expanding the devices of the medium, and by favouring redundancy through the reinforcement of the message in different channels, so that the information becomes more immediate in its transmission. Both terms are in dialectic dynamism; they are two features that help to explain the relationship of the audience to the medium, and the way the medium is received by its audience.

Welles' films are generally appreciated for their formal devices, which would qualify them as hypermediated works; this thesis intends to extend the study to the formal devices of his theatre and radio. Since both terms go hand in hand, the aim of the research will not be to determine whether immediacy or hypermediacy prevails in them, but how both interact, seeing if the actual use of intermedial techniques tends to one side or the other, or whether the apparent hypermediacy of his films does seek immediacy for its audience.

The proposal of this thesis is to study the connexions within the body of Wellesian work, establishing relationships through the media and through different works. These interrelationships transcend chronology, so that the argument has to go back and forth in time in order to develop and reach conclusions.

The media this thesis is concerned with are theatre, radio and film; other media that will be referred to are printed media and illustrations. There are genres within each medium

which will be dealt with specifically, such as radio drama, illustrated books or newsreels. Music constitutes a special case in this classification—though a medium in itself, it will be considered a device with its own codes within the target medium. This consideration is a result of the concept of intermediality, since the use of music in the three main media is inextricable from the narrative as a whole.

### Paradoxes and ambiguities in Orson Welles' oeuvre

The study of a career as complicated and extensive such as Welles' is bound to bear no less complex results. The multiple facets that this thesis deals with lead to a web of relationships, patterns and maybe a few loose ends. The approach I have chosen must make allowances for this complexity. Paradoxes and contradictions will arise on the way, between theory and praxis, intentions and results, performance and reception. These paradoxes, so common in relation with Welles' figure, must be enumerated before going into the detailed study of the specific works.

Revealing Welles' intentions is not part of my agenda; the aim is to analyse a series of artistic strategies that appear and develop in these works. What Welles said about his own work is always fascinating, and very often illuminating. It must be kept in mind, however, that one must sift his statements very carefully—Welles loved to fictionalise the stories of his life.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the magnitude of his reputation as auteur seemed to annoy him, so that his answers to interviewers were often either elusive or extravagant.<sup>8</sup> His

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<sup>7</sup> See Peter Conrad, *Orson Welles and the Stories of His Life*, Faber 2003. In spite of the excessively auteurist approach, the research that it is based on is quite interesting.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Bodganovich interviewing Welles about *Citizen Kane* in *This is Orson Welles*, pp. 46-66.

statements and opinions, however, are always interesting, and often provide useful insight into his work.

The main paradox around which this thesis revolves is his attitude towards Shakespeare's works. Welles performed Shakespeare's plays all through his life; it was Shakespeare who made his name in the theatre, with the productions *Voodoo Macbeth* and *Caesar* in the mid-30s. Indeed, he was the first American director directing the Bard to be so successful, breaking the "curse" that only allowed Britons to triumph in Broadway doing Shakespeare. This success, in a way, turned him into a sort of authority on the subject, at least before he started making films.

In 1938, Welles' mentor Roger Hill published a volume of Shakespeare's plays illustrated and prefaced by eighteen-year-old Welles. These editions of *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Julius Caesar* (*Macbeth* would be added to the series three years later<sup>9</sup>) were aimed at high-school students, and edited for the classroom; the illustrations would provide ideas for designs and mise-en-scène of each play. The volume that resulted was entitled *Everybody's Shakespeare*—it is a most interesting work for this research because it features Welles' introduction, an essay about his position about Shakespeare's texts. Besides, the illustrations are practically the first record of how he envisioned the plays; three of them (*Macbeth*, *Caesar* and *Merchant*) he would revisit in several occasions later in his career, and some images already appeared in those early pictures.<sup>10</sup>

The introduction starts with an elegy to the Bard and his times:

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<sup>9</sup> The series changed its name to *The Mercury Shakespeare*, taking advantage of the brand-name of Welles' theatre company.

<sup>10</sup> These editions were re-published in subsequent occasions during the 40s and 50s, taking advantage of the name of Orson Welles for publicity. Welles recorded these editions with the Mercury Theatre as a companion to the book; those recordings are now available in CD.

Shakespeare said everything. Brain to belly; every mood and a minute of a man's season. His language is starlight and fireflies and the sun and the moon. He wrote it with tears and blood and beer, and his words march like heartbeats. He speaks to everyone and we all claim him but it's wise to remember, if we would really appreciate him, that he doesn't properly belong to us but to another world that smelled assertively of columbine and gun powder and printer's ink and was vigorously dominated by Elizabeth.<sup>11</sup>

Simon Callow comments on this paragraph that Welles would contradict 'every word [...] in his subsequent practice'<sup>12</sup>. It is true that some of the tenets Welles embraces in the essay do not seem to fit with most of what he did afterwards; however, some of his other works are in accord with these ideas. In this passage, Welles shows a veneration for Shakespeare and his time; most theatre and film versions he directed remove the text from its original context and place it either in modern dress (*Caesar*), generic period settings (*Othello*), or medieval expressionistic castles (*Macbeth*). The designs in the volume, however, are quite conservative and in accord with this statement. Moreover, his different versions of the Henriad (*Five Kings* (1939) on stage, *Chimes at Midnight* on stage and film (1966-7)) also follow up these ideas, a homage to the 'Merry Old England' and those times that are gone. So not 'every word' would be contradicted, rather Welles' pose remained ambiguous, resorting to this ideology *if* it suited the play. This evidences a heterogeneity of concepts in relation to the original texts, which might be interpreted as a paradoxical attitude, but in fact agrees with the spirit of experimentation he manifested.

The rest of the essay does not seem to contradict the works in his later career, but indeed contrasts with this elegiac beginning. He advocates for learning Shakespeare by performing the texts<sup>13</sup>, appropriating the plays and taking them away from their original

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<sup>11</sup> Hill and Welles, p. 22

<sup>12</sup> Callow, in his foreword to *France* (2001), p. xiv

<sup>13</sup> Roger Hill and Orson Welles, p. 28

context. The aim of the volume, nonetheless, seems to be fostering the students' interest on Shakespeare's plays—they are certainly more appealing if they are made accessible rather than a test to the students. Precisely the possibility of appropriation, of moving Shakespeare from British thespians into American theatre, was one of the keys of Welles' subsequent success on stage just a couple of years after writing this introduction.

Welles' ambiguous attitude reflects the negotiation between stage tradition and avant-garde trends that would characterise his oeuvre. In spite of being an innovator and experimenter, the main sources of his work were classical texts, as one can see in the list of theatre plays he did, (e.g. *Faustus*, *Moby Dick*), the *Mercury Theatre on the Air* series, or his films (*The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Don Quixote*, *The Trial*). Shakespeare encapsulates this apparent paradox as well, since most of his theatre productions and two of his films (*Macbeth*, *Othello*) present sophisticated expressionistic visuals that clash with apparently 'traditional' mises-en-scène, as could be e.g. Laurence Olivier's. On the other hand, his films *Chimes at Midnight* and *Merchant of Venice*<sup>14</sup> have more naturalistic designs, as well as a slightly more classical style of filmmaking. This range of approaches is in accord with the basic experimental attitude that Welles claimed for himself.

The duality of conservative staging vs. innovative staging within the works I selected also constitutes an important paradox. Now allow me to make a few broad generalisations. The nineteenth-century theatrical style was considered in the 1930s the traditional way of staging Shakespeare. This involved 'realistic' sets, period costumes, and elaborate mise-en-scène. On the other hand, in Shakespeare's time there were no sets in the theatre, the location was indicated in the dialogue or through a few props; the decorated

architectural backdrop of the theatre was also common to all the performances. Within this generalised terms, the concept of tradition has two clashing definitions. What Welles states about the setting in *Everybody's Shakespeare* seems to leave aside the nineteenth-century style and reclaim Elizabethan staging as the true tradition.

Scenery belongs with many plays; it's an interesting study, a worthy art, and it's fun, but I doubt if there ever was a production of a play by Shakespeare, however expensively authentic, where and whenever, that was entirely worthy of its play. I have just drawn a lot of sketches for putting Shakespeare in a picture frame. Still I feel that one of the very wisest ways to play Shakespeare is the way he wrote it. (All this frowning isn't directed at *lighting* or simple *architectural design*.) I believe he wrote it this way not because he didn't know better but because he knew best.<sup>15</sup>

'Lighting' or 'architectural design' did not appear on the Shakespearean stage, and yet he considers them 'worthy' of these plays—Welles intervened in the design of his productions, and realises that would be 'frowning' at his own work. In the productions he would direct just a couple of years later, he would indeed make a wonderful use of lightning, along with a stripped down stage with very basic architectural settings. The same could be said of his first two Shakespeare films—the sets of *Macbeth* are geometrical, labyrinthine, contrasting light and shadows; *Othello* uses Venice in its opening scenes as décor, then Cyprus becomes a generic architectural space in the shape of a fortress—the setting does not take over the action in either case. In a way, these conceptual designs bring together the emptiness of Elizabethan theatre to twentieth-century stage and film, using light as an expressive device in both target media in a way that was not possible in the

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<sup>14</sup> Only two reels of this film are available, it was never released because the other two were stolen. *The Merchant of Venice* was to be released in 1969.

<sup>15</sup> Hill and Welles, p. 26

daylight-filled 'wooden O'.<sup>16</sup> The result, either on stage or film, is a 'synthesis' between past and present practice, an innovation by updating the stagecraft of the past. In fact, Elizabethan theatre and twentieth-century theatre could be considered different media, since their codes and conventions are of similar nature but belong to different cultural landscapes; thus the *mise-en-scène* in Welles' Shakespeare adaptations, by being diachronic, would also be intermedial.

This recovery and adoption of past practices into the present is one way to interest the audience in the play, to surprise them with something new though it was old and disused. A couple of years after publishing *Everybody's Shakespeare*, Welles would state this in an interview:

I believe in the factual theatre. People should not be fooled. They should know they are in the theatre, and with that knowledge they may be taken to any height of which the magic words and light is capable of taking them. This is a return to the Elizabethan and the Greek theatre. To achieve that simplicity, that wholesomeness, to force the audience into giving the play the same creative attention that a mediaeval crowd gave a juggler on a box in a market, you have to enchant.<sup>17</sup>

Those 'magic words and light' to 'enchant' the audience appeared literally in his *Voodoo Macbeth* and *Faustus* (though in this case he is talking about his *Julius Caesar*). The phrases also serve as a metaphor for the aim of theatre—the audience is lured into the action of the play, they are aware that they are watching fiction, and yet they give the performance their full attention.

This passage also points out another of the paradoxes in the Wellesian body of work—achieving 'simplicity' actually required very complicated strategies. To begin with,

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<sup>16</sup> Performances that took place indoors in Jacobean times, in venues like the Blackfriars, did have light effects with candles. These were private performances for the aristocrats, and less common than stage performances.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with John K. Hutchens, *The New York Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1937.

bringing past theatrical devices to modern media, and make them blend together is not as easy as it may seem. It can also be technically complex—John Houseman, producer of the theatre versions of *Faustus* and *Julius Caesar*, complained that the apparent stage simplicity of both plays actually required extremely complicated lighting, sound design and stage-hand interventions.

### Orson Welles as *auteur*

The paradoxes and ambiguities continue when it comes to the issue of authorship in Welles' œuvre. Orson Welles stands as one of the idols of filmic *auteurism* of the 50s and 60s, such as André Bazin from the pages of *Cahiers du Cinema*, or Andrew Sarris in the United States. This also made him the aim the attacks of anti-*auteurists*; the most notorious case was Pauline Kael and her *Raising Kane*, in which she attributed the merits and innovations of *Citizen Kane* to its screenwriter, Herman Mankiewicz. The figure of Welles stood in the middle of this tug-of-war in film criticism, showing the strengths and weaknesses of both stances through their arguments on his works.

Welles himself fuelled *auteurist* views in his youth; he seemed to enjoy the publicity that called him 'genius' and made his name a quality trademark on the stage and radio. The fact that he would intervene in several aspects of his productions (director, actor, producer, writer, designer) was conveniently highlighted by the news media of the times, as well as his first biographers. His collaborators, (especially the designers) frequently argued with him because he took the credit for their work; they would, however, continue collaborating

with him, as in the case of Abe Feder, lighting designer of the Federal Theatre Project, and the beginnings of the Mercury Theatre.

In ‘The Director in the Theatre Today’, a lecture for the Theatre Education League in 1938, a young Welles confirmed his absolutist stance with statements like these:

The director, however, must be not only the servant but the master.... The composer, the light man, the scene designer, the choreographer and the actors... cannot all decide upon individual conceptions of the play. That would result in chaos. The director must know what is right for that conception he has of the play. The director must be better than his scene designer, better than his lighting designer—better than all of these people in the field of production; and it is his task to bring out of them the best talent and the finest results they can give.<sup>18</sup>

According to him, the director is on charge of ‘the conception of the play,’ and his task is to make sure that this conception is served by the talents of the rest of the company. This conceptual approach is a trademark of Welles’ early career, and a key issue in understanding his Shakespeare adaptations. These works are based on a fundamental concept, related to a theme or themes in the original text; every aspect of the play is at the service of this concept. According to Welles the champion the director (i.e. himself) must champion the concept.

The multi-talented profile of Welles took him to Hollywood, where he signed a contract with RKO for which he would direct, act, write and produce three films. The result was *Citizen Kane* and film criticism glory. His public figure of genius-of-all-trades eventually backfired, however, and was one of the causes of his fall from grace in Hollywood. If something went wrong, he would be responsible; so when problems started arising in his productions, he was automatically blamed for it. This of course was only a

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<sup>18</sup> As quoted by Callow in France (2001), p.8. See also Callow, 314-19 for a more detailed textual commentary on the piece.

surface problem—Welles was notorious for the chaos that ruled his productions, for one thing. His liberal / leftist sympathies – he wrote speeches for F. D. Roosevelt’s campaign in the early forties; apparently the support of the American Communist party propitiated the success of his *Caesar* on stage – could also account for the desire of powerful, conservative moguls in Hollywood for his demise.<sup>19</sup>

After *Kane*, Welles’ productions were plagued with problems, the worst of them all being the inability to get final cut on his films. Significantly enough, the only movies that he actually had control over were his Shakespeare adaptations *Othello* and *Chimes at Midnight*, plus his last released film *F for Fake*, which he also wrote; others like *Don Quixote* he did not come round to finish in his lifetime – probably because of his perfectionist but unpractical methods. Producers took over postproduction without even consulting Welles; the most outrageous instance was *The Magnificent Ambersons*, where they shot a new, happy ending that did not match the rest of the film, and burned the unused filmed stock. On the optimistic side, both *Macbeth* and *Touch of Evil* were re-released in the late 80s and early 90s following Welles’ notes, so that we might have the feeling of what the original film would have been.<sup>20</sup>

Financial troubles also haunted the career of Orson Welles when he left Hollywood, after shooting *Macbeth*—in many occasions he would have to stop filming because the production was out of money, and then come back when he had put together enough cash to keep shooting.<sup>21</sup> This would result, for instance, in reverse shots being filmed months or

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<sup>19</sup> See *The Battle Over Citizen Kane*, Michael Epstein, dir. (TV, 1985)

<sup>20</sup> The version edited according to Welles’ instructions of *Touch of Evil* was released in 1998; *Macbeth* recovered the scenes that producer’s scissors had left out, plus its Scottish ‘burr’ dialogue in the 1980s (*Internet Movie Database*).

<sup>21</sup> Micheal MacLiammoir published *Put Money in Thy Purse*, the shooting diary of *Othello*, where we can read about the production process that extended over three years and three countries.

even years after the primary shots in a totally different location, changes in the cast that made him re-shoot takes, and different crews too. In short, the filmed stock of his films from the 1950s onwards would be a mishmash of reels that probably only Welles knew how to put together.

Therefore it is curious that auteurs take Welles as one of their heroes, precisely when most of his films were plagued by events that interfered in the production, and got in the way of what might have been Welles' view. To expand the paradox, Welles kept on trying to recover the artistic control he had achieved in *Kane* by producing and editing his own films.

I can't help but believe that editing is the essential thing for a director, the only moment when he completely controls the form of his film. When I'm filming, the sun is the determining factor in something I can't fight against; the actor brings into play something to which I must adapt myself; the story too. I simply arrange things so as to dominate whatever I can. The only place where I have absolute control is in the editing studio. Consequently, that's when the director is, potentially, a true artist, for I believe that a film is only good insofar as the director has managed to control the different materials and hasn't satisfied himself with simply keeping them intact.<sup>22</sup>

In this statement he concedes that there are aspects of a film that cannot be controlled. A director, as *metteur-en-scène*, does not have the final say on the result, that is on the hands of the editor. *The Magnificent Ambersons* taught him this the hard way; he was also denied final cut several times before this interview<sup>23</sup> (1958). By then he must have realised of the capital importance of edition, so that to 'control' the film, the director must become editor too. Moreover, he already lists the three elements that, years later, he would consider the basics of a movie: screenwriting, acting and editing.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with André Bazin, and Charles Bitsch, 1958, in Estrin 43.

<sup>23</sup> The films in which Welles did not have final cut were *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), *Lady From Shanghai* (1947), *Macbeth* (1948), *Mr Arkadin* (1955), *Touch of Evil* (1958).

In the seventies, Welles had gone through many more filmic misadventures, but still would persevere in the importance of the director. He admitted nonetheless that the role of the director was ‘over-rated’:

[...] The actual job of the director in ninety-nine percent of all movies is minimal. It’s the only really easy job around. It really is, you know. And you can fool the people for years if you’re a good producer. The director who is by nature a good producer can make a great name for himself and to live to a great age, covered with glory and honors, and never be found out. Because a movie can be made by the actors, or by the cutter, or by the author. The best movies are made by the director.<sup>24</sup>

These selected quotes show how Orson Welles modified his attitude and qualified his statements about authorship—from taking all the credit as director-genius to highlighting the importance of team work, and the secondary role of the director. From idealistic factotum young director to still hopeful old director there had been eighteen films; Welles exemplified the best and worst consequences of applying auteur theory to actual filmmaking. In fact, by the time that auteur theory started to bloom, Welles was already well on his way back from the director-creator paradise. In any case, the attitude of his youth was probably more a façade, since he knew very well with whom to team up, and brought his regular collaborators in the Mercury Theatre to the radio first and then to Hollywood. Some of his regulars were Joseph Cotten, Agnes Moorehead, John Houseman, or Bernard Herrmann, among many others.

Welles’ relation to the Shakespearean text, however, was an exception. Whereas he appropriated the merits of the work of his collaborators through his career, and considered the role of director hierarchically above his collaborators’, he took a different stance with Shakespeare. The title ‘By William Shakespeare’ appears in the opening credits of each of

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Leslie Megahey, 1982, in Estrin 203-204.

his films right after the title. This, for a start, seems to concede the author credit to Shakespeare, since it is the only writing credit of these films. Welles only appeared as director of the piece, not even taking over the credit of adaptation. However, this key role in bringing the text to new audiences stays unreclaimed in the films. He justified the role of the adaptor in *Everybody's Shakespeare*:

Elizabethan plays are seldom played in their entirety any more. This is partly because the language has changed and certain passages have become meaningless, and partly because modern theatre audiences are unaccustomed so sit through more than two hours of actual performance. It's true that certain scenes and many lines are unnecessary and sometimes even dull, and in this discretion Mr. Hill has blazoned away with a discreet and scholarly blue pencil.<sup>25</sup>

Note that the adjectives 'discreet' and 'scholarly' qualify the adaptation of Roger Hill—the authorial figure of Shakespeare looms over them, so both Hill and Welles prefer to give plausible reasons for daring to cut Shakespeare's text.

Years and experience, again, seemed to change his stance, radicalising it in a way—Shakespeare 'the author' becomes the all-mighty cultural icon, who must be celebrated with a worthy production of his play. In the mid-seventies, he declared his absolute reverence for the text, claiming a repositioning of the director within a Shakespearean production:

Shakespeare's great enemy is the director! [...] One needs a director who is perfectly measured, a true servant not only of Shakespeare but also of the actors. For a few years, I think, in Germany, Russia, and perhaps for a short time in England and America, there was a certain openness, an end to this impasse. The academic tradition is dead, I absolutely agree. But today—and I'm not speaking of cinema but specifically of theater—I feel that the director has become too strong. [...] The basis of theater is the actor, and after the actor, the play. In that order.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hill and Welles, p. 28

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Richard Mariendstras (1974) in Estrin, 147.

These three fundamentals of cinema convert into two in theatre (where there is no editing): the actor, and the text (it obtains a quality seal if it is by Shakespeare), served by the rest of the elements. Of course, Welles still acts in his plays, takes the main role; he is also adapting the text (though uncredited), so that there only appear the passages relevant to his concept. For example, *Chimes at Midnight*, play or film, selects a group of characters from five different plays, turning their common stories through the plays into a story about Falstaff, friendship, loyalty, age, and paterno-filial relationships. It is Shakespeare who wrote the words, plus Holinshed (Shakespeare's source) for the voice-over narration; but it is Welles who chooses to highlight the story of Hal/Henry V and Falstaff. Welles, who also knew his bit about opera, may very well have taken the concept from Verdi's *Falstaff*, which takes exactly the same texts as sources. Each of these adaptations choose different passages, in different order, and result in different reflections on similar topics. Verdi's opera is a masterpiece in its own right, regardless of Shakespeare (though it makes an amazing use of the original texts in its libretto); the authorial credit falls now to Verdi, because he is the genius creator in the target medium. *Chimes*, on the other hand, remains a Shakespeare text if we ask a literature critic or if we look at how Welles positioned himself in the credits and in the interviews. However, if we ask a film critic, it is 'a film by Orson Welles'—authorship remains relative, depending on the personality considered an author, the medium and who is attributing it.

The interest of discussing authorship in relation with Shakespeare is evidencing that the attitude Welles-director demonstrated towards the text was different from most of his other works. Welles kept his figure nominally in a secondary role, with the idea that the concept must serve Shakespeare's text. Therefore, for him the achievement is providing a concept that can make justice to the original play. The paradox is that, even though he

apparently tries to remove the adaptation work from the spotlight, the plays are more focused on themes that may only be secondary in the original through adaptation. Who the author is, as Foucault already explored, is more a cultural and critical issue. What we know is that the credits of these scripts share the names of Shakespeare and Welles, plus the uncredited work of editors of the plays working through four hundred years. For the purpose of this thesis, the figures I am interested in are Shakespeare, as the writer of the original plays, and Welles as his adaptor into the different media.

Welles was accused of oversimplification in his conceptual approach to Shakespeare, because he concentrated on one or just a few of the many topics of every play. As we will see in the examples selected, it is possible to express the concept in every adaptation in one sentence. The simplicity of the concept may also imply overlooking other themes; it has the advantage, however, of highlighting and exploring that single concept at large. Instead of oversimplifying, the result reaches complexity by exploring in depth one single idea. In the radio version of *Hamlet*, for instance, we will see how the main concept is considering the Prince of Denmark a man of theatre, which has important repercussions in the acting style of the broadcast, as well as in the adaptation of the text, and having as a most significant consequence the omission of the 'To Be Or Not To Be' speech.

The shift of hierarchy in Welles' ideology seems to be the result not only of forty years of experience, but also of a disenchantment with what the director could actually do. Welles' tenets in his mid-twenties seemed not to be too far away from auteurism-in-practice, before auteurism even started as a critical trend. Of all people, he must have encountered a good deal of the practical issues that get in the way of the director-as-auteur, so that towards the end of his career he had heavily qualified his attitude. However, though he seemed to relinquish his powers as director to the writer, actors and editor (in the case of

cinema), it must be remembered that he also wrote and acted most of what he directed, and also ended up editing his films, seeking still to control the result of his works.

In opposition to this, there is the semiotic approach to Welles' works, of the likes of Stephen Heath.<sup>27</sup> Semiotics focuses on the text as main source of signification, the codes it uses and the socio-cultural context within which it is included.<sup>28</sup> My method certainly follows these fundamental tenets, since the basis of my thesis is close textual analysis of the works of the same director, contextualised in their historical setting. Nevertheless, I am assuming a degree of authorial signature as the common thread of these works; the semiotic approach will be essential to map out and compare the intermedial devices and their meaning in these case studies.

### Thesis structure

Each chapter of the thesis will deal with one target medium at a time, in the order Welles started directing—first theatre, then radio and finally film. It must be taken into account that his radio work overlaps with his Federal Theatre Project and Mercury days—when at the end of October 1938 his star started to decline on stage with *Danton's Death*, *The War of The Worlds* broadcast made him famous all over the country. In the same way, he started delegating his role of radio director and producer as he got more and more involved with the pre-production of his first feature film in 1940. The chapter on film deals with *Macbeth*, which will take us back in time to 1936 and Welles' first professional experience as a theatre director, *Voodoo Macbeth*.

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<sup>27</sup> See for example Stephen Heath, 'Film and System: Terms of Analysis', *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Spring 1975) 7-77 and vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 1975) 91-113; 'Touch of Evil' in: *Screen* vol. 17, no. 1 (Spring 1976) 115-117.

