STAGING ORSON WELLES

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ABSTRACT

In this study I consider the legacy of Orson Welles as a stage figure puppeted in a collective theatre of memory. The study builds on Jonathan Rosenbaum's observation that Welles remains a "mythical and ideological creature" and a "site for the acting out of various fantasies." Referencing Marvin Carlson's *The Haunted Stage* and Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead*, I apply their insights to three plays that feature Welles as a pivotal character: Jason Sherman's *It's All True*, Austin Pendleton's *Orson's Shadow*, and the Naomi Iizuka-Anne Bogart collaboration, *War of the Worlds*. My central concern is to consider the ways we remember and stage Welles and, in light of Rosenbaum's insight, to also question the myths and ideologies those stagings act out.

A corollary to my interrogation of Welles's stage figure as a site of memory is my conviction that the collective memory of Welles's life and work might be staged more usefully. The plays considered approach Welles from different perspectives. However, all – to varying degrees – assess negative judgments. Welles's legacy has been subject to conflicting interpretations, and the arbitration of his historical and remembered significance is a process with important consequences. I raise these consequences and read the plays as evidence in the debate over what Orson Welles's figure signifies.

The introduction reviews the "Battle Over Orson Welles" and considers the source-texts that inform Wellesian stagings. The three middle chapters involve readings of each play, analyzing the playwrights and each script's source material in light of the scholarship of Carlson.
and Roach. The final chapter is a meditation on Welles's legacy. In it, I suggest alternative approaches to staging Welles's figure.

On balance, my study finds that Welles's is a crucial figure in the staging of collective and cultural memory. I end by considering Welles's as an anxious figure – an American artist incapable of compromise whose genius was rebuked in a culture dominated by marketplace values – and by suggesting that his troubled surrogation on our stages may owe, in part, to a collective urge to repress the knowledge that we have somehow failed him.
This work is dedicated to my mother,

Carolyn Lee Miller Gretzinger.
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CHAPTER ONE: A KING OF SHREDS AND PATCHES

HAMLET. A king of shreds and patches –

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,

You heavenly guards! – What would your gracious figure?

(Hamlet, Act 3, scene 4, 102-104)¹

INTRODUCTION

Film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum has written that, more than two decades after his death, Orson Welles remains a "mythical and ideological creature," a "site for the acting out of various fantasies" (Rosenbaum 2007, 239). In a critical overview of three biographies of Welles – Simon Callow's The Road to Xanadu (1995), David Thomson's Rosebud: The Story of Orson Welles (1996), and Joseph McBride's Orson Welles (1996) – Rosenbaum discerns "[two] prevailing and diametrically opposed attitudes [dictating] the way most people currently think about Orson Welles" (236). The first attitude, according to Rosenbaum, corresponds to a greater or lesser degree with the two former titles (greater in the case of Thomson, lesser in the case of Callow), and is characterized by an understanding of Welles's "life and career in terms of failure and regards the key question to be why he never lived up to his promise." The second attitude Rosenbaum finds expressed in McBride's book and in Barbara Leaming's Orson Welles: A Biography (1985), Frank Brady's Citizen Welles (1989), and James Naremore's The Magic World of Orson Welles (1978; revised 1989), and regards Welles's "life and career more

sympathetically and inquisitively." Rosenbaum neatly analogizes the first position with that of the editor in Welles's film *Citizen Kane* (1941), who sends the shadowy reporter Thompson (William Alland) after the mystery of Rosebud, and who seeks a "single formula" for neatly explaining Kane's life. Rosenbaum compares the second position with Thompson's own judgment at the end of *Kane*: "I don't think any word can explain a man's life" (236).

Rosenbaum's review, "The Battle Over Orson Welles" (first appearing in *Cineaste* 22, No. 3, 1996), adapts the title of an Academy Award-nominated documentary on the making of *Citizen Kane: The Battle Over Citizen Kane* (1996). The title is a savvy counter-salvo on Rosenbaum's part. *The Battle Over Citizen Kane*, a critically successful film broadcast on "The American Experience" PBS program, acts out quite a few fantasies of its own and paints a harsh portrait of Welles, essentially equating him with his mighty opposite in the *Kane* conflict, William Randolph Hearst. Rosenbaum's title signals his own position: he belongs in the second group (sympathetic and inquisitive) and has contributed greatly to Wellesian scholarship throughout his career, beginning with a 1972 rebuttal to Pauline Kael's damning essay attributing authorship of *Citizen Kane* not to Welles but solely to Herman Mankiewicz, and culminating with his editorship of Welles's and Peter Bogdanovich's biographical project, *This is Orson Welles*, published in 1992. By contrast, the makers of *The Battle Over Citizen Kane* (Michael Epstein and Thomas Lennon, directors; Lennon and Richard Ben Cramer, writers) belong, on balance, in the first position. The film regards Welles as explicable, more or less, by a single formula. Like Hearst, the documentary suggests, Welles was possessed of a massive ego and a destructive personality. According to *The Battle Over Citizen Kane*, Welles was a genius who burned bridges pursuing quixotic quests, an artistic titan for whom collaborators (where they were acknowledged) were expendable, necessary only as fuel to launch Welles to higher and
higher stations of accomplishment and acclaim. Rosenbaum, who challenges this view with a
lifetime of scholarship and an appeal to the evidentiary record, reminds his readers with his title
that the battle over Orson Welles is ongoing and that there is good reason for contesting the
"single formula" approach.

Yet a "single formula" approach, as any yellowed or yellowing journalist will attest, can
make a story simpler, cleaner, sexier, and what is most crucial, salable. Welles's own Charles
Foster Kane knew that a story didn't have to be true to be attention-grabbing ("If the headline is
big enough, it makes the news big enough"). A story like the one told in The Battle Over Citizen
Kane – a clash of mighty egos by two men, masters of the media of two centuries, who were
more or less destined to clash – may be more dramatic than the complicated narrative found in
histories and biographies. Indeed, the documentary was sufficiently successful to be packaged
with the Warner Brothers DVD release of Citizen Kane in 2001, having attained the status of a
"Special Feature." It is thus now positioned for consumers as an authoritative source of
information on the film. Consumers may enrich their experience of Welles's film by viewing, on
the second DVD disk, a compelling documentary narrative that places the movie into context as
primary historical evidence for a great conflict, the terms and consequences of which the
documentarists have defined. The documentary further inspired Benjamin Ross's docudrama,
RKO 281 (1999), featuring Liev Schreiber as Welles; RKO 281 more or less presents whole-
cloth the narrative presented in the documentary. Because the story presented in The Battle Over
Citizen Kane and RKO 281 is at odds with what scholars and biographers in the field of Welles
studies have been telling us for quite some time, there is apparently some justification for
Rosenbaum's concern regarding Welles's status as a "mythical and ideological creature" and a
"site for the acting out of various fantasies." "Acting out" a particular myth based on the life and
career of Orson Welles is potentially a profitable venture (admittedly for a niche market). Not only Ross's movie but Tim Robbins's *Cradle Will Rock* (1999) and Richard Linklater's *Me and Orson Welles* (2009, based on the 2005 book by Robert Kaplow) have featured Welles as a self-destructive archetype of failure, reminiscent of the megalomaniac tyro depicted in the Epstein-Lennon and Ross projects. This trend in renderings of Welles's life story, in biography or in dramatic adaptation, raises questions about the thematic significance of this myth for its audience. Is there more to this myth's appeal than the journalistic simplicity of the single formula?