The first chapter will focus on Welles' early years as a professional director from 1936 to 1939. His youth and charisma made him an off-Broadway director at the early age of twenty-one. Thanks to his partnership with John Houseman, he directed his *Voodoo Macbeth* and *Faustus*, among other plays, for the Federal Theatre Project. The fame and renown he achieved while working for the FTP allowed him and Houseman to set up the Mercury Theatre in 1937, whose most famous production was a *Julius Caesar* in modern uniform. In this chapter I will deal with *Faustus* and *Caesar*. Marlowe's *Faustus* is included because it is a particularly interesting case of intermediality in theatre; on the other hand, this production helps to understand the concepts in his versions of *Macbeth* on stage and then on film.

This chapter will analyse how Welles made a conceptual approach to the dramatic text, turning every production into an eminently formal experiment. His aim seems to have been shaking the audience with a wonderfully crafted and elaborate production; the text becomes a canvas for theatrical effects and tricks. He sought to impress the audience through visual and aural design, using them along with the text, in his own words, to 'enchant' his audiences.

The first intermedial device dealt with is the effects of radio sound in theatre. In *Faustus* the experiment was reportedly successful and impressive, so that incorporeal sound added up to the supernatural events on stage. In *Caesar* the pre-recorded soundtrack was a failure, and was substituted by sound effects produced by musical instruments and the thumps of the actors' boots on stage.

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<sup>28</sup> Fiske, 40.

The intermedial aspects of the visuals will be lighting design as a means to imitate cinematic narration, which is specially remarkable in the transitions between scenes, and in the construction of theatrical space. The visual design of the play also resorts to specific genres imported into theatre—on the one hand, magic performances (a very specific type of theatre) and newspapers, magazines and newsreels, the way in which news materialize on the printed page and film.

The second chapter will tackle Welles' work on the radio. Though he accumulated extensive experience in the medium as an actor, I will focus on the shows he directed, starred, and occasionally wrote for, *The Mercury Theatre Of The Air* and *The Campbell Playhouse*. His innovations were mainly adapting the narrative form to the medium itself, and producing plays made the best of radio sound. These resulted in careful voice work, sound effects and music that were integrated in the narrative, and a script that involved the narrator in the events of the story. All these created a powerful, solid aural narrative, which we will also observe in the soundtrack of his cinematic *Macbeth*. These devices will be applied in the textual analysis of two of the Shakespeare plays he performed and directed on the radio, *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*.

Remediation is the key concept to understand how intermediality works in Welles' radio drama. To begin with, most of the texts were originally novels, they were presented in first person narration, with dramatic dialogue as direct reported speech. This is in itself a novelty for the time, since the convention to present radio drama was a purely dramatic adaptation of the text. Theatre, nonetheless, was still a fundamental resource—the majority of the cast in each broadcast came from the Mercury Theatre company, the first repertory company for the radio from the stage. The narrative style of these programs, as we will see,

text will also evidence how concepts for a performance are transformed and adapted into the target medium. The results I am seeking through this research are principally the effects of intermediality on the original texts, as well as in the resulting adaptation; more importantly, I will be questioning whether the intermedial devices actually fit and come across, or interfere with the understanding of the final work, and why. Through the exploration through three different media, I will try to establish if there are recurring strategies, looking for overarching intermedial techniques through the different texts. The answers to all these questions will be listed and summarised at the end of the thesis.

was very dynamic and fast-paced, bringing into radio a rhythm that very much reminds of cinematic editing.

The last chapter of the thesis is a textual analysis of Welles' first released Shakespeare film. *Macbeth* (1948) features heavy traits of his more avant-garde productions, especially in the cinematography and the soundtrack. The visual design is heavily expressionistic; and even though he denied having seen any expressionistic films before shooting *Macbeth*, he saw several plays in Germany that followed that aesthetic trend when he was a kid. Whatever the source, the aesthetics clearly follow expressionism, which also appeared in *Faustus* and *Julius Caesar* on stage.

This version of *Macbeth* is probably the richest example of intermediality in these works. Not only was it preceded by *Voodoo Macbeth* eleven years before; part of the pre-production process consisted of a theatrical run of the script in the Utah Theatre Festival in 1947. There the actors were able to perform their roles before going into the shooting period; the film set and the stage design were the same (which were also based on the plan of the *Voodoo Macbeth* set) but in different scale. The film space therefore had a physical continuity that related it to its theatrical origins, transformed by an elaborate cinematography, as well as an acting style that came directly from the stage. From radio, the film imports a very cohesive soundtrack, due to its having been recorded before filming. The actors had to lip-synch to their own dialogue, which must have been awkward in spoken dialogue but quite helpful in soliloquies performed as voiceover. Nevertheless, space and sound do not quite come together, they seem to be independent from each other, producing a jarring effect.

To sum up, my objectives consist in exploring the devices that qualify these texts as 'intermedial' through careful textual analysis. Contrasting different versions of the same

**CHAPTER 1: 1937-1939: THE FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT AND *FAUSTUS*;  
THE MERCURY THEATRE AND *JULIUS CAESAR***

Theatre was Welles' first love as a young teenager, and the first medium where his acting, directing and designing talents started to stand out. Some of the topics and concepts of his professional career already appeared in his high-school productions, including Shakespeare. Although he did not get any formal training, his early work certainly sheds some light on his practical approach to theatre later. In this chapter, a brief overview of his beginnings on stage introduces the most successful period of his life, his days as an off-Broadway actor and director (1937-9). These years coincided with his radio stardom in directing and acting, which is the topic of the next chapter.

**The Fabrication of a Theatre Star**

There are many legends around the figure of Orson Welles; most of them are related to his childhood and teenage and how he became an actor. Certainly, Welles was first to foster these stories; a born storyteller, he also knew how to use these accounts to publicise himself. These 'legends' have already been qualified or disproved by other authors<sup>29</sup>, therefore I have been careful to check the veracity of some of the anecdotes that included here.

Welles' love for the stage started in his high school days at Todd School, from age eleven to sixteen (1926-31). He directed his first plays there, including what he entitled

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<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Peter Conrad, *Orson Welles and the Stories of His Life*. The main sources for the historical accounts that follow are Simon Callow's *Orson Welles, The Road to Xanadu*, which deals with the first twenty-five years of his life, till the moment when he finished shooting *Citizen Kane*; and Jonathan Rosenbaum's chronology at the end of *This is Orson Welles*, which he edited.

*Winter of Our Discontent* in 1930, a composite of the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. It was not the only Renaissance piece he did in those years—he directed, adapted and designed the sets for Molière's *The Physician in Spite of Himself*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. We see how he tackled already as an amateur some of the works he would later direct professionally (*Caesar*, *Faustus*), as well as the concept of summarising a saga of Shakespeare's plays in one play.

Welles got his first professional theatre job in Ireland, 1931, when he was hired at the Gate Theatre in Dublin as an actor, press agent and assistant in the construction and painting of the sets. As Callow narrates, The Gate had been established by Hilton Edwards and Micheal MacLiammóir, who were its artistic directors. They wanted to oppose themselves to Yeats' Abbey Theatre, which had become conforming after years of worldwide attention. Edwards and MacLiammóir wanted to follow the trend of the avant-garde theatre in Europe, as they considered European theatre was still plagued by naturalism in spite of the works of Appia or Craig. In their writings, they considered that naturalism was now the dominion of film, so that theatre should be aware of its non-naturalistic devices and highlight them, a philosophy that sounds very much like Brecht.<sup>30</sup>

Hilton Edwards wrote

We wanted a first-hand knowledge of the new methods of presentation discovered by the Continental experimental theatres. We wanted ourselves to discover new forms. We wanted to revive, or at least take advantage of, and learn from the best of the discarded old traditions. And, not least, we wanted to put at the disposal of our audiences all the riches of the theatre, past, present and future, culled from the theatres of all the world and irrespective of their nationality.<sup>31</sup>

As Callow noted, the spirit of experimentation of the Gate and of recuperation of past theatrical forms would be shared by Welles later on, as well as the experimental

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<sup>30</sup> Callow 92-93

spirit.<sup>32</sup> He had been exposed to those ‘Continental experimental theatres’ in his childhood, while travelling with his father across Europe; maybe working with artistic directors who put those tenets into practice enhanced their influence on him. Working at the Gate also taught him to diversify his work, and do several tasks at a time—he worked hard and relentlessly, which became his *modus operandi* for the rest of his career. He also learned the importance of publicity—he was first to praise himself in the press notes he published as a press agent. Welles would declare in the mid-sixties that his stint at The Gate was the only theatrical education he got: ‘Whatever I know about any of the stage arts today is only an extension of what I first knew from them.’<sup>33</sup>

In 1932, back in the United States, Welles was hired as an actor for Katherine Cornell’s touring theatre company, directed by her husband, Guthrie McClintic. They hired him – without giving him an audition – for their touring company; he formed part of the cast of *Candida*, *The Barrets of Wimpole Street*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, where he got the attention of audiences and critics for his remarkable performance of Mercutio. Shakespeare, again, seems to have brought out the best of him.

McClintic’s approach to theatre was totally opposite from the practice at the Gate. According to Weiss, he was an “anti-theorist”, concerned about the whole effect of the play, rather than about detailed, analytical directing. His productions followed his instinctive, emotional response to the text; in directing the performance the intention was to transmit that same emotion to the audience.<sup>34</sup> Over the years, Cornell and McClintic

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<sup>31</sup> Hilton Edwards, in the tenth anniversary booklet of the Gate. As quoted by Callow, 92.

<sup>32</sup> Callow 92

<sup>33</sup> As quoted in Callow, 92.

<sup>34</sup> Weiss (1994), 32-33.

managed to make up an cast of regular actors, thus giving capital importance to ensemble acting. McClintic very soon started to disapprove of Welles' acting style, too 'hammy' for the elegant, discreet style of Mrs Cornell's company.<sup>35</sup> Welles, who tended to grandiloquence and stealing the show, did not feel very comfortable either; on top of that, the company's standards were opposed to the experimental spirit the Gate had instilled in him.

Katherine Cornell's company took him to New York that same year with *Romeo and Juliet*. He would not rehearse, however, his successful part of Mercutio, but was relegated to play Tybalt and the Chorus. Thus his arrival in Broadway was not as triumphant as he would have wanted it, but rather discrete. After this, he started getting a living as a radio actor, so that his theatre and radio career were simultaneous from this moment.

The next theatre acting job he got was Archibald MacLeish's *Panic*, a play about the Wall Street crash in blank verse. This production became very important in the course of Welles' career, not because of its success – there were only three performances – but because it was where he met John Houseman, the producer of the show. Houseman became fascinated by Welles' talent and charisma, and did not hesitate to call him again for his next enterprise as a producer and manager for the Federal Theatre Project.

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<sup>35</sup> Berg and Erskine, 256.

The Federal Theatre Project: The Negro Theatre Unit and Project 851

The Federal Theatre Project was promoted under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration during Roosevelt's office. After the Wall Street Crash, the Government endeavoured to promote employment through several projects such as the WPA. This government initiative was short-lived, from 1933 to 1939, when liberal pressure finally found its way to its cancellation.

The Federal Theatre Project was active from 1937 to 1939; in its short days of existence, however, it catered a series of innovative projects all over the U.S. – Houseman's theatre companies amongst them – and was the closest the country got to have a national theatre. The companies were government-funded; they did not have to reach certain box-office quotas but provide jobs for unemployed theatre workers, which gave these companies a certain freedom of production that could not take place on Broadway. The FTP allowed a good margin for theatrical experimentation, and for endeavouring new projects. It was the ideal framework for such an experimentalist as Welles.

John Houseman was appointed manager of the Negro Theatre Unit, and he immediately called Welles to join him, not as an actor, but as a director. Houseman divided the types of plays the unit would perform into two categories—plays written by black people, for black actors and black audiences, and classical plays performed by black people, without reference to skin colour.<sup>36</sup> The first play they decided to tackle seems to fall under this second category—a version of *Macbeth*, set in mid-nineteenth century Haiti, in

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<sup>36</sup> Callow, 221.

the court of Emperor Henri Christophe.<sup>37</sup> This was the core concept of *Voodoo Macbeth*; the witches would use voodoo magic to wind up their charms, bringing Haitian drummers to provide a powerful score for the action. Skin colour was thus explained by the setting, integrating it into the concept of the production.

The play opened on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1936, and ran for more than four months in two different theatres; every show was sold out. In spite of having a cast that was mostly amateur and not familiarised with Shakespeare, the production was a complete success thanks to the freshness that they brought about and its daring approach. Until that moment, Shakespeare was considered a box office bomb, unless it was played by prestigious (usually British) actors, such as John Gielgud. Cornell and McClintic's company had been reluctant to stage its *Romeo and Juliet* precisely for this reason. Shakespeare was far from being popular in Broadway; but it shone bright in Harlem, where the Negro Theatre Unit was located.

The FTP offered Welles his first opportunity to put into practice his standards on the relationship between artist and audience. He was against elitist art, art for the middle-class or the bourgeoisie. His target were popular audiences, whom he wanted to reach with classical works as well as with off-beat texts; this was a constant of his early career both in theatre and radio. Welles' standards, however, suffered from the paradox that plagued him all his life—his aim was to get to popular audiences; however, the experimental nature of most of his works did not go down well with general audiences. His theatre and radio work got away with popularity thanks to their innovations, but as his career developed and his

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<sup>37</sup> This was the idea of Virginia, Welles' wife at the time. (Callow, 222)

innovations became riskier, he ended up being considered an art-house director rather than a crowd-pleaser.

After the tremendous success of *Voodoo Macbeth*, the company set out in a tour that took them all over the U.S.. In the meantime, Houseman and Welles left the Negro Theatre Unit, arguing that it should actually be produced and directed by black people, to whom it rightfully belonged.<sup>38</sup> The duo would not relinquish the FTP, though, since it was still a fine framework for experimentation off-Broadway. This did not sound unreasonable at all to Hallie Flanagan, National Director of the FTP. The tremendous success of a Shakespearean play was the first stepping stone to set up a company that would do revivals of classical texts. This was Houseman's suggestion, which was enthusiastically received by Flanagan—the new 'Classical Theatre' unit was put into motion. The name of this unit was the number that the administration had given to it, Project 891.<sup>39</sup>

The new theatre company only had time to stage three plays from September 1936 to June 1937, and only one of them, Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, can be actually considered a 'classic'. The first play was a free adaptation of Eugène Labiche's *Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie*, which was entitled in English *Horse Eats Hat*. This elaborately staged farce became a success during all its run. Eventually, Project 891 was forced to close in June 1937 before the premiere of *The Cradle Will Rock*, Marc Blitzstein's Marxist musical. The FTP was forced to suspend all its performances on the opening day of this play; Houseman and Welles managed to circumvent the closure by finding another theatre, to where they took their audience in a jolly parade. Blitzstein played the piano from the stage, while the actors sang their parts from the seats of the

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<sup>38</sup> Houseman, 106.

theatre (the guild forbade them to act on stage). *Cradle Will Rock* became the combatant swan song of the Federal Theatre Project.

*The Tragical History of Dr Faustus*

There are several reasons to include the analysis of *Faustus* in a thesis about versions of Shakespeare. Apart from the fact that Christopher Marlowe was contemporary and an important influence on Shakespeare, the Faustian figure became very influential on Welles' work and the characters he played. *Faustus* is also a basic reference in the analysis of his different versions of *Macbeth*, which I am also analysing; as the other great English Renaissance play that had magic and charms on stage. Finally, this particular production also deserves a space in its own right, because its staging makes remarkable use of intermedial devices.

Marlowe's play was the only text that could be called 'classic' of all the Project 981 productions. The original text combines metaphysical tragedy, dealing with Faustus' spiritual struggle, with light comedy, related to the use of magic to deceive / trick people. Poetry in a heightened style alternated with clownish moments in prose, to make it entertaining for the audience at all times. Welles, however, took out most of the comedic moments, leaving only the trickery to the Pope, and the misadventures of Robin and Rafe, who invoke Mephistophilis with a stolen magic book. The adaptation focuses on Faustus and his relationship with Mephistopheles, taking good care of minimizing the moments when the Doctor has misgivings and considers asking God for mercy. In all, there are only

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<sup>39</sup> Houseman, 106-8

two opportunities for Faustus to repent left in the adaptation—one when his blood freezes before signing the deed that will sell his soul; another when the Old Man appears. The warnings are fewer and shorter, thus turning Faustus’ tragedy into a journey to damnation from which there is no way back. The character seems to lack depth in this version, since his moments of doubt and struggle are fewer, and it is precisely his recurring self doubt what makes him human in the original.<sup>40</sup>

Mephistophilis’ part, on the other hand, was kept practically uncut, enlarging his role and his influence on the protagonist. Jack Carter, the protagonist of *Voodoo Macbeth*, played a black-skinned devil. Carter thus brought to *Faustus* some of the exotic voodoo magic of the previous version of *Macbeth*.

Welles had no qualms about juggling with the text; he was thinking of contemporary American audiences and left out most of the classical references and passages whose language would result more cryptic. By his approach, the text seems to have been at the service of his concept, and not vice versa. This, nonetheless, followed a rationale that applies to his Shakespeare adaptations as well.

Although his production was very much an original work, Welles felt it incumbent upon himself to justify what he had done with Marlowe. He reasoned that unlike the Chinese or the French, the English theatre had no traditional way of performing its classics; thus each great work had to be produced, and make its impact, in its own way.<sup>41</sup>

‘Making an impact’ seems to have been the objective of most of Welles’ oeuvre, before and after *Faustus*. In this case, the phrase means coming up with a series of staging

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<sup>40</sup> Welles follows what is known editorially as the A version of the text, published in 1604, eleven years after Marlowe’s death. There was another text published in 1616, known as the B version, with more comical scenes added, but none of these lines appears in Welles’ script. The text of the production, therefore, abridges version A.

<sup>41</sup> France (1977), 98

devices that would be unexpected or unusual in the mid-1930s. These devices were not circumscribed to the performance itself, but extended to its peripheral texts. The publicity did not even mention the fact that it was a Renaissance text, but it was geared to present a gripping, scary spectacle. This was the introduction to the play in the hand program:

The proper attire or “pontificalibus” of a magician, is a priestly robe of black bombazine, reaching to the ground, with the two seals of the earth drawn correctly upon virgin parchment. Round his waist is tied a broad consecrated girdle, with the names Ya Ya, — Aie, Aaiee, — Elibra, — Elchim, — Sadai, — Pah Adonai, — tuo robore, — Cintus sum. Upon his shoes must be written Tetragrammaton, with crosses round about; and in his hand a Holy Bible, printed or written in pure Hebrew. Thus attired, and standing within the charmed circle, the magician repeats the awful form of exorcism; and presently, the infernal spirits make strange and frightful noises, howlings, tremblings, flashes, and most dreadful shrieks and yells, as the forerunner of their becoming visible. Their first appearance is generally in the form of fierce and terrible lions and tigers vomiting forth fire and roaring hideously about the circle; all which time the exorcist must not suffer any tremour or dismay; for, in that case, they will gain the ascendancy, and the consequences may touch his life. On the contrary, he must summon up a share of resolution, and continue repeating all the forms of constriction and confinement, until they are drawn nearer to the influence of the triangle, when their forms will change to appearances less ferocious and frightful, and become more submissive and tractable. When the forms of conjuration have in this manner been sufficiently repeated the spirits forsake their bestial shapes, and enter the human form, appearing like men of gentle countenance and behaviour. With great care also must the spirit be discharged after the ceremony is finished, and he has answered all the demands made upon him. The magician must wait patiently till he has passed through all the terrible forms which announce his coming, and only when the last shriek has died away, and every trace of fire and brimstone has disappeared, may he leave the circle and depart home in safety.<sup>42</sup>

The paragraph does not refer to the action of the play, its characters, or its context; the interest is directed towards the invocation of daemons and the use of magic, not towards the Renaissance origins of the text. At the same time, the paragraph is intriguing; its fragmentary nature seems to imply that this is what happened on stage. Along with this,

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<sup>42</sup>From the Library of Congress online collection,  
<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=ftpandfileName=fprpb/1092/10920004/ftp10920004page.dbandrecNum=2>

fliers and posters of the production featured a grotesque skeleton wielding a scythe (see [Illustration 1](#)). Death, magic and the supernatural are thus the themes to lure audiences into the theatre, presented in texts around the performance to prepare them for it.

As we have seen above, Welles is a conceptual director, and the concept of this play is already put forward in the publicity. The purpose of the concept was made explicit by Welles himself:

The aim is to create on modern spectators an effect corresponding to the effect in 1589 when the play was new. We want to rouse the same magical feeling, but we use the methods of our time.<sup>43</sup>

When *Faustus* was staged in Marlowe's time, audiences probably would have been in awe—whether they believed in witchery or not, the play shows practices that were forbidden and secret; these were extraordinary events that were supposed true. Being able to watch and hear what is taboo was one of the main attractions of the play in the Renaissance – apart from the fact that it was performed after Marlowe's death –<sup>44</sup>. Welles seems to be looking for a similar way of keeping his own audience in wonderment.

Richard France remarks that the production was a 'burlesque' of horror films, the classic films *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* had been released earlier in the 1930s. The question was how to frighten and intrigue an audience that could already be familiar with the Hollywood horror of the mid-thirties. France explains that 'instead of the usual practice of contrasting mysterious happenings within a recognisable (if often Gothic) setting, Welles created an atmosphere for his production of *Faustus* that was unrecognisable as anything but the background for a magic show.'<sup>45</sup> Being aware that the audience may have in mind the horror movies so successful in previous years, the intention seems to have been

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<sup>43</sup> As quoted by France (1977), 90

catching them unawares and surprise them with something they did not expect on a theatre stage.

John Houseman said in his biography: ‘Of all the shows we did together, *Faustus* looked the simplest and was the most complicated; it was also the most brilliantly executed.’<sup>46</sup> There was no décor, the stage had been extended with an apron into the stalls, a thrust stage that would get the actors closer to the audience. The stage was covered in black velvet, which absorbs light, so that the characters would move around a black void. This pitch black background also served to hide the multiple trapdoors distributed across the stage, through which the actors came in and out.

A spectacular lighting design supplied the space construction on stage. Designer Abe Feder provided sixty-three lighting cues, with one hundred and fourteen lights over the stage, as the production book shows.<sup>47</sup> Such a high number of lights was so unusual that their weight made one of the structures bend down and collapse before the production.<sup>48</sup> The lights built walls and cascades of light, wrapping the actors with a zenital halo—one of the better-known photographs of the play is that of Welles in the title role looking up towards a source of light over him, probably considering in a moment of despair to ask God for forgiveness (see [Illustration 2](#)). The lights over the stage become ominous, oppressive, a heavy burden for the characters of the play who, by not being in Heaven, are inhabiting hell.

So as to recreate the magic effects, actors would appear and disappear through the trapdoors, and objects would float around and vanish into the black. In order to do this,

<sup>44</sup> Introduction to *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe vol. 2*, Gill, ed., xv.

<sup>45</sup> France (1977), 90

<sup>46</sup> Houseman, 120

<sup>47</sup> <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage>

Welles used techniques from Chinese puppetry—he had stagehands dressed in black velvet, who perfectly camouflaged themselves against the background, moving the objects around and hiding them with their bodies from the sight of the audience.<sup>49</sup> Mephistophilis' first entrance was truly spectacular—a couple of stagehands pulled him in a car, so that he seemed to glide onto the stage.<sup>50</sup>

*Faustus* is an example of a special kind of intermediality—Welles imports other dramatic conventions, from what I call a 'theatre of attractions', into an off-Broadway play rather than other medium. Instead of borrowing from horror movies, the twentieth-century equivalent of what *Faustus* was in the Renaissance, he borrows from puppet theatre and magic shows, which are another theatrical genre. The dramatic text is thus turned into spectacle, and the prestige of the playwright is put at the service of the approach to the play. The show had to be spectacular, making the form, which is Welles' inception as a director, be in accord with the content, which is the text provided by Marlowe. The form was already capital both in the publicity and the concept of the play, so that the performance is no other than its ultimate display .

Magic and puppetry are not the only sources of intermediality in the performances. The visual effects of the black background and the stage apron present the action on stage in what I call a cinematic perspective. The general blackness of the backdrop made the space flat, as if it were a screen, in which spotlights imitated the cinematic iris opening and closing on the characters.<sup>51</sup> As the actors did not walk on stage through the wings, but just

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<sup>48</sup> France (1977), 93

<sup>49</sup> For a more detailed description of the technique, see Houseman 120-1.

<sup>50</sup> Production Script, page 5:

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=ftpandfileName=fprpt/1001/10010005/ftp10010005page.dbandrecNum=58>

<sup>51</sup> The iris that closed on a character or a detail was common as a form of fade-out in silent cinema.

seemed to appear on it, the sense that they inhabited a frame was even stronger; the fading in and out of the lights worked as a kind of ‘editing within the stage.’

The stage’s apron, however, broke the flatness behind the proscenium arch. It broke into the orchestra pit, staging all the moments that did not require the use of ‘magic tricks’:

The larger, ensemble scenes were played in the deeper recesses of the stage, while the soliloquies, low-comedy scenes, and dialogues between Faustus and Mephistopheles took place on the apron—cheek by jowl with the audience. Welles reasoned that such close proximity would cause “the actor to use a larger manner and more voice than when he is separated from his listeners by the proscenium arch. The nearer you are, the bigger you must seem, and the louder you must speak to hold attention.” Welles, it seems, foresaw the thrust stage achieving quite the reverse effect from the common use to which it was to be put in the 1950s.<sup>52</sup>

Thus the moments of higher dramatic tension were performed closer to the audience, and in an aggrandised manner. As France notes, this seems to go against the convention of acting close to the audience, which tends to be more nuanced and subtle. What Welles seems to be doing is just enlarging the acting as the figures of the actors are enlarged to the audience, overpowering them. It could be thought to be some sort of theatrical close-up that means to situate the audience in a more intimate position with the character. However, this is Orson Welles we are talking about, and the use of the apron reminds us of his trademark extreme low-angle shots that he would use later in his film career. The audience would be closer to the characters above them, who would tower and appear in the bigger-than-life fashion that would be so recurrent in his films. Thus intermediality becomes a way of rehearsing a device proper of another medium (film) in another (theatre), and then apply it back in its original source medium. It was Truffaut who remarked that Welles’ extreme low angles

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<sup>52</sup> France (1977), 91

positioned the film viewer in the first row of a theatre,<sup>53</sup> tracing back the theatrical influence on Welles' cinema.

Probably the most interesting and innovative element of the production was the use of sound. A public address system was set up to provide sound in the theatre,<sup>54</sup> and many of the actors of the production (forty-five) played off-stage voices. This filled the air with disembodied voices, as those of the radio – Welles was by now a seasoned radio actor, and would become a director in six months. Thus the Evil Angel and the Good Angel do not appear on stage in their first intervention, but become voices, updating the convention of their roles as both sides of Faustus' conscience speaking in his head. It could also be considered an essay of cinematic voice-over to represent the struggle of a troubled mind, as we would see for instance in his films *Macbeth* or *Chimes at Midnight*.

Apart from this, there was a huge, old fashioned thunder drum, which produced an overwhelming sound. Its beat would make the seats rattle with its vibration, literally shaking the audience. The environment of the play was ghostly, ethereal, in a medium like theatre where voices belong to a body, and usually have a distinct physical source. The slipperiness of the sound, as well as the appearances and disappearances of the actors on stage, must have resulted in a unique experience, for these devices divest the theatrical performance from its characteristic physical presence.

This would be the last time that Welles would play the title role, and he would not revisit the play again. However, it seems evident that the Faustian type was a heavy influence in his career and the roles he would play later.

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<sup>53</sup> François Truffaut, in his Foreword to Bazin, 8.

<sup>54</sup> France (1977), 93

All the characters I've played and that we've been talking about [Macbeth, Quinlan, Othello, Arkadin] are Faustian, and I'm against the Faustian outlook, because I believe it is impossible for a man to be great unless he acknowledges something greater than himself. It can be the Law, it can be God, it can be Art, or any other idea, but it must be greater than man. I've played a whole line of egotists, and I detest egoism, the egoism of the Renaissance, the egoism of Faust, all of them. But it goes without saying that an actor is in love with the role he is playing [...]. I believe there are two great human types in the world and one of them is the Faust type. I belong to the others, but in playing Faust, I want to be just and loyal to him, give him the best of myself, and put forward the best arguments that I can in his favor, because after all we live in a world which was built by Faust. Our world is Faustian.

His relationship with the character seems to be very personal, as people who knew him or have written about him have pointed out.<sup>55</sup> Doctor Faustus, in the original text, was a sophisticated version of the Everyman; while the play followed the structure and stock types of morality plays. Welles makes this fallen Everyman into the inspiration and model of his villainous, tragic characters, who try to be bigger than life itself – thus the way he represents them on screen, in low angle shots – and fail and are crushed by an ‘idea that is greater than man.’

His performance of Macbeth will relate to Faustus as he announces in this quote. Shakespeare's character is also over-ambitious and resorts to magic to achieve his super-human goals; in the end, magic turns against him and causes his demise. Welles' Macbeth will inherit some of Faustus' pride, his chin constantly looking up fearing the reaction of heaven. In the Welles' *curriculum*, Macbeth will be the next reincarnation of the Faustian type.

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<sup>55</sup> See Houseman, 121-2, who remarks that Welles believed in the Devil and thought he was doomed.

### The Mercury Theatre

After the closure of the FTP, Houseman and Welles took the good name and prestige they had achieved and decided to set up their own repertory company. Houseman wrote a declaration of principles published in *The New York Times*, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1937. In it they announced a continuance with the ideology of the FTP. Tickets would be affordable (\$2 top price), and the plays chosen were those that seemed to have ‘emotional or factual bearing on contemporary life.’ The company refused to have a political agenda, but not to express social awareness and make commentary on the times by resorting to classical texts.<sup>56</sup>

During the run of *Faustus*, Houseman had taken care of making a survey, asking the audience about their theatrical tastes in a questionnaire that was given out along with the program. The results were the replies of about forty thousand people, which appreciated the innovative airs of the FTP; specific suggestions repeatedly asked for ‘more classical plays’, ‘classical plays excitingly produced’ and ‘great plays of the past produced on a modern way.’<sup>57</sup> The Mercury was born as a theatre to please audiences, so the plays chosen fitted these requests.

Their first production opened in November 1937; it was *Caesar: Death of a Dictator*, an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* in modern dress. The characters wore black shirts and trench coats, copying the looks of the Italian *fascisti*. The production was a huge success, confirming the good instinct of the Mercury with classical texts. During the run of *Caesar*, the Mercury opened two other shows in nearby theatres—*The*

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<sup>56</sup> Houseman, 142-3

*Shoemaker's Holiday*, adapted from the play by Thomas Dekker, and a rerun of *The Cradle Will Rock*, in what would be called its 'oratorio version' – staged without décor and without stage action. The three plays run together with great success, and marked the heyday of the Mercury Theatre, with both critical and audience acclaim.

When *Caesar* ended its run, and the Mercury started to prepare new productions, their success started to decline. In April 1938, *Heartbreak House*, by George Bernard Shaw, was a modest success. The following plays brought about just one failure after another. *Too Much Johnson*, a screwball comedy based on the play by William Gillette, was rehearsed but never performed publicly because of technical problems. A short film was shot as the first scene of the play, to be shown before the action on stage. After that, they realised that they could not project films in the theatre where they were going to perform, so they had to play the first act as well. Finally funding fell through and they could not even premiere. *Too Much Johnson* could have been an excellent example of Welles' intermedial devices; the sheer fact that he tried to tell a story through two different media speaks volumes about his methods of experimentation. Unfortunately the film was lost in a fire, and the documents left are not enough to study these devices.

This was just the first blow to the Mercury Theatre. The next production was *Danton's Death*, by George Büchner, which opened in November 1938. It was a very ambitious production, starting by its design—the backdrop was made up of five thousand human masks, that would change their expression depending on the lighting. The stage was dominated by a structure that would lift the actors up and down, risking their necks

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<sup>57</sup> Houseman, 143

whenever they got onto it. The production was a flop, in spite of the overnight attention that Welles achieved during rehearsals after his famous radio version of *The War of the Worlds*.

The coup-de-grâce of the Mercury Theatre came with *Five Kings* in early 1939<sup>58</sup>. Welles seems not to have learnt his lesson from *Danton's Death*, and embarked in another overambitious project—condensing Shakespeare's *Henriad* in two four-hour performances, that would play in alternative evenings. Rehearsals were a complete chaos, the text changed every day. To make things worse, Welles himself did not even know his lines as Falstaff—another actor would stand for him while he directed from the stalls. This lack of preparation showed once the play opened, it was a complete five-hour disaster. To make things worse, the décor was set in a revolving stage that moved too fast and tended to throw off the actors. In spite of frantic changes on Welles' part to fix the debacle for the second show, it did not improve much. The revolving stage was slowed down, though this time it spun too slowly and the actors had to wait for it to turn until they could continue with the action. The production never made it to New York, as intended, and the company was dissolved. Welles would use the Mercury Theatre name in later theatre productions, but in those occasions Houseman would not be with him as a producer—the name tried to recall the glory days just related. A Shakespeare play successfully inaugurated the Mercury's success and a Shakespeare play sealed its tomb. It was time for the Mercury Theatre to move on to film.

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<sup>58</sup> This was produced in collaboration with the Theatre Guild, which co-financed it (Callow, 423).

Caesar

The very first Mercury production is one of the most interesting cases of intermediality, by the way it brings the aesthetics of contemporary news media to the stage. It is also an ideal case study for this thesis, since the company reprised their roles in the radio a year after the theatrical run, so that the relationship with contemporary media had to be done aurally. Even though *Caesar* has been object of scholarly study in repeated occasions, it has not been compared to its radio version; what is more, the radio broadcast has not been studied at all, which makes the *Julius Caesar* adaptations a key example for the intermedial study of Welles' versions of Shakespeare. On top of this, the theatre production included a series of failed intermedial experiments, which did not make it to the final staging, but that give us some insight on the rehearsal process of the Mercury Theatre.

*Caesar* was the crystallization of the 'declaration of intent' that had been published in August. John Houseman, producer and co-partner with Welles in the enterprise, managed to lift off the project following a business model based on investors—quite an achievement for a classics repertory company off-Broadway. Setting Shakespeare's texts in contemporary times was not only a way to respond to the demands of the audience, but also a way to save money, since the extras could use their own clothes, and they could buy apparel in second-hand stores.

Even though the company was supposed to abstain from taking a political stance, a play commenting on contemporary fascism was bound to be considered political. Even though it is referred to by most people with the title of Shakespeare's play, the official title

of this production was *Caesar*, subtitled ‘Death of a Dictator’<sup>59</sup>; the change in the title already shows not only an update in the text, but also refers to the allegorical level of the production—‘Caesar’ also means ‘tyrant’ in English. At the time, Welles insisted that there were not explicit references to the political situation in Europe. According to Callow, ‘It was a general feeling of contemporaneity that [Welles] was after; not a blow-by-blow parallel.’ The similarities with European fascism could not be missed—to begin with, fascism imported many of the symbols and imagery of the Roman empire, the fascist salute being the ‘Ave’ of the Romans. Remarkably too, Joseph Holland bore a significant resemblance with Mussolini in the title role. The design would also be similar to fascist uniforms intentionally:

To emphasize the similarity between the last days of the Roman republic and the political climate on Europe in the mid-thirties, our Roman aristocrats wore military uniforms with black belts that suggested but did not exactly reproduce the current fashion of the fascist ruling class; our crowd wore the dark, nondescript street clothes of the big-city proletariat.<sup>60</sup>

Years later, in an interview with André Bazin, Welles would admit that they indeed took a political stance in the production, it was more than a comment or a search for a contemporary feeling.

[*Caesar*] was overtly anti-fascist. It was a period when fascism wasn’t a matter of little discussion in a café, a little disagreement. At that time fascism was the most important thing. I admit that there were certain misrepresentations in the staging, because we were living in those times.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, the concept of the play was to make Shakespeare’s text contemporary to the audience, giving evidence of its relevance to current events, as well as the atemporality

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<sup>59</sup> See Rosenbaum’s chronology in Bodganovich and Welles, *This is Orson Welles*, p. 339.

of the issues that dictatorship brings about. In order to make the relationship evident, Welles was inspired by the visuals and sounds of the news at the time.

[...] Welles was not out to make any bold political statement; indeed, the very ground note of the production was his audience's own superstitions about dictatorships. These could be traced to the influence of movie newsreels and popular magazines. Welles, in turn, endowed them with theatrical impact—so much that one is tempted to compare elements of the production to comic strip versions of dictatorship.<sup>62</sup>

He was trying to import a specific format from different media—film, magazines, newspapers, and radio. The formula, so to speak, was blending Shakespeare's historical tragedy with *agitprop*. It was not the first time that the *agitprop* model was used in that year—in the FTP days, one of the most popular shows was the *Living Newspaper*, a theatre show that dramatised current news for audiences in the style of popular revue. Incidentally, Norman Lloyd, who played Cinna the Poet in the production, had also acted in *Living Newspaper*<sup>63</sup>.

The purpose of *Caesar* was not bringing the news to the stage, but to compare current events with those in Roman history, interpreted from the ethic standards of an Englishman living at the turn of the seventeenth century. The interpretive framing, then, is complex enough to encourage questioning; it is far more than just hinting at the similarities of the situation at the end of the Roman Republic and the rising of fascism in Europe. By not oversimplifying the staging, making the reference implied but not direct, the production invites to interpretation, much in the way of the Brechtian concept of theatre, and almost an expectable result of the *agitprop* inspiration.

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<sup>60</sup> Houseman, 149.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Richard Mariendstras (1974), in Estrin, 153

<sup>62</sup> France (1977), 112

<sup>63</sup> Houseman 145-6.

The reading of the play is even more ambiguous in the light of the adaptation of the text. The playscript focuses on the traitors after Caesar's assassination, leaving Octavius completely out of the story, and severely cutting down Marc Anthony's role. It becomes the tragedy of the traitors, the tragedy of Brutus – played by Welles himself –, who kills his friend because he was ambitious, but also a fair ruler for the people. In this version, Brutus' moral dilemma becomes the centre of the play.

The script also leaves out Caesar's ghost; by ruling out the supernatural the play seems more plausible; the argument of spiritual justice weakens against the moral conflict of the traitors. There is not poetic justice to be fulfilled; characters become recognisable because of their looks and gestures and their struggle for power. What Shakespeare brings to contemporary affairs is a humanity to the characters that were seen in the news; from the impersonality of newsreels and magazines to the insight that dramatic dialogue and soliloquies provide.

The production did a very good job of ensemble scenes, which were carefully choreographed and planned. Welles borrowed lines from other plays, particularly *Coriolanus*, when he needed extra lines; most of the exclamations of the crowds were thus Shakespearean. The most memorable of the scenes in the play was precisely the one in which Cinna the Poet, mistaken by the mob for the traitor of the same name, is killed by the angry crowd. Several different approaches were used before the final version, and none worked out, so that the scene was about to be dropped. Marc Blitzstein, the composer of the production, directed some rehearsals of the scene with a metronome,<sup>64</sup> but still it was not effective enough. The final staging revolved around the concept of Norman Lloyd, playing

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<sup>64</sup> France, (1977), 114

Cinna, of his character as a street poet who is assaulted by a mob. In the following description of the scene, however, we can see how some of the rhythmic approach of Blitztsein seems to have made it to the final version.

The opening concept of the scene was pantomimic, and had about it a deceptively quiet—even comic—air. [Norman] Lloyd (as Cinna) the oblivious victim, meanders into a pool of light. “I dreamt tonight that I did feast with Caesar,…” he muses wistfully. Then, without a warning, the crowd is upon him – singly, then in twos and threes, coming out of the surrounding darkness until it forms a ring around him. Cinna, assuming they have come for his verses, begins to fish them out of his pockets. Quickly, the mood changes as they press in around him with their questions: “What is your name?” “Wither are you going?” “Where do you dwell?” “Are you a married man or a bachelor?” [...]

From offstage a chorus of extras takes up the chant:

Come. Kill. Ho. Slay.  
 Come. Kill. Ho. Slay.  
 To the Capitol.  
 To the Capitol.

Cinna, by now wide-eyed and cringing, offers samples of his poems to the mob around him, only to have them wadded up and thrown back into his face. One step at a time, they converge on Cinna. From out of the shadows comes the pronouncement, “Tear him for his bad verses!” Cinna, backing away, turns from one to the other imploringly, “I’m Cinna the Poet, not Cinna the Conspirator.” At this point the mob’s ranks are doubled with extras and, together, they swallow him up. Blackout. Silence. Then, a last frenzied cry – “BUT I’M CINNA THE POET!” This is followed by the peal of a Hammond organ struck full volume on all the bass keys and pedals for what seems like minutes (but it is actually forty-five seconds).<sup>65</sup>

Such a terrifying scene, preceded by Anthony’s famous speech, served to illustrate the motivations of a crowd that had been conveniently harangued by a eloquent and manipulative speaker. This relationship between the mob and the politician also offered a good insight into what might be happening in Italy or Germany. It was, as it were, a ‘living newspaper’ of the assassination of Julius Caesar, and the punishment of his killers.

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<sup>65</sup> France, (1977), 114-6.

The production shared many of the characteristics of *Faustus*, starting with a bare stage. Two flagpoles on the sides were the only décor of the play; a series of platforms provided different levels as well as give the illusion of depth, which was particularly handy in a somewhat small theatre.

In *Caesar* [Welles] called for a series of huge, subtly graded platforms that covered the entire stage floor. First came the main downstage playing area [...] which rose in a gentle rake to meet a set of shallow steps running the full width of the stage. These led to an eight-foot plateau, the midstage playing area, then rose again through another set of steps to a final narrow crest, six and a half feet above stage level, before falling back down into a steep, fanning ramp that ended close to the rear wall of the theater. This gave the stage an enormous depth and a great variety of playing areas.<sup>66</sup>

That the design was sober did not mean that the staging was simple. Houseman declares that the production was not as complicated as *Faustus*, but it was not simple either.<sup>67</sup> The lighting plan was more sophisticated, designed by Jean Rosenthal, one of the leading theatre technicians of American theatre. The actors did not enter or exit the stage through the wings, fades-in and out marked these transitions on stage, reprising *Faustus*' cinematic rhythm.

The photographs of the production show an extremely dramatic lighting, that avoided mid-tones and favoured very dark shadows and very bright whites. This could be yet another instance of Welles' expressionist style. It also suggests the texture and looks of the photos in magazines and newsreels—the sensibility of the film and the quality of photographic reproduction made these photos tend to extreme blacks and whites rather than greys. The best remembered light effect were the so-called “Nuremberg lights,” inspired by the impressive illumination of the Nuremberg party rallies in September, 1936:

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<sup>66</sup> Houseman, 148.

Steps and platforms were honeycombed with traps out of which powerful projectors were angled upward and forward to form a double light curtain (the “Nuremberg lights”) through whose beams all actors making upstage entrances had to pass and were suddenly and dramatically illuminated before descending to the playing areas below.<sup>68</sup>

Apart from the dramatic effect, the reference to German fascism was explicit, extending the allusion to all European fascism (not only Italian). Welles echoed recognisable images, imitating the texture of the media in which they were originally reproduced. Changing the medium of the image was a means to call attention to it; decontextualisation also helped to look at the images and situations with new, fresh eyes.

If the visuals of the play were inspired by news and magazines, the sound designed intended to bring radio to the theatre. Irving Reis, producer of *The Columbia Workshop*, put together a soundtrack for the play at Welles’ request, though the track was finally not used at all.<sup>69</sup> Houseman explains that a disc was prepared with big city sounds, it was ready just in time for the first preview. In a regular record player it sounded ‘terrific’, but the equipment that they had at the theatre made it sound ‘like a subway train in travail,’ full of unearthly screeches and unrecognisable hubbub.<sup>70</sup> The recording interfered with the dialogue, which caused first annoyance and then hilarity in the audience of that preview. The soundtrack was then dropped, so that Blitzstein’s score and the thumping of the actors’ boots – the stage was not padded because they were short of money – , along with an enormous drum, which was probably the same used in *Faustus*, made all the sound

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<sup>67</sup> Houseman, 148

<sup>68</sup> Houseman, 148

<sup>69</sup> Callow, 332

<sup>70</sup> Houseman, 158

effects.<sup>71</sup> The recorded soundtrack was one of Welles' failed experiments; fortunately Blitzstein provided an experimental sound design to make up for the absence of the sound effects.

[Marc Blitzstein] managed to achieve amazingly varied effects—from the distant bugles of a sleeping camp to the blaring brass and deep, massive, rhythmic beat which instantly evoked the pounding march of Hitler's storm-troopers that we were hearing with increasing frequency over the radio and in the newsreels.<sup>72</sup>

The ensemble of all these devices was the most famous Mercury Theatre production, and Welles' consecration as a theatre director. Much has been commented on the dramatic effects and coups-d'étage of the production, while the relationship with the mass media of the times has been mentioned but not developed. Certainly, its elaborate blending of Shakespeare and news media to facilitate political comment was finely interwoven into a compact, coherent whole.

The effect of intermediality in this production heavily relied on the audience and their familiarity with current events. The political comment referred to fascist ideology, though Welles denied the direct relationship with personalities of the time. *Caesar* was conceived more as an anti-fascist allegory; though the direct imitation of news media made it more concrete than Welles would have liked to admit.

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<sup>71</sup> Houseman, 157-8

## Conclusion

Shakespeare became the milestone that marked the beginning and the end of Welles' most successful stint on the boards—*Voodoo Macbeth* and its triumphant run opened the way to success, prestige and recognition, *Caesar* was the confirmation of his talent with the Mercury; while the failure of *Five Kings* closed down the Mercury Theatre and wrote a full stop to his New York theatre career. He would not reach the levels of success of these years again, nor the praise to his genius in the US be contemporary to the release of his works.

Intermediality in Welles' early Renaissance versions seems to follow two successful strategies. On the one hand, remediation (low-angle point of view, close-ups, news media aesthetics) brings a new refreshing look to the stage. On the other hand, hypermediacy as the use of other media directly into the target medium seems to have been more problematic—the use of loudspeakers in the theatre worked out well in *Faustus*, but turned into an interference in *Caesar*. Welles, young and daring, would not be afraid to fail in trying these devices. He was exploring them and their effectiveness, incorporating the most successful ones into his artistic vocabulary, to use them again and in other media later.

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<sup>72</sup> Houseman, 155

## CHAPTER 2: RADIO INNOVATIONS: *THE MERCURY THEATRE ON THE AIR AND THE CAMPBELL PLAYHOUSE*

Orson Welles started his career as a radio actor at the same time he worked in New York theatre. He did it for a living at first, soon his charismatic voice made him a solicited actor with a very good salary. His directorial successes on stage also made him a prestigious figure to appear in radio shows. In the summer of 1938 he started his own radio drama series, with John Houseman again producing at his side—*The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, which had been previously announced as *First Person Singular*.<sup>73</sup> The run was initially set to finish in the fall, but CBS decided to go on sustaining the series until the winter. It was during this extended run that the *War of the Worlds* broadcast took place, and threw Orson Welles into stardom. Thanks to its sudden popularity, the program won Campbell Soups as a sponsor and changed its name to *The Campbell Playhouse*. The sponsorship affected the contents and format of the program, since now it had to accommodate the messages of the sponsor. It went on for three series, from December 1938 to June 1939, September of that year to March of the following, and from November 1940 to June 1941.

In this chapter I will compare Orson Welles' work as a radio director with other shows at the time, namely The Lux Radio theatre, the most popular and longest-running radio drama show in the 1930s and 1940s in the U.S.. This will provide some guidelines about the ways he innovated in an aural medium, as well as giving good clues about how he would deal with his film soundtracks later on. It has been affirmed that *Citizen Kane* treats

sound as if it were for the radio;<sup>74</sup> little has been said, however, about the convention-breaking work he did on that medium.

In the study of other radio drama of the time, *The Lux Radio Theatre* will be the main reference to contrast with the Wellesian radio work. Other brief references will be made to *The Shadow* radio serial, in which he starred from 1937 to 1938, and *The Columbia Workshop*. These contrasts will tell why the Mercury broadcasts were different and, more importantly, what their innovations were. *The Mercury Theatre On The Air* was a sustained (i.e. not sponsored) program for CBS, which offered Welles ‘the freedom to experiment and prestige [...] for the network.’<sup>75</sup> The series adapted literature classics to the radio, which gives it a uniformity of content and form that would not be as consistent in *The Campbell Playhouse*, which was a sponsored program.

### Radio Drama and The Golden Age of Radio

Before starting to talk about the historical framework of Welles’ radio work, let me borrow a couple of definitions that define the status of dramatic texts for radio. Derek Rattigan makes an important distinction between *radio* drama and *radio drama*<sup>76</sup>. The first refers to drama that has been previously written for another medium (e.g. theatre) and

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with Richard O’Brien in 1938, in Estrin, 3.

<sup>74</sup> See Rick Altman’s illuminating article, ‘Deep-Focus Sound: Citizen Kane and the Radio Aesthetic’.