Rosenbaum observes in his essay that "exercising moral censure, puritanical or otherwise, is one of the most convenient methods available for carrying out [the] task" of putting Wellesian worries to rest; he is suggesting that there may be unacknowledged anxieties of influence underlying narratives of Welles that prefer the single formula approach (240). Rosenbaum's point is that the "mythic and ideological" inscriptions involved in the posthumous puppeting of Orson Welles have potentially troubling implications for scholars, audiences and readers interested in his historical legacy. When Rosenbaum speaks of "ideological worries," he is talking about the need of some writers to defend the marketplace logic of a particular (still prevalent) system of commercial production, into which much of Welles's work did not fit. Writers like Callow and Thompson would prefer to find Welles anomalous, rather than criticize a means of production with which they are ideologically complicit (Hollywood and the journalistic/academic apparatus that attends it). They therefore "puppet" a version of Orson Welles to act out the myth/fantasy of the self-destructive, mythomaniacal charlatan. This is not to say that Welles was never self-destructive, or that he never misrepresented the truth about himself. It is rather to point out that writing biography from a motive of setting "ideological
"worries" to rest is in some degree less honest and in the long run less useful (e.g., to future students and scholars of Welles's work, who may regard late 20th or early 21st-century Wellesian puppet-shows as dated curiosities) than doing so "sympathetically and inquisitively." The tone of "moral censure" is predominant in Callow's writing on Welles, for example, to a degree that makes the tone of his biographical treatment of his subject at times more fascinating than the subject (i.e., Welles) himself. In other words, Callow and other writers prone to "acting out" with Orson Welles are doing both more and less than reporting all the news honestly. They are adapting Welles and all that he has come to signify into a new play, for a stage of their own making.

I would like to build on Rosenbaum's insight by adopting his phrase "acting out" as the keynote of this discussion. I think that the process of using Welles as a site for acting out can be used for good or ill, to set worries to rest, to exorcise the Wellesian ghost, and also to clarify what our worries about him represent. I also believe that there is an "acting out" in Rosenbaum's writing and in all texts (including this one) that propose to make meaning out of the fabric of Welles's life and career. Some writers address the specter of Welles anxiously, careful to delimit his meaning in a single formula that reduces his story to a Faustian fable or the mythic fall of an over-reaching American Icarus. Others adopt Welles as their familiar and bowdlerize his biography, stretching their eye at his fabulations, excusing his excesses and mistakes, or shifting the blame for his failures to a Kafkaesque "System" worthy of one of his films.² The latter process finds its reflection in the desire to "restore" Welles's unfinished or imperfect works to some imagined state matching Welles's intentions. Michael Anderegg observes in "The Texts of

² For example, Clinton Heylin's Despite the System: Orson Welles Versus the Hollywood System (2005).
"Othello" (the sixth chapter of *Orson Welles, Shakespeare, and Popular Culture*) that "[the] fascinated interest Welles continues to inspire can be related quite directly to textual indeterminacy and to the related difficulties in accessing what texts there are." Anderegg is speaking of Welles's films as texts and comparing them with the various texts of Shakespeare's *Othello*, but his insight applies to treating Welles – and iterations of Welles that come to us via historical documents, biographical assessments, and dramatizations of his life – as a text, or body of texts, that inspire interest precisely because of their "textual indeterminacy and [...] the related difficulties in accessing what texts there are" (99).