<sup>75</sup> Callow, 370. Callow also adds that sustained programming was ‘no form of philanthropy’, since radio programs were in average rather low quality, though quite popular. ‘Liberals, academics, artists, leaders of labour, agriculture, religion, [...] and ‘the non-profit world’ made up a pressure group that nagged at this low-quality programming at the dawn of the New Deal. These groups asked officially for the revocation of the broadcasting licenses to networks unless one-fourth of their programming was devoted to non-profit programming, educational and the kind. The Congress was favourable to this, and though a law was never passed, the networks made an effort to comply with this demand. See Callow 370-1.

adapted for radio performance. This was the prevailing mode in the US during the 30s and early 40s, since it adapted plays and film scripts to be performed on the air. On the other hand, radio *drama* is a dramatic piece specifically written for the radio, so that it takes advantage of the particularities of the medium and its particular codes. This dramatic mode, for instance, is still popular in Great Britain, where the BBC has a department devoted to producing radio *drama*, and promoting the work of new writers. This subtle difference between these two types of radio drama is fundamental to understand the difference between Welles' work and of his contemporaries'. His work, particularly *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, seems to show an awareness of the medium's potential, as radio *drama*, which was unusual in other contemporary programs of the same kind.

The period concerned was the so-called 'Golden Age of Radio' in the US, the 1930s and 40s. This was the time when radio was the star of media, and took away cinema and theatre audiences to keep them at home listening to their radio receiver. People could listen to the same stories that played on stage or where being shown on screen, since radio drama available was almost exclusively based on dramatic or filmic adaptations. Michele Hilmes affirms that it was 'highly rated programming on network radio's nighttime schedule'<sup>77</sup>. Some of them presented one-hour versions of films on release—*Hollywood Playhouse*, *The Screen Guild Playhouse*, *The Silver Theater*, and the most popular, *The Lux Radio Theatre*. *Cavalcade of America* presented dramatizations of events in American History; it was in this series that Welles started his career in radio.<sup>78</sup> 'Even when the dramas enacted were

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<sup>76</sup> Rattigan, 28-29

<sup>77</sup> Just after the other great dramatic programs that starred network's programming schedules: woman's serial dramas, better known as 'soap operas'. See Sterling and Kittross.

<sup>78</sup> Hilmes does not list *The Columbia Workshop*, for which Welles performed his first Shakespeare on radio.

stage plays, they always presented a glittering roster of Hollywood stars.’<sup>79</sup> Radio was a means of reinforcing the popularity of the stars, as well as a promotion of the films adapted.

Rick Altman provides a general description of the aesthetics of radio programs of the time, and how narrative was conditioned by sponsorship and station identification cues.

With very few exceptions, radio broadcasting of the late thirties and early forties was live, studio-based, and commercial. Conceived in fifteen-minute units, by far the majority of programs had a single sponsor and a master of ceremonies or host who served as a sort of clutch between the program’s two main gears: discursive framing (references to program name, time slot, place in radio flow, sponsorship, audience, next appearance, and so forth) and narrative material (series, serial, news, sporting event, personality, performance, and the like). Programs that lasted more than fifteen minutes (principally sporting events, variety shows, news specials, and prestige drama) regularly interrupted their narrative material every quarter hour in order to identify the station, provide air time for the sponsor, and increase the number of privileged moments (beginnings and endings) within the narrative material.<sup>80</sup>

The differentiation between discursive framing and narrative material is essential to understand why *The Mercury Theatre* stands aside from other radio drama. A sponsored program negotiates with the framing differently to a sustained program. In the first type, sponsor messages interrupted the narrative flow every fifteen minutes; the same happens in sustained programs, though the interruption is usually shorter. The sponsorship is not only an intrusion in the narration (whatever the contents of the narration are, e.g. a play, the news, an educational program), the sponsor sought to call attention on its product so that the discursive framing becomes so prominent it overshadowed the actual contents of the program.

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<sup>79</sup> Hilmes, 103

<sup>80</sup> Altman, 7

Let us review briefly the radio aesthetics of this period, which were also the basis of Welles' programs. The construction of space in radio had two sound levels: 'foreground dialogue (and important narrative effects)' and 'backgrounded effects (and unimportant speech)'.<sup>81</sup> The convention to create these two levels, plus the type of setting was 'no reverberation for the foreground narrative and dialogue space, and audible reverberation for the background ambience and out-of-the-room space'.<sup>82</sup> Since there was no stereo sound then, space was constructed through volume—higher volume implied being closer to the microphone, and therefore to the listener.

Sound volume would also help mark the segments just mentioned above, with the following characteristics:

**introductory and conclusive sound spikes** with greater volume range than any purely narrative material [...]; **initial sound space events** [...]; **conventional sound treatment of narratively important material** [...]; **contradictory treatment of sound at moments of high discursive investment**.<sup>83</sup>

Each fifteen-minute narrative segment is book-ended by a rise in the volume of the sound. '[T]he beginning of a program is usually preceded by a short period of silence, thus increasing the impact of the loud sound event to follow'.<sup>84</sup> It was, as it were, starting and ending with a bang—in the case of *Mercury Theatre* it opened and closed with Tchaikovski's Concerto no. 1. This aural division was an explicit way to structure the

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<sup>81</sup> Altman, 9

<sup>82</sup> Altman, 10

<sup>83</sup> Altman, 6 (bold type as in the original). In this paragraph he is describing the sound segments in *Citizen Kane*, but the description is the same that for radio segments. He includes this endnote to this paragraph: 'It is interesting to note that, throughout his career, Welles matches initial / final rapid variations in volume to similar variations in image scale: large close-ups, distorted faces, unusually long shots. Certainly, the scene editing use of high volume sound accompanying an oversized and often distorted close-up is something of a Welles trademark'.

<sup>84</sup> Altman, 11

program, letting the audience know which act of the narration was taking place; it was also a practical way of accommodating the necessary discursive framing.

*The Mercury Theatre On The Air and The Campbell Playhouse*

Welles started acting in educational programs in 1934; in the following year he worked in *America's Hour* (CBS) and *Cavalcade of America* (NBC), both of which consisted of dramatizations of American history. This same year, he also became part of the cast in *The March of Time*, a series that dramatised the weekly news.<sup>85</sup>

At the beginning of his radio career Welles learned some tricks of the trade that would become extremely useful later on. He got accustomed to work quickly and adapt his voice to multiple characters (e.g. he got to play all of the Dionne quintuplets in *March of the Time*).<sup>86</sup> Working fast would be the *modus operandi* in *The Mercury Theatre On The Air*, where rehearsals (and at times even the script writing) would usually take place on the same day of the broadcast.

The program that made Welles into a radio star was *The Shadow*, where he played the hero protagonist Lamont Cranston / The Shadow from 1937 to 1938. Some of the devices used in this show can be identified in his own radio work. For a start, The Shadow was a hero adapted to his medium—he had special mesmerising powers that helped him “cloud men’s minds” so that they could not see him; he became a disembodied voice that came from the shadows. The formula of the show consisted of an introductory segment *in*

*medias res*, where a crime (normally one in a series) took place, then it gave way to the investigation of the hero and final resolution. This feuilleton structure, as Altman notes<sup>87</sup>; helped to hook the audience on the program. The narrative pace was fast and engaging, carrying the action dynamically to its resolution. Beginning *in medias res* (or at the end of the plot) would become another Wellesian trademark, in radio as well as in film—famously in *Citizen Kane*, but also in *The Stranger*, *Othello* and *Chimes at Midnight*. An agile narrative pacing, with shorter narrative segments linked with overlapping transitions, was another of Welles' common practices.

The use of sound effects in Welles' radio also seems to have been influenced by *The Shadow*. Sound effects created atmosphere and setting—e.g. echoes and dripping for underground sewers, humming voices and the judge's hammering for a court. Sound effects would be interwoven with the dialogue, giving an enhanced sense of the location. It was also through sound effects that the double personality of the hero was represented—Lamont Craston spoke with a mellow, somewhat nonchalant voice, whereas The Shadow spoke in deep tones, with a strange reverberation. Welles would copy this trick for the opening episode of his series, *Dracula*, where he played Dr Seward and the Count in similar tones, using the reverberation to represent the unearthliness of the vampire.

Apart from *The Shadow*, another possible influence on Welles could come from *The Columbia Workshop*. This was also a sustained program at CBS, the network that later hired Welles to do his own show. Although it was not very popular, it aired from 1936 to

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<sup>85</sup> Welles and Bodganovich, 331-33. Welles would parody the *March of the Time* format later in *Citizen Kane*, as the program also had a newsreel version for movie theatres.

<sup>86</sup> Rosenbaun, 333, in Bodganovich and Welles.

<sup>87</sup> Altman, 25.

1947,<sup>88</sup> catering artistic creation through ‘experimental radio.’ The series was produced by Irvin Reis, it experimented and introduced new devices in radio drama, as no other program did before it. Given that there were no writers that would provide texts for the medium, the purpose of the program was to adapt pre-existing texts to exploit radio’s own devices.<sup>89</sup> Significantly enough, Welles started directing for the radio in this show; what is more, the three programs he directed were Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (19<sup>th</sup> September, 1936 part 1; 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1936 part 2) and *Macbeth* (28<sup>th</sup> February, 1937). The second one, unfortunately, has been lost; *Hamlet* will be dealt with at the end of this chapter.

On 11<sup>th</sup> July 1938, *The Mercury Theatre On The Air* gave its first performance. Orson Welles became what his agent called ‘a quadruple threat’ —he would direct, produce, write (at times) and act in it, the cast being made up of members of his theatre company. He sold CBS a series of dramatic one-hour programs that would replace *The Lux Radio Theatre* during that summer.

The first significant feature of the show was to bring many of the regular actors of the Mercury to the studio, along with some other actors that Welles had met in his previous radio work, such as Joseph Cotten, Agnes Moorehead, Ray Collins, Paul Stewart or Everett Sloane; they would also accompany Welles in his film career. The cast in the Mercury broadcasts were not movie stars, it was the ‘first complete theatrical producing company in radio.’<sup>90</sup> Their voices were charismatic enough to have the individuality necessary to identify each character; they were also very flexible, so that a single actor could play

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<sup>88</sup> In 1956 it came back, under the name of *The CBS Workshop*, and its run went on for a year and a half.

<sup>89</sup> From <http://www.rusc.com/old-time-radio-series/old-time-radio-Columbia-Workshop.html>

<sup>90</sup> *The Mercury Theatre On The Air*, ‘The Man Who Was Thursday’, 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1938.

several roles in the same program,<sup>91</sup> which contributed to keep the budget of the show tight. Their voice was their only tool available, and they had to make the most of it. It was not only a matter of perfect declamation, which was so fashionable after the appearance of sound cinema, but also an ability to transmit personality, characterising someone by his or her voice alone. To do all this, there had to be a measured exaggeration in the intonation of phrases, along with a range of changes in the voice to indicate age, or nationality—for example, most of the plays in *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* were performed with a British accent by the American cast, since most of them were English literature classics.<sup>92</sup> More importantly, the Mercury actors made an extraordinary use of silences and pace – this was very probably directed by Welles as if he were an orchestra conductor – vis-à-vis the obvious reading tone in other radio drama programs.

In other shows such as *The Lux Radio Theatre*, there was not a regular ensemble of actors, the main attractive being the parade of major and minor Hollywood stars every week. This also meant that most times the actors were not used to radio—they sounded as if they were speaking to a theatre audience rather than to a microphone. The fact that they were reading also influenced the performance, as it somehow speeded up the delivery, only leaving room for some strategic dramatic pauses.

*The Lux Radio Theatre* mostly featured adaptations of film screenplays that had already been released, sometimes with the same movie cast. Cecil B. DeMille, who hosted the program from 1936 to 1945, represented Hollywood and its glamour, while the aim was parading screen stars on the radio, to publicise their figures as well as their films. The

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<sup>91</sup> Welles was an specialist at this, and would carry this talent to cinema, where for instance he dubbed most of the voices of non-native English speakers in *Chimes at Midnight*.

scripts would normally be abridged versions of the screenplay, based on the highlights of the film. Some of the *Lux* shows, contemporary with the work of Welles in radio, were *Mr Deeds Goes to Town* (1<sup>st</sup> February 1937), *Captain Blood* (22<sup>nd</sup> February 1937), *It Happened One Night* (20<sup>th</sup> March 1939), *The 39 Steps* (13<sup>th</sup> December 1937), or *Wuthering Heights* (18<sup>th</sup> September 1939).

*The Mercury Theatre on the Air* also presented *radio* drama, i.e. adaptations of previous works for the radio; unlike *Lux Theatre*, though, the sources would only be literary adaptations. The main difference was that all the stories were told in first person, hence the initial name of the show, *First Person Singular*.<sup>93</sup> That run (until 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1938) would only have novels and short stories as their source; most of them were classical works (*Dracula* opened, followed by *Treasure Island*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The 39 Steps*, and *The Count of Monte Cristo*), and almost half of them featured first person narration in the original. When CBS renewed their contract for the fall, only one program was a theatrical adaptation, the rest were still fiction. This production, which opened the second run, was *Julius Caesar*, in an attempt to reproduce the success of the stage production. Other shows during this run were again classic literature adaptations still in first person (*Jane Eyre*, *Immortal Sherlock Holmes*, *Oliver Twist*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, and *The Pickwick Papers*).

Welles justified the use of novels as source texts in his radio show thus:

This is because the nature of the radio demands a form impossible to the stage. The images called up by a broadcast must be imagined, not seen. And so we find that

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<sup>92</sup> Curiously enough, *The War of the Worlds*, though set in England in the original, was played with American accents, because the action had been transposed to the US East Coast. Perhaps this change in their own convention was another reason why listeners were confounded when they listened to the show.

<sup>93</sup> Many resources refer to this first season of *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* as also known *First Person Singular*. Even though it is probable that the second denomination was the name of the project, it was never introduced with that title in the recordings that I have been listening to.

radio drama is more akin to the form of the novel, to story telling, than to anything else of which it is convenient to think.<sup>94</sup>

Apart from noting that radio is different from theatre, he also mentions a very important asset of radio—the imagination of the listener. Welles sounds to be on the right track when he equates radio drama to the novel, but he fails to mention the capital difference between both. Novel only has words to work on the imaginary forces of the reader, whereas radio drama has words, as well as the intonation and quality of the voice, utterances, sound effects, and music. These elements narrow the possible interpretations of the text, and at the same time become powerfully evocative.

After the notorious broadcast of *The War of The Worlds* (30<sup>th</sup> October 1938), a Halloween prank that went too far, Orson Welles became a star all over the U.S. The show then became so famous that the Campbell Soups Company, which had previously refused to sponsor it, rapidly contacted them to associate its brand name with the series. The show then had to change the name to *The Campbell Playhouse*, and surrender to the demands of the sponsor. This meant that its discursive style became similar to *The Lux Radio Theatre* format, though the narrative content still retained the freshness of *The Mercury Theatre On The Air*, as well as the first person narration. The sponsorship meant they had to have a guest star in every program, who would be interviewed after the performance and praise the delicious product they were selling. Some of the guest stars of *The Campbell Playhouse* were Katherine Hepburn (*A Farewell to Arms*), Helen Hayes (who would practically become a regular), Laurence Olivier (*Beau Geste*), and Walter Huston (*Les Miserables*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*)

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<sup>94</sup> Callow, p. 373.

In the case of *The Lux Radio Theatre*, the presence of the sponsor was so prevalent it practically took over the narrative content. De Mille would interview the stars in the intermission, asking them about the wonders of Lux soap, calling attention to the Hollywood stars rather than to the events of the play. Hilmes defines this characteristic as ‘self-consciousness’:

Rather than trying to hide the mechanisms of radio production behind the realist *mise-en-scène* that the movies had developed [...] radio tended to draw on its stage inheritance by acknowledging the presence of audiences in the studio during the broadcast (the origins of both the “live studio audience” and the laugh track) [...].<sup>95</sup>

This self-consciousness was very evident in *The Lux Radio Theatre*—DeMille introduced each episode as if he had selected the movie and the cast himself, acting as a ‘theatrical showman’.<sup>96</sup> By having a famous filmmaker, they also heightened the reputation of the program. Hilmes notes

‘DeMille actually had very little to do with putting together the show, but his carefully constructed persona as producer emphasized the Hollywood connection and helped to keep at arm’s length too close an association of Hollywood glamour with outright commercial selling.’<sup>97</sup>

DeMille, as the host, was part of the discursive framework of the program, his role being outside the narrative content. Altman qualifies this role thus:

‘Typically, the sponsor and the speaker are so carefully identified as to appear indistinguishable. [...] In the introductory and closing phases of the program, every host, [...] functions simultaneously as synecdoche of the sponsor and the broadcasting system [...]’<sup>98</sup>

In the case of *Lux Theatre*, there was actually a speaker for the messages of the sponsor apart from DeMille. This does not mean this was an exception to the identification

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<sup>95</sup> Hilmes: 98

<sup>96</sup> Hilmes: 98.

<sup>97</sup> Hilmes: 103

of sponsor and host—as I see it, this was a sign of the double sponsorship of the program. On the one hand, there was Lux Soap, on the other, there is Hollywood and its stars, and both wanted to take a prominent position in the program. What mattered was who appeared in the show; what hooked the audience was that they could listen to the same stars they watched on the big screen. The narrative contents were the realisation of this idea; the discursive framing, therefore, prevailed over narrative content. This was corroborated when the actors stepped out of character and were interviewed as themselves and, of course, talked about the wonders of the sponsor. This was generally what the beautiful female stars did, such as Ida Lupino, Claudette Colbert or Janet Leigh.

Welles would oppose himself to the sponsor dominating the format—in an interview to present *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, he affirmed that he did not frown at sponsorship, admitting that it was a ‘logical’ system, but he did ‘find fault with the fact that the broadcasters, in presenting a program, develop it along lines pleasing to the sponsor, rather to the radio audience itself, for whom it is really intended.’<sup>99</sup> Even when the sponsorship arrived, Welles stuck to this statement.

Campbell Soups, however, affected the format of *The Mercury Theatre On The Air*, not only the discursive framing, but also the content . The works adapted became more contemporary and trendy, such as successful plays of the time (such as Charles MacArthur and Ben Hetch’s *Twentieth Century*, Elmer Rice’s *Counsellor-at-Law*, Noel Coward’s *Private Lives*, Thornton Wilde’s *Our Town*), or other works which had been or were about to be adapted to the screen or stage (e.g. *Rebecca*, which opened the run, *Mr Deeds Goes to*

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<sup>98</sup> Altman, 11

*Town, Only Angels have Wings, Show Boat, or Arrowsmith*). The classics, featuring first person narrators, were still part of the program, though not as prominently as in the two previous runs—this is when the classic broadcast of *A Christmas Carol* took place, as well as *Huckleberry Finn* or *Jane Eyre* (again)..

Welles integrated the discursive framing into his radio drama, trying to efface it and make the narrative content closer to the listener. His budding stage renown made him the main asset of the program. His name, as well as that of his theatre company, bestowed the show with the kind of prestige that *The Lux Theatre* acquired from Cecil B. DeMille's filmic reputation. This was probably the reason Welles had been invited to *The Columbia Workshop*, and then offered a series as a substitute for *Lux* during the summer. Conversely, Welles was an all-in-one wonder that could be the star host, as well as the star actor, and actually direct the program.

When in 1938 CBS hired Orson Welles to write, produce and direct a series of one-hour dramas [...] they were inaugurating a new radio form. [...] Welles's show cast him in the ambiguous triple role of host, narrator, and actor. Especially in the view of the absence of a sponsor, Welles takes on the for him very comfortable function of selling himself, his show, and the Mercury Theatre. As shill extraordinaire, throughout his performances he bridges the discursive/narrative gap, for under the host we see the actor, and under the actor we see the host, with the narrator conveniently encapsulating both roles simultaneously.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, as a 'quadruple threat', the figure of Welles host-actor-director-(occasional) writer provided a continuum by which self-consciousness was subdued. There was still a separation between the introduction and the actual story—for instance, in *Dracula*, Welles-host announces 'Next time I speak to you I'll be doctor Seward,' separating his

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Richard O'Brien in 1938, included in Estrin, 4.

<sup>100</sup> Altman, 12

introductory role from his dramatic part. Still, though he changes the pitch of his voice, his melodious tones are recognisable in his acting.

Altman remarks that Welles was not first in embodying the host/actor in the radio drama discourse, nor did he invent the narrator in drama, ‘but he may very well have invented the intrusive episodic narrator, the one who bridges each pair of scenes rather than appearing only at the beginning and end of the program’.<sup>101</sup> This narrator was usually involved in the action, such as Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island*, Dr Watson in *Immortal Sherlock Holmes*, or the female protagonists of *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre*. Another kind would be the omniscient narrator, who also appeared between scenes, along with or instead of the sound peaks; this will be the case of the narrator of *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*. Apart from blending narrative content into the discursive framework more smoothly, this ‘intrusive narrator,’ as part of the story, bestows the storytelling with a continuous flow—it may be ‘intrusive’, but for the sake of cohesion and unity of the narration. First person narrative, besides, personalised the story and provided a point of view; enticing the listener to identify with the narrative voice, and encouraging the interpretation of what (s)he is listening to.

*The Mercury Theatre* also differed from *The Lux Radio Theatre* in the formal qualities and conventions it followed. While listening to the *Lux* broadcasts nowadays, it is very evident that the whole program was scripted—they all speak very articulately, clearly and even their hesitations are perfectly measured. The actors performed in front of an audience, adapting the theatrical stage to the radio studio, so that the radio audience could hear the applauses of the spectators

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<sup>101</sup> Altman p. 12.

Taking the novel as reference for radio storytelling also positions the listener differently than listening to a dramatic performance, not only because it engages the imagination of the listener, but also in the distance between the story and the audience.

Sarris refers to Welles' concept of narration:

[...] Welles always thought of radio (and later television) as a narrative medium rather than a purely dramatic one. "There is nothing that seems more unsuited to the technique of the microphone," he said, "than to tune in on a play and hear the announcer say, The curtain is now rising on a presentation of.... This method of introducing the characters and setting the locale seems hopelessly inadequate and clumsy." Welles wanted to eliminate the "impersonal" quality of such programs, which treated the listener like an eavesdropper. The radio, he recognised, was an intimate piece of furniture and, as a result, the "invisible" audience should never be considered collectively, but individually.<sup>102</sup>

The act of storytelling becomes then more intimate and personal, as reading could be, rather than the communal experience of going to the theatre to watch a play or a movie. Radio listening was collective in those times as well; it is also true that the family listened together, so the sense of intimacy still prevails. Aiming at intimacy, then, becomes a search for immediacy with the audience.

The discursive framing, in any case, could not be omitted altogether. Even *The Mercury Theatre* had introductions and a list of characters, which Welles used to give himself. In the process of innovation, the conventions in effect at the time must be upheld, specially if they were related to the financing of the program. Discursive framing can be minimized, as the first two runs of the series did; it is still necessary to situate the show in the context of the broadcast. Moreover, it becomes capital in the case of *The Mercury Theatre*, since the different conventions it was following would not make the program identifiable just by listening to the narrative—the *Mercury* tended to naturalism, as opposed

to *Lux*'s blatant artificiality. This difference in conventions and style, among other factors, provoked the *War of the Worlds* scare; those who missed the announcement could not identify the broadcast as drama, but thought they were listening to the news. The intrusive narrator, Dr Richard Pierson, did not appear until in the second half of the program, so the trait that characterised the series was not identifiable either.

In the first episode of *The Campbell Playhouse*, Welles did an introduction that summarised the intent of the show.

Well, everybody likes a good story, and I think radio is just about the best storyteller there is. *The Campbell Playhouse* is dedicated to the radio production of good stories; stories from everywhere – from the stage, from moving pictures and from literature. [...] In other words, all kinds of stories, mostly modern, and all of them chosen for their suitability to this medium. That's about all, except I'm going to try to tell them just as well as I know how.<sup>103</sup>

This quote notes the importance of narrative in the show. In the whole passage this quote belongs to, the word 'stories' occurs seven times, vs. the name of the sponsor that is only mentioned twice—narrative still prevails over the commercial format.

Note also the reason why the texts have been chosen, 'their suitability to this medium'. Surely there must have been commercial reasons for choosing them (*Rebecca*, the story that followed, was being shot at the moment, and it was also a best seller at the time); the sheer reference to the medium, however, marks an important difference from other radio drama. Welles expanded on this in the same introduction—when the announcer asked him what kind of 'plays' they were going to perform, this was his reply:

If you pardon me, it's not a play, it's a story, 'cause the acting for the radio is different from motion pictures and the theatre, and I'd like to keep it that way. *The Campbell Playhouse* is situated in a regular studio, not a theatre. We have no

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<sup>102</sup> Sarris, 37. He is quoting from an interview with Richard O'Brien in 1938, included in Estrin, 3-5.

<sup>103</sup> *The Campbell Playhouse*—'Rebecca', 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1938.

curtain, real or imaginary, and, as you see, no audience. There is only one illusion I'd like to create—the illusion of a story.<sup>104</sup>

Welles demonstrates an awareness of radio devices, calling attention on the differences from the other media that shaped radio drama at the time. He expands on the divergences with the stage—there are no curtains ‘real or imaginary,’ which is a note of difference with theatrical performance, and a means to avoid advertisements marking the acts of the play. In the case of *The Campbell Playhouse*, the message of the sponsor would appear at the beginning, middle and end of the program; the middle interruption was nonetheless quite short for the standards of the time (no more than 2 minutes).