The phrase "acting out" conjures both psychoanalysis and the theatre. Orson Welles contributed to a wide range of media, innovating in theatre, radio, television, film and stage magic. His career and fame began in the theatre, a first love Welles never quite lost, even when he committed himself to his life's work of moviemaking. It is therefore to the theatre, and to stage(d) history, that we must turn to interrogate his ghost. From his first success as the Duke in a production of *Jew Süss* at Dublin's Gate Theatre to his 1936 Harlem *Macbeth* for the Federal Theatre Project to his landmark modern-dress production of *Julius Caesar* in 1938, Welles made his earliest marks as an actor, director, and adapter of texts in the theatre. Posthumously, he has returned to it; recently Welles has made several remarkable appearances as a stage character. This study will consider, in light of Rosenbaum's insights about "acting out" Welles, the uses to which this character has been put. I will examine portrayals of Orson Welles in stage plays in which Welles – embodied by an actor before a live audience – literally becomes "a site for the acting out of various fantasies." Staging Orson Welles engages a process of reading and writing theatre history that has meaningful consequences not only for his biographical narrative(s), or for Welles studies uniquely, but also for the discipline of theatre history more generally. How – and
for what purposes – do we stage the figure of Orson Welles? To adopt Welles's own words about Don Quixote, the figure of Orson Welles "seizes" us. Welles's presence – from which his voice and mythologies cannot quite be separated – was and continues to be compelling. His real and historiographic presence still seizes us (as a collective audience with for which there is something at stake in how he is remembered), in various ways and across many disciplinary boundaries. The plays/scripts I consider in my study are each in their own ways attempts to recuperate Welles's figure. The playwrights (and their collaborators) attempt in these works to recuperate this figure on the stage of their audience's collective memory, in different ways and with a range of consequences.

This study has two essential threads. Inspired by recent work on how we stage memory and history in the theatre – particularly by the works of Marvin Carlson in The Haunted Stage (2001) and Joseph Roach in Cities of the Dead (1996) – and prompted by my fascination with Orson Welles, the first thread has to do with considering the ways in which we remember and stage Welles, who serves as my case study for that project. In this vein, I treat Orson Welles as a theatre ghost with important things to say and that significantly returns, in different shapes and with telling variations, to our stages. This ghost can give necessary exposition, narrate events, and impart wisdoms and stories, more or less serving as an extension (or, to use Roach's term, a "surrogate") of the living Welles for audiences who have, collectively, a complicated relationship with his memory. Welles's ghost can also, of course, figure prominently as an important

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3 Welles's exact words have resonance for my study and its interrogation of ghosts: "The figure of Quixote seizes you, and Sancho Panza, and carries you forever. There's no end to them. But they have become ghostly; they're starting to fade, like an old movie, piece of old movie film" (Estrin 207).
character in the retelling and reshaping of his stories (both his biographical stories and the many stories he adapted as entertainments – these two categories are not disparate with Welles, and often reflect meaningfully on one another) as they are shared and understood. Considering and questioning the forms these stories take – how playwrights choose to recuperate Welles in staged remembrances – is my primary interest.

There may be a difference between what is happening with Welles when he's acted on a stage and what happens in films like RKO 281 or Me and Orson Welles (or in a different way, when he's remembered via YouTube clips or by his posthumous "guest appearances" in films like Tim Burton's Ed Wood or Peter Jackson's Heavenly Creatures). The difference may have to do with the actor-audience equation, with the living bodies of actors recuperating remembered

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4 In Ed Wood (1994), Welles (embodied by Vincent D'Onofrio and voiced by Maurice LaMarche), is discovered by Edward D. Wood, Jr. (Johnny Depp) at a dive bar in Hollywood. Welles sympathizes with Wood about the "damn money men." The appearance of Welles with Wood is juxtaposition of high talent with abject mediocrity, and a canny reminder that the Hollywood machine is as indifferent to genius as to schlock. Burton's film (with a script by Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski, from a book by Rudolph Grey) gets some details wrong: this Welles laments that the studio wants him to "cast Charlton Heston as a Mexican," a choice Welles wholeheartedly approved. Peter Jackson's Heavenly Creatures (also 1994) is a wonderfully imaginative example of Rosenbaum's "posthumous puppeting." Based on actual events, the film's eponymous creatures – two girls who fall in love and plot murder – imagine Welles as a character in their fantasy life. Jackson's WETA Workshop puppets Welles (and a host of other screen figures) as an animated clay figure, modeled on his appearance in The Third Man. Welles is also incarnated in the flesh in the film by actor Jean Guérin.
figures in the presence of those crucial living bodies – the theatre audience – who have purposely gathered to collectively remember. It may have to do with the alchemical interchange between embodied performance and reception unique to the physical collectivity and place of the theatre. Joseph Roach cites Pierre Nora's concept of "places of memory" (lieux de mémoire) to illustrate a modern shift in the process of memory from "environments of memory" ("oral and corporeal retentions of traditional cultures") to "places of memory, such as archives, monuments, and theme parks" (26). The milieux de mémoire of the theatre environment privileges the body and excites the "kinesthetic imagination" (Roach's adoption of a term from the lexicon of dance historiography), which in part explains the special impact of witnessing bodies in the place of memory on audience reception:

The kinesthetic imagination [...] inhabits the realm of the virtual. Its truth is the truth of simulation, of fantasy, or of daydreams, but its effect on human action may have material consequences of the most tangible sort and of the widest scope. This faculty, which flourishes in that mental space where imagination and memory converge, is a way of thinking through movements – at once remembered and reinvented – the otherwise unthinkable, just as dance is often said to be a way of expressing the unspeakable. (27)

The plays I consider in my study make canny appeals to the "kinesthetic imagination," relying to some extent for their effectiveness on the simple substitution of an actor's body for the absent Orson Welles. Roach's "virtual" realm, "where imagination and memory converge," evokes Rosenbaum's notion of Welles as a "mythical and ideological creature" and "site for the acting out of various fantasies" (Rosenbaum 239). The playwrights whose scripts I analyze in this study are engaged in a process of remembering and reinventing Orson Welles. Their choice to
stage him in the *lieux de mémoire* of the theatre reflects, I think, their acknowledgment of the special suitability of the theatre to appeal to an audience's kinesthetic imagination to simultaneously remember *and* reinvent.

Memory, further complicating matters, was an important subject for Welles, whose thematic preoccupation with "lost innocence" is often remarked, and there is a strong elegiac tone in many of his productions. William Johnson noted Welles's preference for an "elegiac mood" in his films, which often begin at the end of their chronological plots and look backward to review preceding events (Johnson 1967, 15). Something about Welles's preference for themes of time and loss seems to be bound up in his style. As a filmmaker whose stylistic presence was always profound – he is the archetypal American auteur – Welles's themes are linked to his identity as a stage character. When we experience his surrogate in a theatre production, our kinesthetic imaginations take up a body whose signification has already been profoundly enriched by a great deal of myth and ideology. We may also wish to recall this figure's professional legacy: Welles spent the better part of a century experimenting and innovating in radio, theatre, film and television. In what Welles called a "living" medium (theatre), we may carry associations from a "dead" one (film) (Davies 1988, 105), and we are prompted to do so by the invocation of a ghost. It is the ghost of a magician whose tricks were played on and with memories; his revenant may have designs on ours. Memory and the burdens/benisons of the past are therefore of particular importance for the playwrights who seek to stage Welles (though as Carlson observes, after Herbert Blau, "one of the universals of

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5 *Citizen Kane*, *Othello* and *Chimes at Midnight* all begin with scenes taken from a later point in the plot and reflect on antecedent events, thus provoking an elegiac reception of their protagonists' fates (*Kane*, *Othello* and *Falstaff* all come to bad ends).
performance [. . .] is its ghostliness" (Carlson 1). All of the playwrights considered here are interested in staging theatre history (with different emphases and for different reasons), and one of them (Austin Pendleton, author of Orson's Shadow) has a living memory of Welles.⁶

The second thread of the study is inspired by Rosenbaum's "Battle Over Orson Welles" essay, and his concern with the posthumous puppeting of Welles's figure (Rosenbaum 2007, 236). In his essay, Rosenbaum characterizes a biographical rift in the interpretation of Orson Welles's master narrative(s), arbitrating a divide between Wellesian partisans and more critical (sometimes anxious or hostile) biographers. Both groups have "ideological worries" and stakes in the way Welles's biography is written and collectively remembered, and both groups have scores to settle. Rosenbaum's formulation – his phrase "acting out" – evokes the studies of Carlson and Roach, who both describe the complicated process of memory as necessarily inflected by the interests of those doing the remembering. Their work on memory has called attention to the problems of surrogation ("the doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins," Roach 3) and to theatre's function as a "memory machine" and as a site that is inherently and inevitably "haunted" (Carlson 1). These insights seem uniquely suitable when applied to the figure of Welles, whose acting out necessitates an engagement with issues of memory, subjectivity and authenticity on a textual level.