The formal differences with *The Lux Radio Theatre* are evident—the performance takes place in a studio (‘not a theatre’) where there is not an audience to perform to. The actors focus on acting for the microphone, so that this radio acting is closer and more intimate to the audience than the *Lux Theatre* dramatic readings. The final feature of the program was a trademark of the Mercury Theatre, and of Welles’ actor directing—the actors would step on each other’s lines as one would do in real life, another type of overlap that helped to endow the show with great dynamism. The show was also famous for its energy and impromptu feeling, probably due to the rushed rehearsals on the same day of the performance. Thus the acting felt spontaneous and lively, in spite of being scripted and following many of the tenets of theatre acting. *The Man Who Was Thursday* is an excellent example of this liveliness—according to John Houseman, the script had been prepared that same morning, and had been rehearsed only once.<sup>105</sup> The central scene is a meeting of anarchist leaders, the actors screamed and spoke over each other’s lines, as a means to

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<sup>104</sup> Orson Welles, *The Campbell Playhouse*—‘Rebecca’, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1938

impose their authority. The satire reflected the chaos of the organisation through the screams and overlaps, so the acting probably benefited from the lack of rehearsal.

The similarities between the novel and radio drama played a favourable role in the adaptation of literary works, particularly during *The Mercury Theatre On The Air* series. Several writers were enrolled to provide the scripts in later runs of the program (among others, Howard Koch, who later would be credited with *Casablanca* and *Sergeant York*; and Herman J. Mankiewicz, who penned *Citizen Kane*), though the first scripts were mainly written by John Houseman along with Orson Welles. Their main method of adaptation was based on cutting and pasting from the original novel, thus keeping many literary devices of the source text. It was also a way to speed up the writing, especially when the novel already featured first person narration, and they could always affirm that they were being faithful to the original by having verbatim extracts from it. The process, however, was never as simple as that. John Houseman enumerated some of the ways in which they produced their radio plays:

We invented all sorts of ingenious and dramatic devices: diaries, letters, streams of consciousness, confessions and playbacks of recorded conversations.’

I do not think that they ‘invented’ all these forms, as most of them were handed down from many of the original texts. Confessions are also found in theatre, as well as public confessions or asides / soliloquies; whereas recorded conversations seem more akin to the aural environment of the radio. The novelty, again, lies in resorting to novels rather than dramatic texts, as well as in the hypermediation of the radio drama format. This affirmation is also yet another example of how remediation allowed to explore the possibilities of a medium. Remediation could also be part of the source text as well—again, in *Dracula*, the

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<sup>105</sup> Leonard Maltin’s *Mercury Theatre Special*, 1988.

original text uses diaries, letters and newspapers to build up the narrative. Houseman and Welles kept the original's multiple sources and connected them through the voice of the 'intrusive narrator' in the figure of Dr Seward. All the devices Houseman lists are actually ways to express intimacy with the events of the story, recounting events in the first person, being instances of how immediacy can be sought through hypermediacy.

Another important characteristic of the *Mercury / Playhouse* radio drama was its dynamism. The story flowed quickly, in short scenes; '[Welles'] narrative segments are far shorter than those of the average radio drama.'<sup>106</sup> The narrative segments were more similar in length to cinema sequences than to theatre scenes, thus making the action more agile and fast paced.

The transitions between scenes also contributed to the dynamic rhythm of the narration—the action would move from one place to another without pausing between scenes, though the change of setting would be indicated either by the narrator, sound effects and/or music, which would serve as overlaps from one scene to the next. For instance, in *The Man Who Was Thursday*, a character calls a horse-cab, then a jolly, quick music starts to play, picturing, as it were, the ride. The voice of the hero-narrator tells over the music how the two characters got to a tavern, before the music ends. The key is that the transitions should be dynamic and advance the action, not a stop or a pause—it was rather like movie editing marking the rhythm of the play,. As we have seen, Welles also did overlapping transitions of this kind in the theatre (there were sound overlaps of *Voodoo Macbeth*), and would also be one of his trademarks in cinema—very famously, in the dissolves to flashbacks in *Citizen Kane*.

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<sup>106</sup> Altman, 14

The use of music was also somewhat different from *Lux*'s—music did not work as a curtain or divider between segments, but it was a means of establishing mood and setting, much in the way it works in cinema now. As we saw in the example above, it was integrated into the story, even the musical bridges between scenes would be part of the narrative. The composer was Bernard Herrmann, then conductor of the CBS orchestra; he would follow Welles to film in his *Citizen Kane* endeavour, and later achieve recognition thanks to his work with Alfred Hitchcock. Reportedly, Welles would spend as much time working with Herrmann as with the actors—certainly music had a good deal of the story to tell. Welles and Herrmann also kept a few tricks up their sleeves—John Houseman talks about how the pieces were selected for each program:

What Benny [Herrmann] did, he would have a whole repertoire of music, and had wonderful names. I remember there was one on for any 'gruesome effects'; there was 'frozen music' [...]. So as the rehearsal went on he'd say, 'Alright, we'll use ten bars of 'frozen music', we'll use that theme and that theme. So it was a matter largely of selection – that doesn't mean that he didn't compose special pieces – but, in general, these were pieces that he'd composed, which were in the so-called 'repertoire'.<sup>107</sup>

They had stock materials they would resort to in various occasions—the effectiveness of the music resulted from the skilful craftsmanship of Herrmann, who could provide pieces that would fit several purposes. Even though there were stock melodies in the repertoire, they would not repeat again and again, so that each program had its own musical entity by using different tunes. Playing pieces specifically composed for each story would also disguise the use of these repertoire melodies, so that there was variety as well as idiosyncrasy in the musical narrative.

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<sup>107</sup> Quote and information on Herrmann from the radio program hosted by Leonard Maltin, *Theatre of Imagination*, aired in 1988. Recording downloaded from 'The Mercury Theatre On The Air', <http://www.unknown.nu/mercury/>

As Welles became more famous and busy, he was gradually less and less involved with his radio show, till effectively he only was host and actor. He would import his First Person Singular concept to his first Hollywood project—an adaptation of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, which he had already adapted for the first run of *The Mercury Theatre On The Air* as a short story.<sup>108</sup> The main concept of this film was going to be that the ‘eye’ of the camera would be the ‘I’ of the protagonist, Marlow,<sup>109</sup> telling the story from his point of view continuously, without cuts. The events were relocated to South America, and Kurtz’s figure was compared with a fascist leader,<sup>110</sup> revisiting the anti-fascist spirit of *Caesar*. The project was abandoned right after Germany invaded Poland, and turned the subject a delicate matter to deal with; the first-person device would have also been prohibitive in the tight-budgeted Hollywood during World War Two. The end of *Campbell Playhouse* coincided with the pre-production of *Citizen Kane*—his radio glory days ended, to start with his problematic film career.

### *Hamlet in the Columbia Workshop*

The first opportunity that Welles had to direct a radio program was offered by the *Columbia Workshop* director, Irving Reis. The program had started its run in July of 1936; it was a sustained series, which favoured experimentation like no other program at the time. The enormous success of *Voodoo Macbeth* made Welles into a Shakespearean celebrity; thus the first text that he directed for radio would be Shakespeare’s. In the recording, the

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<sup>108</sup> See Carringer’s chapter 1 in *The Making of Citizen Kane*, 1-15.

<sup>109</sup> Carringer, 8

<sup>110</sup> Carringer, 4

presenter states that the Workshop had asked Welles to direct *Hamlet*, I cannot affirm whether the text was Welles' own choosing.

This adaptation is very peculiar for a variety of reasons. To begin with, it is split in two parts, half hour long each, which were not broadcast in consecutive weeks – part one on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1936; part two on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1936. Welles himself introduced the play thus:

In deciding to present an abbreviated version of *Hamlet*, the *Columbia Workshop* found itself facing a considerable dilemma—would it be feasible, we wondered, to give merely the plot in a short space of time, or should we concentrate on certain well-known passages, and let the story proceed confusingly? Our final decision was this: to present to you the first two acts of the play, presenting, whenever possible, the most notable scenes in their entirety; and giving you, we hope, a clear dramatic statement of the fauces of Hamlet's tragedy.<sup>111</sup>

The second part was broadcast almost two months later, probably because of popular demand—the show asked for the feedback of the audience at the opening introduction and the closing spiel, so that the producers could learn what was liked or not.

Managing to tell the tragedy of Hamlet in less than one hour is quite a feat, which involves leaving out a good deal of the original play. The selected scenes were not, of course, played 'in their entirety,' and in order to speed up the storytelling, a narrator summarised the situation between scenes, advancing thus the Mercury narrator. Several subplots are omitted or not finished—there is no mention to Fortinbras, nor to the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The women in the play are mere decorations—Ophelia, played by Welles' then wife Virginia, appeared briefly before the play-within-the-play, reducing her later madness in two lines of singing. Gertrude has slightly more presence, though her relationship with her son is oversimplified, and her lyrical description of

Ophelia's death omitted. Both actresses, probably because their role was reduced to a minimum, say their lines with an unusual glee. Gertrude replies 'The lady protests too much, methinks' to the Moustrap in a unmistakable happy tone, as if she did not realise of Hamlet's intentions. Women are clearly not one of the main topics of this version of Hamlet.

The most significant cut, however, happens between both parts of the play. The first part ends with the 'Rogue and peasant slave' soliloquy, in the line 'The play is the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king'; the second part starts precisely with the play within the play. What is missing from the adaptation is the über-famous, iconic, over-quoted soliloquy 'To be or not to be'. The cut is tremendously strategic—it finishes the first part in a climatic moment, and starts the second with another. Since the two parts were broadcast with seven weeks in between, the listener could think that 'To be or not to be' was going to or had been performed in the other part. Some editions situate the soliloquy at the beginning of Act III followed, by the nunnery scene, in which Hamlet disowns Ophelia. That would put both passages in between the end of the first part and the beginning of the second. Other editors and performers, such as Olivier in his film version, include the famous soliloquy and the nunnery scene in the middle of Act II, right before the 'fishmonger' scene. But both scenes are completely omitted in Welles' radio version, so that this second context to the soliloquy is lost.

This omission is quite coherent, given what the focus of the adaptation is. The 'notable scenes' to which Welles referred to in his introduction, and the passages that appear practically uncut, are those related to the troupe of players and acting. The Player

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<sup>111</sup> *The Columbia Workshop*, 'Hamlet' CBS, 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1936.

King gives his Hecuba speech, the second part opens with Hamlet giving instructions to the players, and we can listen to most of the Mousetrap dialogue. What is more, the ‘Rogue and peasant slave’ becomes the climactic soliloquy of the play, because of its situation, its length – it is almost complete – and its relevance to the main topic of the adaptation. The passages that refer to theatre-within-the-theatre are the main focus of the performance; becoming in this case theatre-within-the-radio.

Hamlet is characterised as a man of theatre, the actor within him surfaces and glows, whereas the suicidal, tormented Dane has no place in Welles’ version. He is a man of action—the final fencing match is an agile, vivid piece of work. ‘To be or not to be’ does not match this view of the character, so leaving it out does not seem inadequate at all.

Welles’ performance of the title role also fits and becomes this view of the character. Notably, this is the only occasion known in which Welles played the Prince of Denmark.<sup>112</sup> His performance is full of energy; he certainly hams it up since that was his tendency at his young age (he was only twenty-one). However, since the highlight goes for the thespian facet of Hamlet, grandiloquent acting seems to be in accordance with the adaptation. This is a notable and daring approach on the part of hot-blooded Welles, whose Shakespearean delivery is based on everyday speech rhythm, well articulated as corresponds to radio acting.<sup>113</sup> It contrasts with the Guielgud model of declamation, measured and solemn, enhancing each beat of the pentameter. The contrast is made explicit in this version when the Player delivers his Hecuba speech in imitation of the Guielgudian school.

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<sup>112</sup> Welles had played the Ghost and Claudius in Ireland, directed by Hilton Edwards.

<sup>113</sup> It is a pity that some of the other actors do not take a leaf out of Welles’ book, and trip on their lines in the recording.

This difference in the acting can also be accounted for in terms of remediation—Hamlet is the radio actor, the Player is the theatre actor. The adaptation, therefore, becomes more an exercise of bringing the stage to the radio, and evidencing the differences between both in aural terms. Both performances tend to histrionics, but in different ways—the pretended elegance of the player evidently lacks the characterisation necessary for the radio (which would be transmitted through gestures on stage), whereas Welles' performance delivers the verse in a more natural way to make the best of the range of expression in his voice.

The use of foreground / background sound levels to construct space and narration also marks the differences between theatre and radio. There are two passages, both in the second part, that make two speeches simultaneous by having one in the background, the other in the foreground. This is very difficult to perform on stage, since it could lead to confusion and unintelligibility. Radio sound editing can control the volume of two simultaneous sound streams, and make one prevail over the other. The effects can be quite varied, though. The first instance is in the play-within-the-play—as Lucianus announces his wicked plans of killing the king, we hear Hamlet in the foreground muttering 'Wormwood, wormwood'. What interests the audience is to know that this is the passage directed to Claudius, the beginning of the speech tells what it is about. The other example is more striking—Claudius prays trying to repent of his murder in the foreground, then his voice goes to the background while we hear Hamlet's musings while he considers whether to kill his uncle or not. In radio it is not easy to differentiate between a character's thoughts and what he utters, and this same ambiguity can also take place in the theatre. Claudius may be praying aloud or to himself; Hamlet must be thinking to himself. The theatrical convention is that both speak on stage; radio makes possible the simultaneity of dialogue to translate

the convention into radio terms, making it explicit through the background/foreground convention.

Historically, this recording is also important because it was the first collaboration of Welles with Bernard Herrmann. The use of music is actually pretty scarce, since only a fanfare marks the court scenes, their beginning and end, and a sinister gong anticipates ominous events. Orson Welles narrates what happened with the music in that broadcast:

We got one cue wrong in *Hamlet*—one cue wrong with Bernard Herrmann. He had broken his baton and thrown his script up in the air and walked out of the studio forty seconds before air time because of a quarrel with Irving Reis. And I dragged him back. We didn't have time to get the notes back in order on his stand, so he was one cue off all through it. So we had fanfares when it was supposed to be quiet, approaching menace when it was supposed to be a gay party, and all live; it was riotous. Nothing to do—he just went on. It got funnier and funnier, because Reis was an emotional-type conductor, and between the two of them...<sup>114</sup>

This must have happened in the second broadcast of the play. The music cues come in awkward places – one cue late, it appears – so that the play closes with a jolly fanfare and then a hurried gong to signal the end. This results in a jarred rhythm for the play, it is difficult to know when a scene starts or ends. The narrator helps to situate the action when the sound cues are confusing, but since the volume peaks marking the segment division are misplaced, the length of these segments is not easy to tell. What can be confirmed by listening to the first part of this *Hamlet* is that the segments are quite short (two to five minutes maximum), as a result of the attempt to compress Acts I and II in half hour. This certainly agrees with Altman's observation that narrative segments in Welles' radio were

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<sup>114</sup> Bodganovich and Welles, 332. Herrmann is not credited in the credits of either recording.

far shorter than the standard of the time,<sup>115</sup> as well as evidencing the dynamism that would later characterise his radio drama.

Sound effects are also scarce, the sound design is quite sober probably due to the small budget. The Ghost is the only character that requires sound effects—his voice turns echo-y to mark its supernatural origin; and each of his appearances in the first part is accompanied by a wind blowing sound—the audience cannot see him on the platform but can hear the disturbance in the air. The rest of the play uses no sound effects at all, not even in the final scene. We know Hamlet and Laertes are fencing because the dialogue says so – that is what internal stage directions are for – but we cannot hear the clash of the foils. The uproar of the court – most probably made by the actors themselves – makes up for this absence, and gives the scene a lively impromptu.

Because of the difficulty of getting hold of this recording,<sup>116</sup> this version of *Hamlet* has been long overlooked by Welles' scholars. Even the detailed and most useful chronology that Jonathan Rosenbaum provides in the appendixes of *This is Orson Welles* cannot provide the date when it took place – it wrongly appears as a recording of 1935, without a specific month or time of the year. It is far from being shortlisted in Welles' best works—there are clumsy acting and wrong music cues, and the play is far too summarised to actually make sense. But it is significant in Welles' career as this is his first attempt to direct a play for the radio. He certainly seems to have some awareness of the devices of the medium, but the narrative richness of sound effects and music that would be found in the Mercury broadcasts is absent—he had been working in radio only for a year, and he had not been exposed yet to the technical nuances of *The Shadow*, apart from the sure tight budget

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<sup>115</sup> See page 79.

of *The Columbia Workshop*. The fact that the text chosen for his radio directing debut was Shakespeare, and the use of remediation in the concept of the adaptation, is yet another piece of evidence of the relevance of both in his career.

### *Julius Caesar*

The original CBS broadcast of *Julius Caesar* on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1938 is lost; fortunately there is a recording of the dress rehearsal that took place right before the program was aired, in which we can hear Welles' instructions to the actors. This is the recorded version that I have chosen to comment on, rather than the commercial recording that was released, with the same cast, to accompany the edition of the play in *Everybody's Shakespeare*.

*Julius Caesar* inaugurated the second series of *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, which was continued by CBS after the summer due to its successful run. The program was a radio version of the Mercury Theatre production studied in the previous chapter, with the same cast. After an introduction that quoted the appraising reviews that the *Theatre on the Air* had received, Welles himself presented the play that followed:

*Julius Caesar* was done by the Mercury Theatre without benefit of toga. It was as timely last October as was sixteen hundred and fifty years after Caesar's murder when Shakespeare wrote it, and it is as timely today. A glance at your newspaper headlines and you'll understand why tonight we could wish for the extra dimension of television. Shakespeare's great political tragedy about the death of a dictator, which is also the personal tragedy of a great liberal, exists in all times without identification or special reference to its time. Its story is real Roman history, and its source is the Roman historian Plutarch. From the Plutarch text for the medium of radio broadcast, we've arranged a running commentary on the action of the play. No

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<sup>116</sup> It has not been released commercially, though it is in the public domain. I had to contact collectors of Old Time Radio Programs to provide me with a decent copy of the shows.

voice is better known, and none could be more suitable than that of outstanding radio news commentator, Mr. H. V. Kaltenborn.<sup>117</sup>

Welles here mentions the triple time frames to which the performance is going to refer to, as noted in the previous chapter: the end of the Roman Republic, Shakespeare's time and the contemporary performance. The relationship between the three is that the themes and events portrayed in the play transcend time, even though they are based on actual facts as retold by Plutarch.

The passage refers to the mass media of the moment—newspapers, television, and radio—the three media that were remediated in the stage version. Welles would have liked to have 'the extra dimension of television', i.e. the visuals, so that he could display the visual relationship with what was happening in the world at that moment. In the theatre production, costumes, fascist salutes and Nuremberg lights had made the connection between the end of the Roman Republic and the rising of the Roman Empire, but this innuendo could not be made in the radio.

The device 'for the medium of radio broadcast' that is developed is this 'running commentary' that took excerpts from Plutarch's *Lives*, which had also been Shakespeare's original source. Using this text as 'commentary' was a way to obtain some sort of first-hand report of what had happened, imitating the immediacy of twentieth-century media. It also helped to summarise the events in the play, so that it fit in the one-hour format of the show.<sup>118</sup>

The narration revises the 'first person singular' format that had characterised the previous series. This time the narrator is not part of the events – and not played by Welles,

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<sup>117</sup> *The Mercury Theatre on the Air, Julius Caesar, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 1938*

who reprised his role of Brutus – which results in the ‘commentary’ interweaving with the dialogue of the play—the narration advances what is going to happen, then the dialogue actually tells the events in a slightly different manner. This brings some of the Brechtian approach of the stage play to the radio, by contrasting the recounting of an event with its enactment. The first example of this has to do with Anthony’s famous speech, ‘Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.’ After a narration of the events divested of ornaments and poetry, the scene that follows has Anthony talking the crowd into rebellion with his oratory, in one of the best speeches by Shakespeare. This is Katelborn’s narration:

When Brutus was gone, the body of Caesar was brought out into the forum, all mangled with wounds. And Anthony made a funeral oration to the people in praise of Caesar. And finding them moved by his speech, he unfolded the bloody garment of Caesar, and showed them in how many places it was pierced, then the number of his wounds. He also told them at this time of Caesar’s will, in which it was found that he had left a considerable legacy of money to each one of the Roman citizens.<sup>119</sup>

The events in the dialogue are basically the same. It is obvious that what is missing from in this passage is the reference to Anthony’s powers of persuasion, and the extremely clever development of his oratory. On the other hand, this contrast gives the listener the chance to appreciate the oratory and judge for her/himself.

Cassius’ death is another example how narration and dialogue differ. In Plutarch’s *Lives*, Cassius dies by having his head cut off by a friend; in the radio version he offers his breast to this friend. This also refers to the way in which Shakespeare interpreted his source; he could change this detail so that the character construction of Cassius was consistent. Conversely, it is significant that in the Mercury stage version Cassius died at the

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<sup>118</sup> The recording of the rehearsal actually runs for sixty-six minutes.

<sup>119</sup> *The Mercury Theatre on the Air, ‘Julius Caesar,’ 11<sup>th</sup> September, 1938*

hands of an enemy. That the Mercury Theatre performed the three versions on stage and radio demonstrates, on the one hand, the way in which performance can change the text to acquire different meanings; and how the necessities of each medium – historical, narrative, dramatic – condition and change the actions and events of the story. The triple version of the same event also evidences that setting the ultimate truth of historical events is impossible.

The other way to express the relationship between *Julius Caesar* and the events of the time was having Kaltenborn as the narrator. He was the most popular news commentator in CBS, the network that also hosted the *Theatre on the Air*. More importantly, Kaltenborn was at the moment the journalist on charge to give and commentate on the breaking news on the Munich crisis – in which Nazi Germany annexed Czechoslovakia, the first invasive move towards World War Two – that was at its peak precisely in those days.<sup>120</sup> His voice was associated with the reports of the events of the crisis; so that the relationship of the *Mercury Caesar* with fascism became aural instead of visual.

The rehearsal allows us to appreciate some aspects of the way Welles directed for radio, though apparently he did it mainly through gestures. We can hear him say ‘Louder!’, give cues, and protest at the crowd when they fail to get to their cue on time. This recording is another example of Welles’ sense of rhythm and beat, and the importance he gave to their accuracy. He even tells the presenter the precise moment when to give the network identification message. This talent for rhythm he would bring to cinema in the form of editing, which he compared to the way a musical score is performed:

[While editing] I'm looking for a precise rhythm between one frame and the next. It's a question of ear. Editing is the moment when film involves the sense of hearing.<sup>121</sup>

In directing the performance it seems that Welles is more of an orchestra conductor than a theatre director. He is concerned with the volume and rhythm of the performance, how the story sounds, in the same way that he was concerned about the aesthetics of his theatre and later his cinema. The script becomes a score to be played in the way that Welles wanted. In a way, it is an intermedial device, a method from an aural medium (music) used in another; it also served as probing ground for his film editing later, also rendering his film editing an intermedial device.

Music also has a special role in this production, which used Marc Blitzstein's score for the theatre version. The score that the recording presents is the 'Fascist March' that is associated with Caesar; plus other musical cues that function as sound effects. In the theatre production, music took over the role of sound effects, when the recorded soundtrack failed. Welles could have probably recovered the big-city soundtrack that had been prepared then and there; controlling the volume was certainly possible in radio broadcast. But on the other hand, it would have also meant identifying the action as present-day; by now Welles seems determined enough to make the relationship evident but not blatant, so Blitzstein's score was used. The score is relatively simple and eclectic – trumpet, horn, percussion and Hammond organ<sup>122</sup> – , but it is also extremely effective. The brass evokes the military sound of the troops that follow Caesar, the sound of boots

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<sup>120</sup> On Kaltenborn, <http://www.otr.com/kaltenborn.html>; on the Munich Crisis and radio broadcast, <http://www.otr.com/munich.html>

<sup>121</sup> Interview with André Bazin, and Charles Bitsch, 1958, in Estrin, 43-4.. Also note this quote 'As far as I'm concerned, the ribbon of film is played like a musical score, and its performance is determined by the way it is edited. Just as one conductor interprets a musical phrase rubato, another will play it very dryly and academically, a third romantically, etc.' Ibid, 40-41.

walking in unison that we hear continuously during most of the first act completes the picture – thousands of soldiers passing by in a triumphant parade – so that the duration of the sound signified the size of the troops. The decisive brass that followed a strong binary rhythm later played a slow, melancholy reveille in Brutus' camp towards the end of the play, before the battle at Philippi—the instrumentation relates the sound to the army, but now an ominous feeling of defeat overhangs the spirit of Brutus' troops.

The same sparsity of sound effects and use of music was thus imported from the stage to the radio studio. In the case of the storms that break out as if announcing the disaster to come, we can hear the traditional metal plank that was shaken imitating the sound of thunder, which happens only once—right before Brutus' soliloquy in which he reasons why he should kill Caesar. The rest of the roaring of the storm is a low rolling percussion, that does not interfere with the dialogue, but provides with a continuous rumble an intriguing, suspenseful note to the preparations of the assassination.

Sound effects and music help creating the setting, visualizing the action, and providing a background to the dialogue that run through whole scenes. We hear Cassius trying to obtain Brutus' collaboration in the plot while the stomps of boots and bugles picture the triumphant troops passing. The sound of the crowd is also well-orchestrated, giving not only a sense of size of the crowd, but also of their mood—the hubbub rises as the mob is stirred after Caesar's death, their noise diminishes when they want to hear Brutus or Anthony speak, and then stir again. The way in which the voices die out, by diminishing the volume of the microphone, pictures their leaving the scene as if they were one. Cinna's death, on the other hand, is left out in this version—it lacked the visuals to

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<sup>122</sup> Houseman, 155.

achieve the same impact it had on stage, so it was substituted by this elaborate sounds of the crowd.

The radio version of *Julius Caesar* is one of Welles' most curious experiments, since it adapts a previous stage production,<sup>123</sup> as well as incorporating prose narration (Plutarch's source text) to the play, so that it combines the adaptation of two texts telling the same story. How the result is innovative and different from other Mercury broadcasts is not immediately evident, since what it seems to follow the format of First Person Singular. Of course, the first person narrator is not a participant in the action of the play, and the events he tells the audience do not always exactly correspond to what the dialogue indicates. In a way, the pseudo-Brechtian style of the stage translates into a subtly question-provoking performance on the radio, disguised as the broadcast version of an off-Broadway hit.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the ways in which radio drama was made on the times Orson Welles was a director in the medium. He became a radio star, thanks to his star role in *The Shadow*, and the notoriety of the *War of the Worlds* incident; his innovations in the medium, however, have not been conveniently highlighted before. The point of this review was establishing how the techniques and devices he used in his Mercury broadcasts differed from other shows, namely, *The Lux Radio Theatre*. What other programs did was basically a remediation of a dramatic reading, in front of an audience. Welles basic

innovation consisted on a remediation of literary sources, mainly novels, having the performance take place in a studio, and trying to reach the audience through a more intimate positioning of the drama in relation to the listener.

The differences between Welles' work and other dramatic adaptation programs were also based on the media model each was based on. While most other radio drama decided to perform dramatic texts on the radio as if it were a theatrical stage, and follow those conventions, the Mercury broadcasts based their scripts on the similarities between prose fiction and radio storytelling. On the other hand, the transitions from scene to scene, as well as the use of music, seem inspired in cinema editing and film soundtracks, which made up for the verbose dramatic text and gave the story dynamism. As Rattigan puts it, 'the [Mercury] productions had fast pacing, a sense of intimacy, and a mastery of the radio medium, which Welles could have only learned during his work in popular radio drama'.<sup>124</sup> The way in which Welles adapted the forms of other media into radio seemed closer to the conventions of radio drama that are used nowadays, whereas the blatant prevalence of the discursive framing of the *Lux* seems to be dated now.<sup>125</sup> It must be taken into account that these programs were thought of more as a parade of Hollywood stars and movie advertising than drama itself, whereas the Mercury prided itself on being theatre for radio. What Welles did was closer to 'radio *drama*', as the aim was producing a play specifically for the medium and its range of possibilities, rather than '*radio drama*', which was basically what his colleagues of the *Lux Radio Theatre* did. The intermedial status of Welles' work is

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<sup>123</sup> Welles directed and performed *Macbeth* for *The Columbia Workshop*, taking the title role. The recording is now lost, so we cannot tell whether he adapted the *Voodoo Macbeth* for radio, or did a completely new version.

<sup>124</sup> Rattigan: 47

<sup>125</sup> Of course there are sponsors nowadays on radio and TV programs (and even movies). Sponsorship, however, tends to be more veiled and integrated into the narrative, using devices such as product placement.

achieved through a sense of rhythm and pacing imported from music, as well as the adaptation of theatrical acting into radio. Welles' radio work was certainly before its time, as his theatre and film work were, seeking the immediacy that would feature the *fin-de-siècle* media.

Rick Altman summarised the way in which the rhythm of the storytelling enhances the idea of unity and pervasiveness of Welles' voice:

Welles [...] multiplies the number of program units, often reducing them to a single minute in length. Instead of returning to a sponsor at the end of each unit, Welles returns to the narrator, whose voice is usually transmitted at a slightly higher or lower level than the preceding dialogue. As a narrator, Welles thus assumes the position of sponsor and broadcasting instance alike. The very large number of loud events and spatial evocations that characterize Welles's productions may serve to enhance the narrative, but in doing so they fulfil the even more important function of introducing the narrator, of drawing attention to his mastery and his product.<sup>126</sup>

Thus, as it were, form and content come together to transmit the power that Welles was supposed to have over the show; he hosts the show thanks to his prestige –grown to enormous proportions after the *War of The Worlds* incident – and at the same time the quality and innovation of his product feedback to that prestige, closing the circle of the type of synergy that would lead him to stardom.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Altman, 14.

<sup>127</sup> Continuing with this digression, the same kind of dynamic would also seal his 'doom' as a director who could not complete his movies. In very general terms, producers would not trust him with money because of his fame, and without the money he would not be able to actually complete them.

### **CHAPTER 3: MACBETH (1948), INTERMEDIAL PRODUCTION METHODS**

The versions of *Macbeth* are an extremely interesting case in terms of intermediality, since it was the only text that Welles performed in the three media that concern this thesis. First he directed his *Voodoo Macbeth* for the FTP in 1936; he came back to the text for *The Columbia Workshop* the following year for a radio adaptation (28<sup>th</sup> February), with Edna Thomas reprising her role of Lady Macbeth. There is a unique recording dated 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1940 called *Macbeth Follies*, that seems to be a parody of the play.<sup>128</sup> There is no evidence of its ever having been broadcast, it could probably be just a private joke that he recorded with friends; it would be a rare instance of Welles' love for satire and parody. He revisited the play for the last time in 1947, when he directed and starred a stage production for the Utah Centennial Festival that served as rehearsal for his film, released the following year. Apart from this, he had also provided the illustrations for the play in *The Mercury Shakespeare* in 1941,<sup>129</sup> which in some cases advance some of the visuals of the stage and film versions.

#### *Voodoo Macbeth*

*Voodoo Macbeth* was Welles' debut as a director off-Broadway in 1936, with the Negro Theatre Unit in the FTP. The lead was played by Jack Carter, who had starred as Crown in *Porgy*; his Lady was Edna Thomas, an experienced actress who had worked in the Lafayette Players and in Broadway; Banquo was the retired boxer Canada Lee; Hecate

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<sup>128</sup> Jovicevich, 230. This recording is held at the Lily Library in Indiana Bloomington University.

<sup>129</sup> This was the new name of *Everybody's Shakespeare*; the volume was released in 1941 with the same introduction as a continuation of the series, the previous volumes were published again under the new name.

was played by RADA graduate Eric Burroughs, probably the only actor familiar with verse acting. The rest of the cast (more than one hundred people) were mostly amateur and not familiar with Shakespeare. Welles, instead of trying to instil the rhythm of the iambic pentameter into his actors, opted to let them speak their lines naturally, and let the music of the verses sound with a different tune. It was also a way to celebrate the tones of the negro dialect, in a company made up exclusively of black actors. This seems to contradict Houseman's intent of performing classical texts without reference to the colour of the skin; however it seems to be perfect for the concept of the play.<sup>130</sup>

This concept was setting the action in the court of Haitian Emperor Henri Christophe in the mid-nineteenth century. This would on the one hand justify the all-negro cast, on the other it would also bring about striking visuals and sound effects. It materialised in an exotic jungle-like backdrop to the castle, and a hundred authentic voodoo drummers from Sierra Leone, led by an authentic witch doctor. The aesthetics of the production were tremendously attractive, and probably contributed a good deal to its success.

The voodoo drummers acted as a sort of chorus to the witches, so that the spells of the weird sisters became voodoo chants. The percussion would punctuate and highlight the dialogue, its constant pervasiveness throughout the play would be a constant reminder of the supernatural forces at work. The figures of the three witches were minimised and blended with a collective magical force; most of their lines were reassigned to Hecate, the 'voodoo master', who was male and a main character in the play. His lines were not only taken from the witches' dialogue, but also from Macbeth himself. Hecate is the one who

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<sup>130</sup> Callow, 222. See note 36 on p. 40.

suggests Macbeth kill Macduff's family, and becomes Banquo's Third Murderer; he even guided Malcolm's troops at the end of the play to defeat Macbeth and fulfil his equivocating prophecies.

Welles' adaptation of the play established most of the guidelines of his subsequent versions. In fact, when it came to write the screenplay for the film, he adapted his *Voodoo Macbeth* script, and not the original text.<sup>131</sup> One of those running concepts was sorcery as the moving force of the play. The three versions (*Voodoo*, theatre version of 1947 and film) open with the witches casting the spell on Macbeth. Unlike the following versions, the end of *Voodoo* presented the witches and Hecate hailing Malcolm, as if they were also going to lead him to damnation. The last line of the play, in all three adaptations, is 'The charm's wound up', meaning that the magic work on Macbeth has been completed; in the *Voodoo* version, however, it means that the process starts again, since it is Hecate who delivers the line.

The fact that the three versions were based on the same adaptation would explain the similarities between them; there are further parallelisms between the *Voodoo Macbeth* and the theatre/film version apart from the text. The *Voodoo* production presented the basic layout of the décor for the following two versions (see [Illustration 3](#)). This layout presented the castle's inner court; a staircase on the right climbed to an elevated platform across the stage, below which there would be another gateway; to the left of the platform raised a tower. From this tower a gate opened on the left side, through which characters would enter into the castle. After Macbeth becomes king, his throne would be located on the left side, next to the tower, on an elevated platform, so that the king could dominate the court.

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<sup>131</sup> Jovicevich, 233

The set and costumes were designed by Nat Karson,<sup>132</sup> who provided the colourful backdrop and the costumes. The designs of the soldier's uniforms are of a dreamy blue; the final look of the costume is reminiscent of fairy-tale designs.<sup>133</sup> The court looks deceptively enchanting, while the voodoo drummers and witches don feathery caps and skirts that associate them to the jungle in the background, the jungle that will take over the castle at the end of the play. The visuals alone must have been particularly striking, an explosion of vivid colours revealing behind the curtain.

The colour coding of the production was the creation of 'a series of pictures in a chromatic ascension of color, each picture with its own series of climaxes, but essentially a part of an integral whole.'<sup>134</sup> The scenes where the light was more intense and bright were the ball (III.iv, a banquet in the original play) and then the sleepwalking scene and the last act, both illuminated in a 'misty haze'.<sup>135</sup> The lighting design – by Abe Feder in his first collaboration with Welles – intensified the action in the play, enhancing the colourful designs on stage. It provided the tone for each scene, literally and figuratively; an experiential synaesthesia that added up to the fair of the senses in the production.

Lights would also mark the rhythm of the narrative, as they made the transitions between scenes. One area of the stage would be lit to start the new scene, while other would fade out, thus avoiding pauses to change the scene. In this first professional experience as a director, Welles already shows his preference for dynamic transitions that would speed up

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<sup>132</sup> It is difficult to tell whether Welles did the initial designs and then Karson did the practical designs, or if it was all Karson's or Welles' work. Throughout his career, Welles tended to appropriate so much of his collaborators, and took part in so many aspects of the creative process, that it is difficult to tell how far his intervention went. I am sticking to the credits as listed in the FTP archives in the Library of Congress.

<sup>133</sup> Some of these designs and photographs of the production can be consulted online at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fedtp/ftmb1.html>

<sup>134</sup> Ned Karson, as quoted in Callow, 229

<sup>135</sup> Ned Karson, as quoted in Callow, 230

the narration. Avoiding pauses between scenes was also a means to immerse the audience in the play, avoiding the wait for the actors and props to be ready.

Richard France noted that this illumination technique seems to imitate film dissolve. It bestows the theatrical performance with a new kind of dynamism, and directs the attention of the gaze to different parts of the stage, as cameras would do. The transitions, however, were a bit more elaborate than that—sound overlaps would also spill the action of one scene into the next. France explains in more detail some of the intermedial features of *Voodoo Macbeth*:

His use of sound both on the stage (*Macbeth*) and in the movies (*Citizen Kane*) is distinctly his own. He borrowed from radio the technique of introducing music into a scene as a kind of emotional prelude to the scene ahead. The transition from the coronation ball to the jungle realm of the witches is bridged in this way. While the waltz music is playing (and, incidentally, establishing the play's period), the sound of the voodoo drums rises slowly, taking over only *after* the transition from one scene to the other has been completed.

This visual transformation has been compared to a film dissolve and used to illustrate the influence of motion picture techniques on Welles' theatre. The fact is, of course, that the "influence" went the other way around. As early as *Macbeth*, he was already exploring on the stage techniques that were later to be heralded as original and innovative in his films.<sup>136</sup>

This paragraph really puts the finger on the chicken-and-egg question regarding intermediality—was it theatre that influenced cinema, or the other way around? I cannot be as bold as France, who affirms that it was theatre that influenced cinema. What is true is that Welles must have certainly been 'exploring', as France puts it, these techniques. Dissolves are certainly more akin to cinema, as well as the kind of sound editing that this example refers to; Welles put those into practice in theatre first, since that was the first medium he worked in. As we saw in the chapter on his radio work, transitional sound

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<sup>136</sup> France (1977), 55-6

overlaps also constituted a trademark of his style. When he got to work on film, he had explored the device long enough to know new and effective ways to carry out both dissolves and sound overlaps. Intermediality, therefore, is also a method of exploration, and of enriching the different devices through practice in every medium.

*Voodoo Macbeth* already shows some other Wellesian trademarks that we have observed in other works. It was his first approach to the Scottish play, which he adapted to serve his own aesthetic intent. It was, as France calls it, a ‘tapestry of sight and sound,’<sup>137</sup> whose main purpose was making a sensorial impact on the audience, rather than a reflection on the text. It was an exercise of style that would mark the guidelines of his successive approaches to the original text.

The recording of Welles’ version of the play for *The Columbia Workshop* has been lost, unfortunately. The absence of this version leaves a gap in this section regarding radio drama, which will be compensated with a detailed analysis of the 1948 film soundtrack.

#### Theatre/Film *Macbeth* (1947-8)

In 1947 Welles mustered the necessary means to shoot his filmic version of *Macbeth*. The production was based on intermedial premises, involving the combination of theatre and radio into the making of the film. To begin with, a theatrical production of the play previous to the shooting would be the rehearsal of the cinematic version. After the theatrical run, the dialogue would be recorded, so that during production the actors would lip-synch to it. The principal cast would remain practically the same throughout the whole process; by the time they got to shoot they would probably know their role quite well. All

these were apparently time-saving strategies which would allow him to shoot the film in less than a month. He certainly was able to do it; the results of his strategies, however, were not always as satisfactory as expected.

The set of the theatre production followed the model seen above for *Voodoo Macbeth*—a tower on the left, a platform across the stage ending in stairs on the right and gateways under the platform and on the left. It seems that the idea of the two levels in the castle was already in Welles' mind when he prepared his illustrations for the 1941 edition of *Everybody's Shakespeare*. The illustration for Duncan's murder is very much reminiscent of what we see in the film, what the theatre production was like, and what probably happened in the same moment of *Voodoo Macbeth* (see [Illustration 4](#)). Macbeth comes from Duncan's room on the left, one dagger in each hand, while Lady Macbeth waits for him at the bottom of the stairs. The figures in the illustration cast very dark and marked shadows, as if lit with a single source. The dramatic light of the picture already hints at a certain gothic, or rather expressionist ambiance to the play. This is yet another example of the recurrence of concepts in Welles' oeuvre, which he revised in every reincarnation.

As Jovicevich narrates, the set of the film and the set of the theatre production were built at the same time in different locations. Thus the actors would already be familiar with their marks in the set, and Welles would only have to worry about planning the camera movements with those of the actors. There are two clear examples of the results of this strategy in the film—Duncan's murder and Malcolm persuading Macduff to join him against Macbeth. Both are shot in one single take – the first instance lasts a whole reel (ten

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<sup>137</sup> France (2001), 32

minutes) – with very smooth and calculated movements across the set. The camera does not turn around, it pans and tracks sideways and in and out, following the so-called 180° rule, so that the point of view respects the space as it were a theatre stage, remaining on the side where the stalls would be. Welles integrates theatre into film in several ways. He shoots movements that had been first designed for a theatre stage. Secondly, acting seems also favoured by the continuity of the shot, giving time for the mood to develop in a way that traditional filmmaking would not facilitate. These scenes also correspond with highly emotional moments in the play – the assassination of Duncan and the moment in which Macduff learns of the death of his family – which require an important emotional build-up on the part of the actor. Significantly, too, Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking scene is also shot in one take, a couple of close-ups of her attendant and the doctor are intercut in the final edit.

One of the reasons for the conjoined production of the text in theatre and then film is helping the actors and their performances, both by giving them time to explore the text, and then long onscreen time to build their performances. In fact, there were three cameras rolling simultaneously from different angles, so that the performances could develop without cuts, as they had been performed on stage, instead of cutting constantly.<sup>138</sup> He was trying to bring as much as he could from the stage production, and this unusual (and expensive) way of shooting, was probably a way to make the best of the acting, then choosing the best angle during postproduction.

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<sup>138</sup> Jovicevich, 279-80. She also refers to the way in which the battle scenes were shot—the cameramen carried light cameras, and were dressed up with the actors, blending in with the crowd in the middle of the battle. Unfortunately, the results of this are not do not show in the film, nor are as effective as the battle scenes in Welles’ later film *Chimes at Midnight*.

The action takes place inside the castle; only the scenes before Macbeth arrives back to Dunsinane, and some of the shots before the final assault take place outside of it.<sup>139</sup> This endows the story with a spatial unity that echoes theatrical space, the ‘empty space’ that Peter Brook denominated, which is unique and transforms through the events on stage and changes of props and lighting. The film explores different rooms of the castle, the court, its surroundings and the deep corridors within it. The feeling of unity of space is sustained, though it also seems distorted and illogical with every change of scene. For example, rock walls appear as a motive in the buildings; the yard of the castle transforms through light and the characters appearing in it—Duncan’s arrival, Macbeth’s drunk parading or triumphant Macduff.

In a way, the castle seems to be a reflection of Macbeth’s state of mind; the film gets darker and darker as the action advances, as he feels more tormented and desperate. The moment when the castle is most brightly illuminated is in Macbeth’s entrance as king, but soon gloom and darkness take over the scene. Bright lights come back when Macbeth dons his armour once more to face Malcolm’s troops, but the lights are blinding, and cast pitch black, ominous shadows.

The idea of Welles’ *Macbeth* representing the mind of the protagonist in spatial terms is not new—Anthony Davies already proposed that the space of the film presented, in visual terms, Macbeth’s state of mind.

The essence of the nightmare which pervades the film is evident in the a-logical and a-historical relationship of space and time. Dunsinane is, in fact, a papier-mâché agglomerate of walls, caverns and rough-hewn arches. In the context of the dream, however, its non-realism is no barrier to our acceptance of it as a rudimentary, rough-hewn architecture without style or form, and therefore without period. Its

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<sup>139</sup> It was all very likely shot in a studio set, not in on location, as Jovicevich affirms.

labyrinthine suggestion of *psychological space* is a visualization which isolates and confines man in the torrid secrecy of his own most abhorrent ambitions.<sup>140</sup>

The best example of how the space transforms according to Macbeth's state of mind occurs between the moment he learns about Banquo's death and the escape of young Fleance, and Macbeth's second encounter with the witches. The murderers tell him what has happened to Banquo and his son, and he reacts thus:

There comes my fit again: I had else been perfect;  
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now, I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears.<sup>141</sup>

In his characteristic metaphoric language, Macbeth expresses his feelings in physical and spatial terms. The relief of knowing about the death of his friend and his son means stability and strength, like that of the rock and stone that the castle is made of – even though it looks very much like papier-maché, as Davies remarks –, and freewheeling air, the open skies that we never get to see in the dusky, foggy environment of the film. Fear means to be enclosed, expressed with four adjectives, each more restraining than the previous. The oppression that Macbeth feels becomes visual in the film—the banquet in the following scene takes place in what seems to be an underground room, with dark walls and ceilings weighing over the guests. It is then and there when the ghost of Banquo, invisible to the rest, appears to him; the ghost is the only thing that inhabits the room in his mind, everybody else disappears in his vision.

The aftermath of the appearance of the ghost brings about in the most interesting transition in the film. After everybody has left, Macbeth decides to consult the witches

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<sup>140</sup> Davies, p.88

again. He gets up, and through a change of light he runs swiftly from what looked like the depths of the castle to the top of a hill—a walk of a few meters stands for a whole journey to meet the three witches, as it would on stage. Wind blows and lighting blasts while he invokes the weird sisters, in a highly theatrical way. We see the silhouette of trees and crosses in the background, as shadows projected by trees being flashed by lightning. Of course, in real life these shadows are impossible, the shadows are very evidently projected on a backdrop, which would be the theatrical convention that Welles is resorting to. Then we cut to a top-down shot of Macbeth, surrounded by darkness, listening to the voices of the witches. The camera approaches him very slowly, as the prophecies are being revealed, so that his figure transforms from looking small and submissive to a close-up of his face that reveals confidence and determination. The set-up of the scene, again, feels theatrical—the actor on stage under the spotlight. It is the classical setup for a soliloquy where the character is isolated from the rest of the world. The implications of the staging at this moment may suggest that Macbeth is hearing the witches' voices in his head; what is more, the prophecies could be the produce of his mind, 'full of scorpions,' what he really wants and needs to hear for the peace of his soul.

What is also remarkable is that, in the stage version, there was a cut between the banquet and the encounter with the witches, and the transition was different. Here is how Jovicevich describes it:

[After the court left] Lady Macbeth crossed to Macbeth in the silence and put an arm tenderly around his shoulder. He rose and moved resolutely to the door. [...] Macbeth then decided to go back to consult the witches and Lady Macbeth backed away fearfully.[...]

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<sup>141</sup> *Macbeth*, III.iv.20-24

[...] After a blackout, the light slowly went up downstage center, and the witches were discovered around a boiling caldron. Low wind, thunder, drum and tympany were heard as Macbeth approached them. After a blackout, Macbeth was left alone on the stage.<sup>142</sup>

The theatrical witches have a fleeting physical presence, asserting their intervention in the prophecies. Welles does not opt to use speakers in the theatre – as he had done in *Doctor Faustus* – but opts for a pause and then bringing in the witches. The filmic witches are also elusive, they slip between cuts; so do their theatre counterparts, not quite of this earth – the actors wore fluorescent masks curtained by woollen hairs – but still the audience could see them on stage. However, the relationship of Macbeth’s state of mind with the space he inhabits is more evident in the film version; it is, as it were, a filmic pathetic fallacy so strong that it transformed solid rocks.

The most remarkable experimental device in the film seems to be that the soundtrack was recorded before shooting the film, so that the actors would lip-synch to it. Welles had tried this before in *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), but was too difficult for the actors to perform to the soundtrack and the idea had to be dropped. Six years later, however, he tried again in *Macbeth*, with mixed results. For some reason, he thought that it would facilitate the mobility of the camera, since they would not have to worry about the microphones or their shadows being visible. Thus long takes would be easier to shoot, since the camera could move around the set more freely.<sup>143</sup> On top of this, the film set was built with the same plan as the theatre set – only bigger, I assume –, and most of the movements of the actors, according to Jovicevich’s comparison of the theatre production and the film,

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<sup>142</sup> Jovicevich, 265-6.

<sup>143</sup> Jovicevich, 277-8

were practically the same.<sup>144</sup> Thus the actors would be familiar with their marks, and it would be less likely that they made a mistake while shooting a long take. The aim of all these strategies was speeding up the production of the film, since Welles had twenty-one days to complete the shooting period.<sup>145</sup>

The result of recording the soundtrack first was that the film can be perfectly followed by listening only—it is, as it were, a film for blind people; or rather, a radio adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. It stands out on its own as a complete narrative, something which seems to be a trademark of Welles’ films (when he got the final cut). François Truffaut noted this phenomenon was common in Welles’ oeuvre:

His radio experience taught him never to leave a film in repose, to set up aural bridges from one scene to the next, making use of music as no one had before him, to capture or stimulate awareness, to play with the volume of voices at least as much as the words. Which is why—independently of the great visual pleasures they afford us—Orson Welles’ films also make marvelous radio broadcasts; I have verified this by recording all of them in cassettes, which I listen to in my bathroom with ever renewed delight.<sup>146</sup>

Several members of the cast had already worked with him in *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, such as Janet Nolan, who played Lady Macbeth, and Erskine Sanford, who played Duncan. What proves to be further confirmation of this is the carefulness with which Welles directed the soundtrack recording:

Orson developed an interesting way of keeping order for all of the different soundtrack attempts at reading specific lines. As he would often ask the actor to give dozens and dozens of readings of the same line, he would hand him a deck of cards. The actor, speaking into the microphone would read, for example: “Confusion now hath made his masterpiece,” and then take the top card of the deck and name it “Ten of diamonds.”