An engagement with postmodern concerns is implicit when Welles is surrogated or haunts the stage, because issues critically foregrounded in postmodern art are at play in many of his signature projects. Citizen Kane and F for Fake are perhaps the best examples of Welles's problematization of journalistic objectivity, but the confusion of truth with fiction was a lifelong

preoccupation of his. Marguerite Rippy, in Orson Welles and the Unfinished RKO Projects: A Postmodern Perspective, notes that "Treading the line between truth and fiction – in fact, exploiting the audience's interest in this line – became a primary signifier of the Wellesian brand" (19). Noting Welles's interest in "interrogations of truth and fiction so probing as to erode the meaning of narrative subjectivity," Rippy observes that "his characters often represent an inability to construct any single 'truth' when it comes to personal or public history" (19, 20). Rippy sees Welles as a "modernist filmmaker" who "nevertheless became adept at representing the state of modern consciousness as it evolved toward postmodern disorientation," and she links Welles's characteristic evocation of postmodern anxieties with what she calls his "brand persona" (20). Rippy notes that Welles's brand persona was essentially "ambivalent" and "unfinished," and she persuasively argues that these qualities worked to make him, after the triumphs of his early career, a commercially unwieldy prospect (20-21). Welles's troubled "brand persona" represents an important residual legacy for his stage figure. In the lieux de memoire of the theatre, where "imagination and memory converge," Welles's figure always already promises to signify the "unspeakable," and this enhances his resonance as an emblematic figure of the "memory crisis" inherent in modernism. To raise the specter of Orson Welles is in some measure to raise the anxieties nascent in a 20th century transition from a dominant modernist sensibility to a postmodern response to the contradictions inherent in that sensibility.

Linda Hutcheon (in A Poetics of Postmodernism) describes a "concentration" of two very Wellesian "problematizations" as definitional of "postmodern art" (Hutcheon 1988, 88). She emphasizes the "indeterminate nature of historical knowledge" and "the questioning of the ontological and epistemological status of historical 'fact' or the distrust of seeming neutrality and objectivity of recounting" as characteristically postmodern; Welles worked to problematize
historical knowledge and facticity in *Kane*, *It's All True*, and *F for Fake*, and many other projects. Elinor Fuchs (in *The Death of Character*) writes that because "of its ability to hold two or more planes of reality in ambiguous suspension, theatricalism has emerged in the twentieth century as a favored dramatic mode to express the relative and multiple nature of self-identity" (33). Theatricalism, or what Welles's mentor in the theatre, Hilton Edwards, called "the Theatre Theatrical," was Welles's preferred aesthetic, and he adopted it in radio, television, film and in the theatre to "express the relative and multiple nature of self-identity" (Leaming 44). In projects like *The War of the Worlds* (a radio drama that infamously confused fact and fiction), *Around the World With Orson Welles* (a television essay series in which Welles appeared as a narrator and travelogue host, remembering and reinventing the places he visited), *Citizen Kane* (a veritable essay on the multiple nature of self-identity) and *Rhinoceros* (a signature text of the theatre of the absurd), Welles engaged with characteristic modernist anxieties of memory and relativity. His brand persona is inseparable from such anxieties; when he is recuperated on the theatrical stage of memory, those anxieties – a deliberate engagement with the "unspeakable" – are sublimated but palpable. His figure, in the plays I am considering in this study, always carries with it a trace of irony: our kinesthetic imaginations are asked to remember and reinvent a man who throughout his career worked to foreground and problematize the processes of memory and its reinvention. Staging Orson Welles thus creates a kind of infinite loop of backward-glancing reference, recalling the march of Charles Foster Kane between the mirrors that cascade his iteration endlessly in *Citizen Kane*.