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<sup>144</sup> Jovicevich, 227-284.

<sup>145</sup> Jovicevich., 277-8.

<sup>146</sup> François Truffaut, in his Foreword to Bazin, 10.

The actor would then give a second reading, perhaps with a different pacing, emphasis, breathing: “Confusion now hath made his masterpiece,” adding, “Three of spades.” This procedure would continue until Orson had as many readings as he believed the actor was capable of rendering.<sup>147</sup>

Every single line was chosen very carefully, which in fact is a process alien to radio drama recording. Let us remember that the type of radio drama that Welles practiced was live broadcast, usually after one single rehearsal. What he was doing was actually recording each sound cue as if it were a shot in film, and then choosing the best lines, using yet another intermedial technique. I assume it was part of the time-saving process plan that Welles was following—it is faster to repeat the recording of a sound cue than to repeat a shot.

This meticulousness with which Welles chose the rendering of each line seems to contradict the opinion of the producers of the film, who objected that the dialogue was difficult to understand, and made Welles dub the film once finished. Thus the careful choice of intonations for every single line was lost in the commercial release in 1948. Fortunately, the film was restored in the 1980s and the original soundtrack was recovered—it turns out that the Scottish burr does not get in the way of understanding the dialogue as much as the degradation of the soundtrack.

The decision of pre-recording the soundtrack, however, brings about a series of problems, which Welles struggled with not too successfully in all occasions. The actors had to perform to the soundtrack, which resulted in awkward acting most of the time, as the voice was divorced from gestures. This mismatch between acting and delivery is apparently a clash of different acting conventions as well. While cinematic acting tends to be more

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<sup>147</sup> Frank Brady, *Citizen Welles: A Biography of Orson Welles*, 410, as quoted in Jovicevich, 278

contained and subtle, both in gestures and in the different qualities of the voice, radio acting is more exaggerated, as the voice must make all the characterisation that cannot be done visually. The radio voice can be even caricaturesque, the range of volume being wider than either cinema or theatre. It transmits a lot of information (e.g. age, attitude, state of mind) through the quality, rhythm and pauses as well, therefore the speed of delivery is somewhat slower than in cinema, so that each and every of the features can be appreciated. If the character(s) have an accent, as it is the case in this *Macbeth*, the actor must speak slower, so that the accent does not make the dialogue a strange incomprehensible jabber. Finally, the delivery is also marked by very exaggerated intonation, in order to be more expressive, so that it is almost unnaturally melodious.<sup>148</sup> If the body expression is to match this type of voice acting, the gestures look excessive and very affected, which makes the acting look unnatural and very theatrical. This is the case, for instance, of Jeanette Nolan's Lady Macbeth, who wrings spasmodically and moves her torso in wide arches in the 'Come you spirits',<sup>149</sup> scene and the murder of Duncan.<sup>150</sup> She was a seasoned radio actress, and her voice acting is very remarkable; but her gestures seem quite awkward. The opposite instance can be found in Macduff's portrayal—the expression is totally handed over to a fine voice acting, while the actor, Dan O'Herlihy, opts for a very stiff, gestureless body acting (he does not change his facial expression nor moves his hands). Neither of these instances seem to fit the 'standard' movie acting, and that is what makes it awkward to the spectator. Only Welles, who knows what he wants and how to do it, seems to be able to

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<sup>148</sup> Of course, these features of radio acting, like any other acting characteristics, can be bent and always have exceptions if the situation / character requires it. This is a listing of generalities to remark how each medium conditions the acting work.

<sup>149</sup> *Macbeth*, I.v.40-54

<sup>150</sup> In fact, her acting seems closer to that of silent cinema, where the opposite circumstance was given—there was image but not sound, so exaggerated gestures had to make up for the lack of dialogue.

blend radio voice work and theatrical gesture to provide his intermedial performance. It is a pity that not all of his actors were as talented, or that he was not able to explain to them his intentions.

On top of this, we must remember that the actors had originally played the same roles on stage, and in the same way they had learned to move around the space, they probably also brought some of the body language in theatre to their filmic performance. Theatrical acting also tends to exaggeration in the gesture, which can look grotesque on screen. Welles himself was prone to grandiloquent acting, but was aware of how to measure it for the screen; perhaps he should have tried to measure the acting of the rest of the cast as well.

The soundtrack also marks the rhythm of the editing, which does not flow as the Hollywood invisible editing that characterised the filmmaking of the time. It makes the juxtaposition of shots feel like a cubist painting, where adjacent sides do not always follow a natural order, though their relationship can be guessed. On the other hand, the continuity is provided by the soundtrack, which develops smoothly and very effectively –again, as it were radio drama. The soundtrack then contrasts with the irregular rhythm of the editing, making sound and images jar and produce a somewhat disturbing effect.

This effect, however, could be intended—the voice becomes disembodied, as in radio, and therefore ghostly and even supernatural. This seems to become a text such as *Macbeth*, which is pervaded by magic and eerie language. Welles seems to be re-hashing the concept of disembodied voices that we already saw in his theatrical *Faustus*, where loudspeakers around the theatre seemed to haunt the room. Sound, rather than visuals, becomes the key to bring the supernatural to the screen—there are no trick shots nor special effects, but an elaborate soundtrack editing.

The witches are perhaps one of the great achievements of the film. The first description in the play comes from Banquo, who says that they ‘look not like the inhabitants o’ the earth’<sup>151</sup>. Their cinematic unearthliness consists on making them black silhouettes against a whitish fog background. They don’t have a face—we see no eyes, no lips. The only close-ups we see of them are of their hands ‘winding up’ the charm on Macbeth. They are visually elusive, but aurally assertive. Their shrill, hoarse voices, which deliver the highly rhythmic lines, assail our ears with the continuous torrent of their spells and prophecies—it is a very clear instance of the jarring between the soundtrack and the editing. Their disembodied voices turn them into really spooky entities that can speak without apparent lips. It is their voice also that is their most powerful feature, not only because of the way in which they come across, but also because their charms become effective through language, and the tragedy cannot not take place unless Macbeth hears their forecasts. That their voices become their power seems to be a concept intended by Welles—the scene where Macbeth meets the witches for the second time does not include the apparitions, the visual part of the equivocating prophecies is omitted. We only see the protagonist’s face, surrounded by darkness, while the witches can only be heard. In cinema, not being able to see the body of someone who is talking implies (s)he is not quite in the diegesis of the film—the witches speak off-screen, as if they did not belong to the cinematic world either. They are beings from another medium, radio, haunting film through its soundtrack.

Sound is probably the most effective channel to recreate a haunting spirit, and Welles seems to be aware of this. Banquo’s ghost appears first in the soundtrack, his

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<sup>151</sup> *Macbeth*, I.iii.41

parting words announcing that he would not fail to the Macbeths' feast repeating again and again in Macbeth's mind while he roams through the caves of Dunsinane. Banquo's voice sounds otherworldly, wrapped in echoes. There can be a double reading of this—it could seem that the reverberation comes from the walls of the cave Macbeth is walking through, as if his obsession was filling the physical space he inhabits (when he actually talks there is not such echo). There is a crack on the wall through which water flows down, showing how deep inside the earth he is, and the cracks that will eventually make the tunnel collapse. If we only listen to the soundtrack, we cannot know if he is inside a cave or not, but clearly Banquo's voice takes over and haunts us as listeners too. Without seeing the spring flowing through a crack on the wall, the flow of water sounds rather like the witches' bubbling cauldron, perhaps a reminder of their influence on the events that are taking place.

The other instance where disembodiment is used as an expressive device are the soliloquies. Welles keeps all the hero's soliloquies in the film, but most of them are delivered as voice-off. Lady Macbeth's famous 'Come you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts'<sup>152</sup> is also heard in voice-over. For one thing, it makes sense that the lines were recorded beforehand, and then have the actors play to it, so that it synchronises the acting to the thoughts rather than the other way around. It also seems to be the natural way to translate the theatrical convention of the soliloquy into cinematic terms—the audience can hear the thoughts of the character on screen, but the actor does not utter the words. Welles, however, did not choose to have *all* the soliloquies in voice-over, and there seem to be very specific reasons when we look into which soliloquies are delivered as they would in theatre and which are not.

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<sup>152</sup> *Macbeth*, I.v.39-40

Macbeth's first aside is the best example of the two ways in which the theatrical convention translates either in cinematic terms or spoken out. Macbeth tells his fellow Scotsmen about the witches, and discloses part of his misgivings about the nature of their predictions:

This supernatural soliciting  
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,  
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.

He does not refrain from sharing the joy brought by the new title—a smile shines on his face as he delivers these lines. The rest of the aside is delivered in off-voice, following the cinematic convention. Macbeth is already thinking of murder, but of course he keeps the 'horrid image' to himself.

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
 Against the use of nature? Present fears  
 Are less than horrible imaginings:  
 My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
 Shakes so my single state of man that function  
 Is smothered in surmise, and nothing is  
 But what is not.<sup>153</sup>

This is a very particular rendering of the original text, where editors usually mark the entire passage as an aside. He is advancing that he is planning to kill Duncan, as he is 'yielding to the suggestion,' as well as the torment and wretchedness that will follow the deed. Macbeth must keep his murderous thoughts for himself; through this aside / voice-over he is foreshadowing later events to the audience. This second part of the passage gives

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<sup>153</sup> *Macbeth*, I.iii.131-143

coherence to the character profile, since it hints at the attitude and the weaknesses that will overwhelm the character right before Duncan's murder, and after Banquo's.

Lady Macbeth, after reading her husband's letter, also starts thinking about Duncan's murder, so that the whole 'Come you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here' is heard as a voice-over. This mode is not totally consistent with the speech, which is a summons to those 'spirits' that will make her bold enough to commit the crime, and therefore should be spoken aloud—her words are supposed to have magical powers, as the witches' charms. There is a pragmatic pattern, however, that seems to dictate which passages are off-voice and which are diegetic. Before murdering Duncan, Macbeth also summons natural forces in his thoughts:

Stars, hide your fires;  
Let not light see my black and deep desires.  
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.<sup>154</sup>

This is the last off-voice passage, until the end of the film, and the arch-famous 'Life's but a walking shadow',<sup>155</sup> sounds while whirling mist covers the screen. Macbeth's laments his wife's death, his strange ode to the futility of life reminds us formally of the witches' charms at the beginning of the film. His mind becomes a disembodied voice, detached from the space that so much oppresses him. Macbeth ends up where the witches wanted to bring him, a cliff with no bottom, and expresses himself cinematically in the same way.

The pattern that these soliloquies seem to follow is that those thoughts that cannot be outspoken are left as voice-off. Thus Macbeth and his Lady think of murder but do not

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<sup>154</sup> *Macbeth*, I.iv.51-4

<sup>155</sup> *Macbeth*, V.v.17-28

utter their thoughts at first. She is first to speak about killing to her husband, while he keeps the words to himself until the moment of Duncan's assassination. After this turning point, the soliloquies are played theatrically: Macbeth now expresses what is in his head—villainy has become outspoken in Macbeth's realm. Humane feelings are instead suppressed and silent, they cannot be expressed consciously (as Lady Macbeth's nightmare that has her washing her hands again and again). Thus Macbeth's famous soliloquy, 'Tomorrow, tomorrow and tomorrow'<sup>156</sup> goes back to off-voice, it is expressed somewhere outside the diegesis, because it does not belong to the realm of treason and serial murders.

This difference between off-voice and diegetic voice, however, can only be hinted at if we consider the soundtrack alone, as it were a radio program. A whispering voice can be the radio equivalent of the off-voice in film. The voice volume is slightly reduced when it is non-diegetic; when we listen to it without the images, we cannot be too sure of the change. Also, when voices are diegetic there is a slight echo, so that they sound 'in space.' The difference between both types is extremely subtle—the boundary between diegetic space and psychological space becomes blurred if we consider them in acoustic terms alone. In a way, Macbeth's mind seems to pervade his court aurally, he transforms the world around him, and the soundscape reflects his state of mind, as Davies' quote suggested.

Thus Dunsinane becomes the space where the hero is tormented by his own guilt, a winding location of horror where Macduff's children die and Lady Macbeth becomes insane; a place that eventually is only inhabited by him, who is so weak that Malcom's troops easily take over. This idea runs parallel both the visuals and in soundtrack—they do

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<sup>156</sup> *Macbeth*, V.v.17-28

not overlap but rather seem to be somewhat out of synch; however, what seems to be the main visual concept is reinforced by the construction of the aural narrative.

Therefore, even though the soundtrack and the images seem to be somewhat out of synch, they are thematically complementary. Welles achieves a remarkable effect in this process, though—the soundtrack, when listened to without the images, can acquire different meanings; some passages and sounds have a different function if we divorce them from the visuals. Together, they have a jarring effect that evokes the nightmarish tone of the film.

The use of silences and sound effects is, paradoxically, very eloquent in the film—they mark the tone and rhythm of the suspense. Sound effects help situating the action and embedding it in the setting—it is the slight echo in the voices that indicates that they are diegetic. For example, the sounds of thunderstorm rage all through the arrival of Duncan to Dunsinane, his murder and the aftermath. The special effects feature some wind to go with the sound, but there are no light effects for lightning nor rain—the soundtrack alone announces rain that does not fall; an unnatural state as those referred to right before the discovery of Duncan's body.

Sound effects and music fill the background constantly, except in very specific sequences, where silence screams out. For instance, during the banquet we do not hear the noise of steps, chairs or plates clinking. The room is full of people, but they are completely silent—again, another uncanny effect; or rather another indication that we are inside Macbeth's mind. He does not see anyone else but Banquo's ghost, perhaps that is why the rest of the room, though moving, is noiseless. If we listen to the scene without the images, we only know of the other guests by Lady Macbeth's address to them, otherwise they do not have aural entity. Another significant use of silence happens later in Macduff's reaction to the death of his family—silence speaks about his deep grief, and it is a fine delivery; it is

a pity that his body language does not accompany the voice, as he does not look shocked but rather indolent.

Of all the sound components of the film, perhaps the musical score, composed by Jaques Ibert, has the most interesting use. Music has a dual function, as part of the aural narrative and part of the overall filmic narrative. We saw how Welles used music in his radio programs not only as bridges between scenes, but rather in the way they were used in cinema—events and the people involved in them are characterised musically, the score usually playing in the background. Thus, for example, the witches' encounter with Banquo and Macbeth is marked by eerie music; the score also punctuates the distress and tragedy of Duncan's death. There the music functions in the same way in both the film as a whole and the soundtrack alone.

The really interesting moments are when the music plays on its own, without dialogue or sound effects over it. There are three occasions in which music takes over the soundtrack—Duncan's arrival at Dunsinane, Macbeth as King entering the court, and the preparation of Malcolm's troops to attack Macbeth. Each of these moments plays a musical score about the nature of each of the three kings—Duncan's music is a religious chant; Macbeth's is a comical melody to his drunkenness, and Malcolm's is a military march and fanfares. If we listen to the soundtrack alone, the music is announcing the entrance of each character, a sound peak as the fanfares announced the program in radio. The music is indeed giving the characterisation, but it is also preparing the listener for the upcoming scene. Thus the score works as a musical bridge between scenes, similar to the way it worked in radio drama. These musical interludes also divide the action into four acts, so that the whole soundtrack can be listened to directly as it were a radio program.

Some passages are told visually, but not aurally, and are missing if we only pay attention to the soundtrack. These are two of Welles' most significant additions in the text—the appearance of Cawdor and his execution, and the character of the Holy Man. We see the original Thane of Cawdor seized, his medal taken off and immediately passed on to Macbeth; then we see his execution as Macbeth meets his wife. The Holy Man's dialogue is made up of the lines of different characters in the play, and there is no indication whatsoever of his religious office in the dialogue—it is his looks that tell us of his 'holiness'. Either appearance does not change the text significantly, but only reinforce the parallelisms and oppositions in the story. By having Cawdor face to face with Macbeth, and cross-cutting his death with Macbeth's arrival to his castle, Welles is hinting at the parallelisms of both characters as traitors to Duncan, who are bound to die for their misdeeds. The Holy Man appears as the 'good' counterpart to the witches—his staff bears the holy cross vs. the forks of the weird sisters.<sup>157</sup> He polarises the forces of good and evil at work through the play; in a similar way the Old Man opposed Mephistophilis in *Doctor Faustus*,<sup>158</sup> with his death, like that of the Old Man, disappears the last opportunity of redemption for Macbeth. Cawdor and the Holy Man reinforce themes in the film, but what happens to them can only be told in images because they do not appear in the text, and the text belongs to the soundtrack.

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<sup>157</sup> Davies, 95

<sup>158</sup> Thanks to Diana Henderson for this hint.

## Conclusion

Though *Macbeth* is not totally successful as a film, it is probably a very interesting experiment. To begin with, the concepts appearing in it seem to have been haunting Welles for practically fifteen years, and he had put them into practice in different occasions—illustrations, two theatre productions, one radio broadcast and one film. *Macbeth* was the only text that Welles did in all the media he worked in as a director.<sup>159</sup> The recurrence of the Scottish play in different forms marks Welles' career, and epitomises his love for experimentation.

What is common in all the versions of the text is the use of intermediality as a means to appeal to the senses of the audience and to reproduce the supernatural powers pervading the play. Instead of special effects, Welles opts for aesthetic defiance to the conventions proper of the medium he is working in, to surprise the audience and create theatrical/filmic effects that enhance the magic of the text.

The use of theatre is significant in the filmic version as a means to make the production process more effective. It also endows the film with a strange unity of space, as well as time, imported from the stage. The theatrical origins of the film also surface in the acting, though less successfully—theatre acting, if not conveniently restrained, looks exaggerated and histrionic on the big screen, as is the case of Lady Macbeth. On top of this, the actors tried to match their radio voices with their body language, which augmented the awkwardness of the acting on screen.

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<sup>159</sup> There was a projected film of *Julius Caesar* that fell through in the early 40s; Houseman would later be the producer of Joseph Leo Mankiewicz's film in 1953.

The use of radio techniques bears more interesting results—to begin with a consistency of the soundtrack, that contrasts with the strange out-of-pacedness of the images. In spite of the difficulty to understand the text, the soundtrack as a whole interacts and complements the visuals of the film, completing the eeriness and the expansion of Macbeth's mind to his environment. Listening to the soundtrack independently from the images results in some passages acquiring new meanings and functions, which otherwise could not be proposed within the story.

Every decision in the movie is two-sided, bringing about surprising effects as well as some unsuccessful results. This *Macbeth* is, among other things, an experiment on film, bold enough to import methods from other media in a search for narrative innovation. Welles was also looking for more effective ways to shoot a film, but the results ended up being more a hindrance and less practical than he expected. In a way, Welles seems to have been the victim of the trick of the text, the 'equivocation' that appears again and again as a motive, by which every good thing entails a negative counterpart.

## CONCLUSION

I work, and I have worked, in 18.5 only because other filmmakers haven't used it. Film is like a colony and there are very few colonists. When America was wide open, with the Spanish at the Mexican border, the French in Canada, the Dutch in New York, you can be sure that the English would go to a place that was still unoccupied. It's not that I prefer the 18.5. I'm simply the only one who's explored its possibilities. I don't prefer improvisation. Quite simply, no one has worked with it for a long time. It's not a question of preference. I occupy positions that aren't occupied because, in this your medium of expression, it's a necessity. The first thing one must remember about film is that it is a young medium. And it is essential for every responsible artist to cultivate the ground that has been left fallow. If everyone worked with wide-angle lenses, I'd shoot all my films in 75mm, because I believe very strongly in the possibilities of the 75mm. If other artist were extremely baroque, I'd be more classical than you can imagine. I don't do this out of a spirit of contradiction, I don't want to go counter to what has been done; I just want to occupy an unoccupied terrain and work there.<sup>160</sup>

This is Orson Welles in the same 1958 interview where he declared his love for experimentation. He describes his working process as a search for what others have not or do not do, his aim being the expansion and enrichment of film, a 'young medium' still today. This attitude seems to be applicable to what he did in radio and theatre too—he did Shakespeare in Broadway when other American directors were particularly careful to step in what was considered the field of British thespians; he proposed an alternative model of radio drama by turning to novels as model and source for *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, when most other radio drama of the time performed abridged versions of plays and films.

Welles space for experimentation seems also to belong to the blurred boundaries and common channels of communication between media, looking for a state of intermediality. Innovation results from the exploration of media interrelationships, looking at performance through media with a wider lens, trying to comprehend as many devices as

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<sup>160</sup> Interview with André Bazin, and Charles Bitsch, 1958, in Estrin, 42-43

possible. These relationships go back and forth, with the remediation of devices of previous media into new ones (e.g. first person narration into radio) or newer media into older ones (e.g. use of cinematic dissolves in the theatre), resulting in a constant revitalisation of devices and expansion of the communicative possibilities of the target medium. At the same time, these innovative devices are applied in the performance of classic texts, Shakespeare in this case, which is also a way of refreshing and invigorating the performance history of these plays.

The feedback becomes reciprocal when the same device is used repeatedly through media. For instance, Welles started using dissolves in theatre, making scene divisions with fades to and from black; by the time he got to make *Citizen Kane*, he had explored the device long enough to think of spectacular dissolves, disclosing partial areas of the frame at a time. A similar case can be made with disembodied sound—after using loudspeakers in the theatre, he played around with pre-recorded sound on film, though the extent to which the results were really intended cannot be confirmed.

There are a series of common methods that these works seem to follow to acquire their intermedial status. The main and obvious one is to import the devices of common channels between media—for example, sound devices are usually taken from radio into the other two media, whereas in the visuals theatre imitates the layout and optical transitions of cinema with lights, and cinema recreates the feeling of unified space and continuous timing of theatre with long takes. The most interesting method, however, seems to be applying the conventions of one medium into another. This is particularly evident in the crossover of acting conventions, from theatre into the other two media—the Mercury players went from the stage to the studio, and the cast of *Macbeth* reprised their theatre roles for the camera. The import of acting conventions, however, also proves to be the most problematic too—

theatre acting seems to suit the exaggeration radio needs to get the performance across; on the other hand, if it is not measured it can fill the screen with unbelievable artificiality, as in the case of the filmic *Macbeth*. In other cases, importing conventions can bring refreshing results, such as imitating the look and feel of newsreels and news photography in the theatre production of *Caesar*.

Another intermedial import that can bring problematic results is mixing the production methods of one medium into another. Again, *Macbeth* the film exemplifies the best and the worst of this tactic. Making a theatre production into the rehearsal of the film so that the shooting period could be speeded up sounded like a good idea, specially since it actually helped filming in only twenty-one days; nevertheless, it resulted in the awkward crossover of acting conventions I just mentioned. Also, recording the dialogue before shooting did not turn out as Welles had expected, producing an interesting effect in contrast with the images, and adding up to the awkwardness of the acting.

Another common trait observable in the works that I have been dealing with, apart from intermedial features, is the constant aim to reach out to the audience, not merely getting across to them but striking, surprising the spectators with something unexpected, thrilling, or daring. These works demand the attention of the audience, they want to immerse the spectator in their storytelling and not let go, looking for the immediacy that I referred to back in the introduction. Thus, for instance, the lack of intermissions in the theatrical productions, favoured by the length of most of the adaptations (less than an hour and a half, the standard duration of a movie in the 1930s), provided a continuous experience which propitiated the immersion into the narrative.

In the same way, theatrical traits in cinema – such as long takes, unity of space or theatrical acting – can also be considered a way of filling the gap between the original

Shakespearean text and film. After all, the literary language of the play and the conventions it brings along may result unbearably artificial on screen, augmenting the exaggerated gestures and diction of theatre till they overflow the screen. The intermedial devices help naturalise what would appear too artificial on screen, by evoking the conventions of the source medium—the filmmaking reminds us of theatre, therefore if the acting is somewhat theatrical it is just keeping up with the film style.

Welles' radio drama also looks for 'intimacy' with the listener, by evoking the process of oral retelling, in the form of first person narration. He explained this in his presentation of *The Mercury Theatre On The Air*.

The added appeal of a narrator introduced as a story-teller brings more intimacy to the dramatic broadcast. [...] When a fellow leans back in his chair and begins: 'Now, this is how it happened'—the listener feels that the narrator is taking him into his confidence, he begins to take a personal interest in the outcome.<sup>161</sup>

This closeness between listener and narrator seems to be yet another way to look for immediacy, and yet, in all these examples, the way to achieve that immediacy has been resorting to intermedial devices, merging media in order to minimise the distance between the message and the receiver. This paradox had already been pointed out by Bolter and Grushin, what they call 'the double logic of remediation' in new media<sup>162</sup>: 'Our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them.'<sup>163</sup>. In order to give the impression of vividness, of 'being there', there is the need of supplementary effect to enhance the communicative function—Bolter and Grushin exemplify this referring, for instance, to digital effects combined with live action in order to produce a continuous sequence; news

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<sup>161</sup> Interview with Richard O'Brien, 1938, in Estrin, 4-5

television networks give information through the presenter, images, superimposed text plus a rolling text ticker in order to provide as much information and as promptly as possible.<sup>164</sup>

However, the devices imported do not always successfully blend in the target medium, which results in the loss of immediacy, and in an unintended call of attention to the medium and its devices. We have seen several examples of this in the previous chapters. In the theatre version of *Caesar*, the recorded soundtrack interfered with the dialogue, so it had to be discarded. A more remarkable case would be, yet again, the film version of *Macbeth*, where the aural and visual narratives are coherent independently of each other, while together they make a jarring, unsettling filmic narrative. Immediacy is not achieved; the devices get in the way and become an interference in the narration, apart from calling attention to themselves.