Carlson, recalling Herbert Blau and Freddie Rokem (*Performing History*, 2000), invokes Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a play crucially concerned with memory (the word "remembrance" recurs in it many times). That play, the action of which is instigated by perhaps the theatre's most
famous ghost, ends with an injunction by Fortinbras – who inherits the "rites of memory" in Hamlet's kingdom – to "take up the bodies." Following Rokem, Carlson summons the figure of Hamlet's father – the "thing" that "returns again" in the theatre, night after night – as a suggestive presence (Carlson 8; Rokem 2000, xi). Carlson and Roach necessarily invoke Richard Schechner's definition of performance as "restored" or "twice-behaved" behavior (Carlson 1, Roach 3) and emphasize that what is restored in the memory process is never completely restored. The process of restoration (again, see Anderegg, above and 112) necessarily involves distortions. Roach remarks that "the relentless search for the purity of origins is a voyage not of discovery but of erasure" (Roach 1996, 6). Orson Welles, a self-described "king actor, maybe a bad one" (Estrin 194), was certainly a Player King of the kind Roach was considering in his analysis of Betterton's funeral (73). Welles's voice also, in very different ways from Elvis Presley's (Roach's example of a mass culture King with a body rich in sublimated meaning), "still echoes in the bone" (71). The restorative process of staging Welles's historical body (what Roach calls an "effigy" and what I will call, borrowing a term from Stephen Heath, a "figure") involves meaningful "erasures" performed when the rites of his memory are written and enacted (Heath 102). Such erasures happen for reasons. Audiences, in their very act of assembling to

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7 Heath's definition of "figure" is one of five components he delineates to describe what is meant by the "'fullness' of people in films." Heath writes that "the presence of people [in films] can be broken down analytically into the following instances or categories" (178-179). The components are: agent ("the agent of an action," "defined in respect of the assumption of a narrative predicate," essentially the doer of an action, not necessarily a human, 179); character ("an agent of a series of narrative predicates," "the demonstration of the individual in respect of a 'set of qualities,'" a psychological assessment of character, 179); person ("the individual [...] who
hear a play, are performing rites of memory and community. Welles's is a contested and powerfully significant figure, casting a long shadow over the audience for whom he played the King. That audience, its collective mind's eye troubled by the mote of Welles's ghost, may regard the specter with anxiety precisely because some necessary questions of the Wellesian play have not been given their due consideration. Interrogating the ghost – as the scholar Horatio does in Shakespeare's play – with an eye towards answering those questions (or asking better ones), is my second interest in this study.

actualizes agent and character," i.e., the actor); image ("The person, the body, in its conversion into the luminous sense of its film presence," the "high point" of this component being the movie "star," 181); and figure ("the circulation between agent, character, person and image, none of which is able simply and uniquely to settle that circulation, the figure it makes in a film" (182). Heath writes of the figure that its "articulation can fail to balance, slip into an overlayering that does not simply cohere," and he uses as an example the case of a scene from Welles's film Touch of Evil in which Welles and his friend Marlene Dietrich appear. Heath delineates the various evocations of the figures of Welles and Dietrich in this scene, noting that the film marked "Welles's return to Hollywood" and that his reunion with Dietrich conjured their "1944 duo in [the film] Follow the Boys" (182). Heath uses "figure" to describe a cinematic circulation of the components of a screen persona, but none of his listed components (except "image") are necessarily exclusive to movies (and "image" has its corollary in the theatrical actor's body as conceived by the audience's collective kinesthetic imagination). I therefore adopt Heath's use of "figure" to reference the concatenation of conjurations, evocations, associations and circulations that determine Welles's meaning as a stage creature.
These two threads – my fascination with the ways in which we collectively remember and stage Orson Welles, and my desire to reflect critically on the historical significances (and meaningful erasures) of his returning ghost – come together in an examination of three plays. These plays were all first staged in a relatively small space of time, around the turn of the millennium. Listed in order of production, they are Jason Sherman's *It's All True* (1998), Austin Pendleton's *Orson's Shadow* (January 2000) and *War of the Worlds* (March 2000) by Naomi Iizuka and Anne Bogart (with the SITI Company). Each of these plays is ghostly in Carlson's sense: the play-texts are evidence of theatre as "the repository of cultural memory" and by reading them we may bear witness to the process of "continual adjustment and modification" requisite to memory (Carlson 2). Each of these plays involves a surrogation, in Roach's sense; Welles's "loss," by "death or other forms of departure," creates a kind of anxiety into which "survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternates" (Roach 2).