The search for aesthetically impressive devices also highlighted the form over the content of these works, which has earned Welles the label of ‘formalist’ in repeated occasions. Welles himself, by confessing his admiration for the craft, of the ‘human function’<sup>165</sup> also displayed a preference to elaborate on the aesthetics rather than the ideas. His adaptations centred on a core concept, perhaps avoiding the ideological complexity of the Shakespearean text. Nevertheless, Welles is not the only director that could be accused of that, the exception is usually finding versions that can actually bring forth that complexity.

As we have seen in every case dealt with in this thesis, however, formal devices were at the service of the concept of the play and the adaptation. They are certainly so

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<sup>162</sup> See the introduction in Bolter and Grusin, pp. 3-15.

<sup>163</sup> Bolter and Grusin, p. 5

<sup>164</sup> Bolter and Grusin, p. 6-9.

<sup>165</sup> See quote on pp. 11-12

spectacular at times that they may take over the content of the play, but that does not mean that it was minimised, or that it is merely at the service of the form. Thus the magical tricks and disembodied sound of *Faustus* were meant to create a supernatural presentation in accord with the reading of the text; both the theatre and the radio versions of *Caesar* related to pre-World War Two events through their aesthetics; the radio *Hamlet* was a celebration of theatre both by the passages selected and the acting style; the filmic *Macbeth* centres on the protagonist's state of mind as magical forces push him into tragedy. Thus form and content are unified, in order to present a solid, clear concept applied to the different adaptations of these texts. Instead of looking at the simplification of topics of the original play, what this thesis has sought to prove is the complexity of the manner they are displayed and how they are developed at different communicative levels in every work.

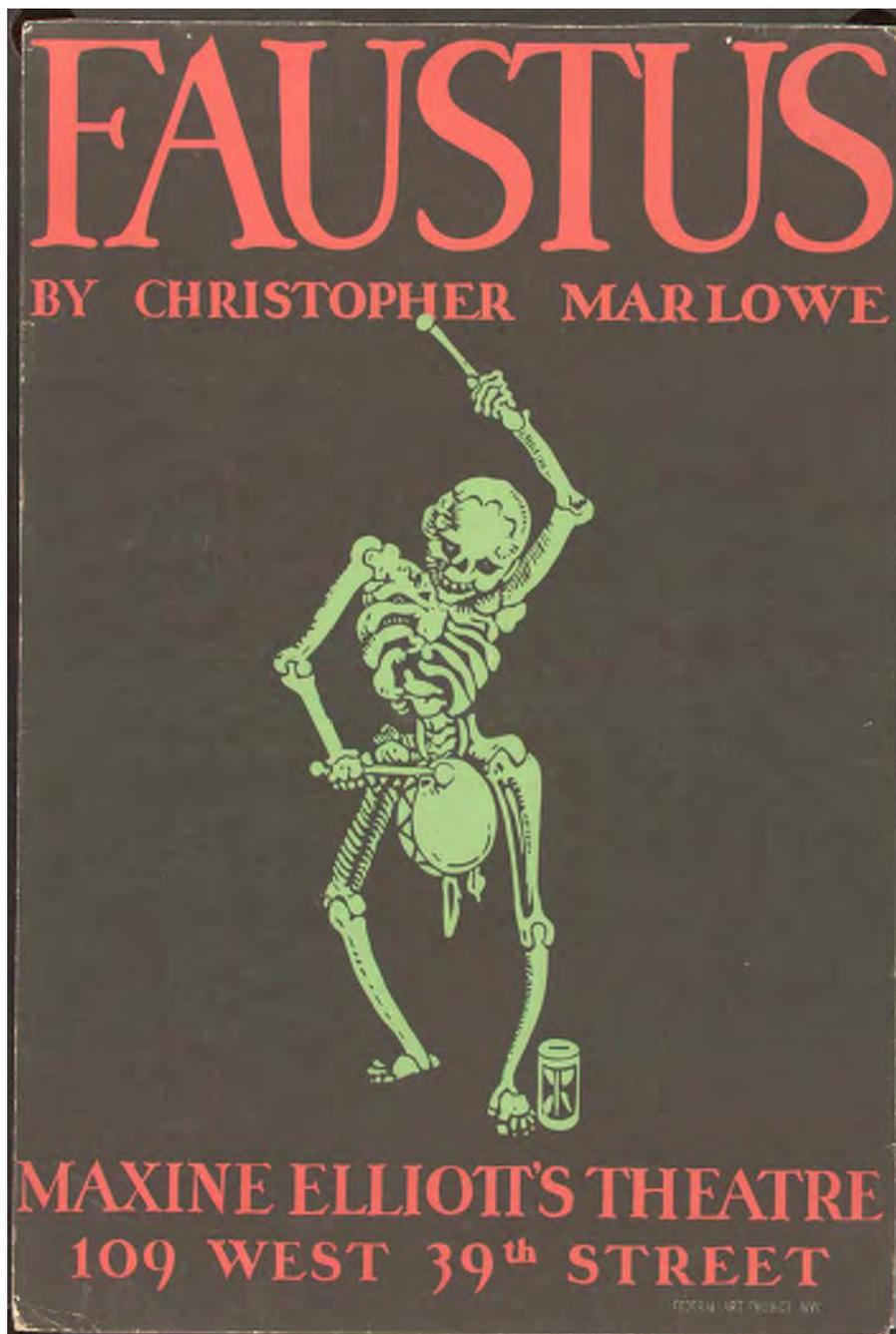
The method of this thesis has tried to bring together the best of two opposing stances in the studies of Orson Welles' work—on the one hand, auteurist criticism, and on the other the semiotic approach. Orson Welles becomes the denominator of all these works because of his directorial role; we have found that, indeed, there are recurring features that his personality brings to every production. This does not mean that he was the only 'author', since his collaborators were also recurrent in his works, and they surely must have contributed substantially to the final product. Welles, therefore, stands as the visible figure in a collaborative work, though I have given the due credit to others whenever it was possible. My intent has been to get the best of both worlds, auteurism and semiotics, in as practical and coherent way as possible.

Thus I have tried to step off the beaten track of media studies, by giving a comparative view through media, as well as by tackling some works that have not been dealt with before, namely his radio versions of *Hamlet* and *Caesar*. The comparative

approach is the only way to give evidence of the intermedial features in the works studied; it also propitiates a comprehensive vision of the relationships between techniques and methods used in them. A thesis of this kind implies an extensive research across a multiplicity of disciplines, which would make the area of study more appropriate for a dissertation. I have tried to palliate this by limiting the time period I was dealing with from 1937 to 1948, opening up the field of comparative exploration to the rest of Welles' works. What I have proposed here is an example of how a body of works, involving a common topic or personality, can be dealt with across media. My hope is that it caters for other studies revising this method, and encourages the re-vision of media texts in a comparative way.



## APPENDIX A – ILLUSTRATIONS



**Illustration 1: Poster for Faustus, January 1937**

Source: Library of Congress, Finding Aid Box 1142  
<http://memory.loc.gov/music/ftp/fprpst/1142/11420002/0001v.jpg>





**Illustration 2: Orson Welles as Faustus**

Source: The Library Of Congress Website, (Findind Aid Box 101)

<http://memory.loc.gov/music/ftp/fprpt/1001/10010005/0058v.jpg>





**Illustration 3: The Voodoo Macbeth stage**

Source: Library of Congress, Finding Aid Box 1179  
<http://memory.loc.gov/music/ftp/fprph/1179/11790088/0001v.jpg>





**Illustration 4: Macbeth descending the stairs**

Source: Roger Hill and Orson Welles, *The Mercury Shakespeare: Macbeth*, p.13.



**APPENDIX B – THEATRE PRODUCTIONS CREDITS**“Voodoo” Macbeth<sup>166</sup>

Arranged and Staged by Orson Welles

Costumes and Settings by Nat Karson

Lighting by Abe Feder

Cast

Duncan	Service Bell
Malcolm	Wardell Saunderrs
Macduff	Maurice Ellis
Banquo	Canada Lee
Macbeth	Jack Carter
Ross	Frank David
Lennox	Thomas Anderson
Siward	Archie Savage
First Murderer	George Nixon
Second Murderer	Kenneth Renwick
The Doctor	Lawrence Chenault
The Priest	Al Watts
First Messenger	Philandre Thomas
Second Messenger	Hervert Glynn
The Porter	J. Lewis Johnson
Seyton	Larrie Lauria
A Lord	Charles Collins
First Captain	Lisle Grendige
Second Captain	Ollie Simmons
First Chamberlain	WM. Cumberbatch
Second Chamberlain	Benny Tattnell
First Court Attendant	Chauncey Worrell
Second Court Attendant	George Thomas
First Page Boy	Sarah Turner
Second Page Boy	Beryle Banfield
Lady Macduff	Marnie Young
Lady Macbeth	Edna Thomas
The Duchess	Alma Dickson
The Nurse	Virginia Girvin
Young Macduff	Bertran Holmes
Daughter to Macduff	Wanda Macy
Fleance	Carl Crawford

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<sup>166</sup> From The Library of Congress online archives, Production Notebook of Macbeth, Finding Aid Box 1035, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=ftp&fileName=fprpt/1035/10350007/ftp10350007page.db&recNum=3>

Hecate	Eric Burroughs
First Witch	Wilhemina Williams
Second Witch	Josephine Williams
Third Witch	Zola King
Witch Doctor	Abdul
Court Ladies	Helen Carter, Carolyn Crosby, Evelyn Davis, Ethel Drayton, Helen Brown, Aurelia Lawson, Margaret Howard, Olive Wannamake, Evelyn Shikpworth, Aslean Lynch
Court Gentlemen	Herbert Glynn, Jose Miralda, Jimmy Wright, Otis Morse, Merritt Smith, Walter Brogsdale, Harry George Grant
Soldiers	Benny Tattnall, Herman Patton, Ernest Brown, Ivan Levis, Richard Ming, George Spelvin, Albert Patrick, Chauncey Worrell, Albert McCoy, William Clayton Jr., Allen Williams, William Cumberbatch, Henry J. Williams, Amos Laing, Louis Gilbert, Theodore Howard, Leonardo Barros, Ollie Simmons, Ernest Brown, Merrit Smith, Harry George Grant, Herbert Glynn, Jimmy Wright, George Thomas, Frederich Gibson
Witch Women	Juanita Baker, Beryle Banfield, Sybil Moore, Nancy Hunt, Ollie Burgoyne, Jaqueline Ghant Martin, Fannie Suber, Ethel Millner, Dorothy Jones
Witch Men	Archie Savage, Charles Hill, Leonardo Barros, Howard Taylor, Amos Laing, Allen Williams, Ollie Simmons, Theodore Howard
Cripples	Clyde Gooden, Clarence Potter, Milton Lacey, Hudson Prince, Theodore Howard
Voodoo Women	Lena Hasley, Jean Cutley, Effie McDowell, Irene Ellington, Marguerite Perry, Essie Frierson, Ella Emanuel, Ethel Drayton, Evelyn Davis
Voodoo Men	Ernest Brown, Howard Taylor, Henry J. Williams, Louis Gilbert, William Clayton Jr., Albert McCoy, Merritt Smith, Richard Ming
Drummers	James Cabon, James Martha, Jay Daniel

Musical Arrangements under the direction of Virgil Thompson

Voodoo Chants and Dances under the direction of Asadata Dafora Horton

Managing Producer John Houseman

Casting Director Edward G. Perry

Musical Director Joe Jordan

Stage Manager Leroy Willis

Assistant Stage Managers Edward Dudley Jr., Gordon Roberts

Doctor Faustus<sup>167</sup>

Production by Orson Welles

Music by Paul Bowles

Lighting by Abe Feder

## Cast

The Pope	Charles Peyton
Cardinal of Lorain	J. Headley
Faustus	Orson Welles
Valded. (Friend to Faustus)	Bernard Savage
Cornelius (Friend to Faustus)	Myron Paulson
Wagner (Servant to Faustus)	Arthur Spencer
First Scholar	William Hitch
Second Scholar	Joseph Wooll
Third Scholar	Huntly Weston
Clown	Harry McKee
Robin	Hiram Sheriman
Ralph	Wallace Action
Vinter	George Smithfield
Old Man	George Duthie
First Friar	Edward Hemmer
Mephistophilis	Jack Carter
Good Angel	Natalie Harris
Evil Angel	Blanche Collins
Spirit in the shape of Helen of Troy	Paula Laurence
Pride	Elizabeth Malone
Covetousness	Jane Hale
Wrath	Helena Rapport
Envy	Cora Burlar
Gluttony	Della Ford
Sloth	Nina Salama
Lechery	Lee Molnar
Baiol	Archie Savage
Belcher	Clarence Yates
Friars	Richie White, Jack Mealy, Warren Goddard, Robert Hopkins, Bernard Lewis, Peter Barbier, Henry Ruselle, David Riggs, Henry Howard, Louus

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<sup>167</sup> From The Library of Congress online archives, Production Notebook of *Doctor Faustus*, Finding Aid Box 101 <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=ftp&fileName=fprpt/1001/10010005/ftp10010005page.db&recNum=6>

Pennywell, Harry Singer, Solomon Goldstein, Walter Palm, Pell Dentler, Frank Kelly, Charles Uday

Puppets by .	Bill Baird
Masks by	James Cochrane
Designs by	Kirk Clover
Orchestra conducted by	Jacques Gottlieb
Managing Producer	John Houseman

*Caesar* (1937)<sup>168</sup>

Adapted and Directed by Orson Welles

Music by Marc Blitzstein

Sets and Lighting by Samuel Leve

Cast

Julius Caesar	Joseph Holland
Marcus Antonius	George Coulouris
Publius	Joseph Cotten
Marcus Brutus	Orson Welles
Cassius	Martin Gabel
Casca	Hiram Sherman
Trebonius	John A. Willard
Ligarius	Grover Burgess
Decius Brutus	John Hoyt
Metellus Cimber	Stefan Schnabel
Cinna	Elliot Reid
Flavius	William Mowry
Marullus	William Alland
Artemidorus	George Duthrie
Cinna the Poet	Norman Lloyd
Lucius	Arthur Anderson
Calphurnia	Evelyn Allen
Portia	Muriel Brassler

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<sup>168</sup> From France (2001), 108

*Macbeth (1947)*<sup>169</sup>

A Mercury Production / Utah Centennial Commission and University Theatre in collaboration with the American National Theatre and Academy

Production and Adaptation from the William Shakespeare play by Orson Welles

Set Design by Robert Shapiro

Costumes Supervisor Riki Grismam

Executive Director Richard Wilson

Production Coordinator Emerson Crocker

Cast

Macbeth	Orson Welles
Lady Macbeth	Jeanette Nolan
Macduff	Dan O'Herlihy
Duncan	Erskine Sanford
Malcolm	Roddy McDowall
Banquo	Edgar Barrier
Ross	Roy Gibson
First Murderer	Brainerd Duffield
Second Murderer	William Alland
First Witch	Brainerd Duffield
Second Witch	Sereta Jones
Third Witch	Virginia McGrew
Holy Man	John McIntire
Fleance	Robert Russon
Porter	Ross Ramsey
Seyton	Keene Curtis
Lennox	Joseph Bywater
Lady Macduff	Joyce Barlow
Son to Macduff	John Covey
Daughter to Macduff	Georgiana Lees
Doctor	Ross Dalton
Gentlewoman	Georgiana T. Lees
Messenger	William Campbell
Old Siward	John Nicolaysen
Young Siward	Arch Heughly

Thanes, Warriors, Messengers, Murderers and Attendants:

Paul LaLonde, Leo Dalton, Robert Sax, Darwin Reed, John Hummer, Paul Droubay, Harold Collipriest, Cyrus Nielson Jr., James D. Muir, John Hamilin, Eyston Ramsey, Clifton Davis, Stan Bramwell, Roland Whitehead, Howard Anderson, Don Christianson,

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<sup>169</sup> From Jovicevic, 917 and Rosenbaum, ed. 401



## APPENDIX C – RADIO PROGRAMS LISTING<sup>170</sup>

### The Columbia Workshop: First Series (Orson Welles)<sup>171</sup>

19 <sup>th</sup> September, 1936	"Hamlet" (Directed by Welles)
14 <sup>th</sup> November, 1936	"Hamlet Part 2" (Directed by Welles)
28 <sup>th</sup> February, 1937	"Macbeth" (Directed by Welles)
11 <sup>th</sup> April, 1937	"The Fall Of The City" (Directed by Irving Reis)
15 <sup>th</sup> August, 1937	"Escape Part 1"
22 <sup>nd</sup> August, 1937	"Escape Part 2"

### The Mercury Theatre On the Air<sup>172</sup> Summer Series (on Mondays)

11 <sup>th</sup> July, 1938	"Dracula"
18 <sup>th</sup> Jul y, 1938	"Treasure Island"
25 <sup>th</sup> July, 1938	"A Tale Of Two Cities"
1 <sup>st</sup> August, 1938	"The Thirty Nine Steps"
8 <sup>th</sup> August, 1938	Three Short Stories: "I'm A Fool", "Open Window", "My Little Boy"
15 <sup>th</sup> August, 1938	"Abraham Lincoln"
22 <sup>nd</sup> August, 1938	"The Affairs of Anatole"
29 <sup>th</sup> August, 1938	"The Count of Monte Cristo"
5 <sup>th</sup> September, 1938	"The Man Who Was Thursday"

### Fall Series (on Sundays)

11 <sup>th</sup> September, 1938	"Julius Caesar"
18 <sup>th</sup> September, 1938	"Jane Eyre"
25 <sup>th</sup> September, 1938	"Immortal Sherlock Holmes"
2 <sup>nd</sup> October, 1938	"Oliver Twist"
9 <sup>th</sup> October, 1938	"Hell On Ice"
16 <sup>th</sup> October, 1938	"Seventeen"
23 <sup>rd</sup> October, 1938	"Around The World In Eighty Days"
30 <sup>th</sup> October, 1938	"The War of the Worlds"
6 <sup>th</sup> November, 1938	Two Stories: "Heart of Darkness"/"Life with Father" <sup>173</sup>
13 <sup>th</sup> November, 1938	"Passenger To Bali"
20 <sup>th</sup> November, 1938	"The Pickwick Papers"

<sup>170</sup> The main sources for these listings are the logs that can be found in the Internet. I consider these reliable sources, since the researchers are specialised in the field, and revise the accuracy these documents periodically—check the links for the latest revision. For more date on production listings, see Rosenbaum's chronology in Bodganovich and Welles.

<sup>171</sup> From <http://otrsite.com/logs/logc1015.htm>. Rosenbaum's chronology gives dates 'Hamlet' roughly in 1935, and 'Macbeth' at a later date (2<sup>nd</sup> May 1937); the other dates coincide.

<sup>172</sup> From <http://www.old-time.com/otrlogs2/mta.log.txt>

<sup>173</sup> Rosenbaum also includes "The Gift of the Magi" in this program, and Callow too, however the actual recording does not include it.

27<sup>th</sup> November, 1938 "Clarence"  
 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1938 "The Bridge of San Luis Rey"

The Campbell Playhouse<sup>174</sup>

On Fridays

9<sup>th</sup> December, 1938 "Rebecca"  
 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1938 "Call It A Day"  
 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1938 "A Christmas Carol"  
 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1938 "A Farewell To Arms"  
 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1939 "Counselor At Law"  
 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1939 "Mutiny on the Bounty"  
 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1939 "The Chicken Wagon Family"  
 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1939 "I Lost My Girlish Laughter"  
 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1939 "Arrowsmith"  
 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1939 "The Green Goddess"  
 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1939 "Burlesque"  
 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1939 "State Fair"  
 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1939 "Royal Regiment"  
 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1939 "The Glass Key"  
 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1939 "Beau Geste"  
 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1939 "Twentieth Century"  
 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1939 "Show Boat"  
 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1939 "Les Miserables"  
 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1939 "The Patriot"  
 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1939 "Private Lives"  
 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1939 "Black Daniel"  
 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1939 "Wickford Point"  
 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1939 "Our Town"  
 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1939 "The Bad Man"  
 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1939 "American Cavalcade" (subtitled "Things We Have")  
 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1939 "Victoria Regina"

On Sundays

10<sup>th</sup> September, 1939 "Peter Ibbetson"  
 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1939 "Ah, Wilderness"  
 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1939 "What Every Woman Knows"  
 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1939 "The Count Of Monte Cristo"  
 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1939 "Algiers"  
 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1939 "The Escape"  
 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1939 "Lilliom"  
 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1939 "The Magnificent Ambersons"

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<sup>174</sup> From [http://www.old-time.com/otrlogs2/cp\\_log.txt](http://www.old-time.com/otrlogs2/cp_log.txt)

5 <sup>th</sup> November, 1939	"The Hurricane"
12 <sup>th</sup> November, 1939	"The Murder Of Roger Ackroyd"
19 <sup>th</sup> November, 1939	"The Garden of Allah"
26 <sup>th</sup> November, 1939	"Dodsworth"
3 <sup>rd</sup> December, 1939	"Lost Horizon"
10 <sup>th</sup> December, 1939	"Vanessa"
17 <sup>th</sup> December, 1939	"There's Always A Woman"
24 <sup>th</sup> December, 1939	"A Christmas Carol"
31 <sup>st</sup> December, 1939	"Come And Get It"
7 <sup>th</sup> January, 1940	"Vanity Fair"
14 <sup>th</sup> January, 1940	"Theodora Goes Wild"
21 <sup>st</sup> January, 1940	"The Citadel"
28 <sup>th</sup> January, 1940	"It Happened One Night"
4 <sup>th</sup> February, 1940	"The Broome Stages"
11 <sup>th</sup> February, 1940	"Mr. Deeds Goes to Town"
18 <sup>th</sup> February, 1940	"Dinner at Eight"
25 <sup>th</sup> February, 1940	"Only Angels Have Wings"
3 <sup>rd</sup> March, 1940	"Rabble In Arms"
10 <sup>th</sup> March, 1940	"Craig's Wife"
17 <sup>th</sup> March, 1940	"Huckleberry Finn"
24 <sup>th</sup> March, 1940	"June Moon"
31 <sup>st</sup> March, 1940	"Jane Eyre"

**APPENDIX D -- *MACBETH* (1948) FILM CAST AND CREW<sup>175</sup>**

Produced and Directed by	Orson Welles
Written by	William Shakespeare

**Cast**

Macbeth	Orson Welles
Lady Macbeth	Jeanette Nolan
Macduff	Dan O'Herlihy
Duncan	Erskine Sanford
Malcolm	Roddy McDowall
Banquo	Edgar Barrier
Ross	John Dierkes
Lennox	Keene Curtis
First Murderer	Brainerd Duffield
Second Murderer	William Alland
First Witch	Brainerd Duffield
Second Witch	Peggy Weber
Third Witch	Lurene Tuttle
Holy Man	Alan Napier
Fleance	Jerry Farber
Porter	Gus Schilling
Lady Macduff	Peggy Weber
Son to Macduff	Christopher Welles
Doctor	Morgan Farley
Gentlewoman	Lurene Tuttle
Messenger	William Campbell
Seyton	George Chirello

Executive Producer	Charles K. Feldman
Associate Producer	Richard Wilson
Music Composed By	Jacques Ibert
Cinematography by	John L. Russell
Editing by	Louis Lindsay
Art Direction by	Fred Ritter
Set Decoration	John McCarthy Jr., James Redd
Costume Design	Adele Palmer, Fred Ritter
Assistant Director	Jack Lacey

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<sup>175</sup> From *The Internet Movie Database*, <http://imdb.com/title/tt0040558/>

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## **INTERNET RESOURCES**

Audio Classics Archive

<http://www.audio-classics.com/index.html>

Internet Movie Database

<http://www.imdb.com>

Library of Congress. The New Deal Stage

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fedtp/fthome.html>

Orson Welles Information and Resources

<http://www.chymes.org/hyper/welles.html>

Old-Time Radio

<http://www.old-time.com/>

RUSC Old Time Radio

<http://www.rusc.com/>

The Federal Theatre Project Collection at the Library of Congress

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fedtp/fthome.html>

The Mercury Theatre On The Air

<http://www.unknown.nu/mercury/>

The Vintage Radio Place

<http://otrsite.com/>

Tracy and Hepburn On The Radio

<http://brisbin.net/Tracy-Hepburn/radio.html>

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