My study privileges stage plays in which Welles is depicted as a theatre artist, or that engage directly with issues of memory or ghostliness. None of the plays (so far as I can

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8 There are several "one-man shows" featuring Welles as a character, after the fashion of Hal Holbrook's *Mark Twain Tonight* (1967) or Samuel Gallu's *Give 'Em Hell, Harry* (1975) – for example, Mark Jenkins's 2004 *Rosebud: The Lives of Orson Welles* featuring Christian McKay (the Welles of Richard Linklater's *Me and Orson Welles*), theatre historian Richard France's *Obediently Yours, Orson Welles* (2009), Marcus Wolland's *Lost Eden* (renamed *The Magnificent Welles* for its 2003 DVD release), and Blake Erickson's *Pearls Before Swine: An Evening with Orson Welles* (2010). My focus here is on plays featuring Welles with other fully realized stage characters. Mainly this is because his "figure" in one-man shows is presented as self-authoring and authorizing, and is thus univocal. The effect of Welles as an epic narrator
determine) were intended by their authors solely as performance texts of historiography (though Jason Sherman is surely dealing with history as a theme). Indeed, all of them invoke poetic license or deploy what Linda Hutcheon has termed "historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon 1988, ix). They mingle truth and fakery in ways that ought to have pleased Welles, pioneer of the "fake documentary" and architect of the "truth's undoing" (Juhasz and Lerner 2006) even as they would likely have disappointed his desire for "flattering" descriptions (Estrin 127). On the whole these plays treat Welles with an ambivalence that defies any "single formula" reading; they are more like Citizen Kane (which as James Naremore noted "is a film about complexity, not about relativity") than they are like RKO 281, in that they present history and human character as complicated processes and not as easily-digestible finished products (61). Except that they all feature Orson Welles as a substantial stage character, nothing that I am aware of links the plays other than their mutual surrogations, hauntings, and negotiations with historical subjects.

It's All True by Jason Sherman, the subject of my second chapter, deals with the events surrounding the 1937 Federal Theatre production of Marc Blitzstein's labor opera, The Cradle Will Rock (a much-mythologized and adapted narrative, and the subject of screenplays by Tim Robbins, Ring Lardner, Jr., and Welles himself).9 The Cradle Will Rock, like other Welles who enters and leaves the action – which is important to my reading of his figure – is not achieved in the one-man show format.

9 Sherman's title is borrowed from one of Welles's most famous unfinished projects. It's All True – christened a "Pan-American Odyssey" by Welles scholar Catherine Benamou – was to have been Welles's first "essay" film, combining travelogue, documentary, and fictional narrative. Its much-mythologized incompleteness is a major crux of Wellesian biography.
productions (notably the Negro Theatre Project Macbeth and the modern-dress Caesar) is an especially haunted production: it is often re-staged as theatre history, using approximations of its original impromptu scene, staging, and design. Sherman, a young Canadian playwright, is interested in (among other things) theatre history and government subsidy of the arts. The legendary story of Blitzstein's Cradle provides ample basis for exploring those themes. It also gives Sherman a chance to meditate, via the interaction between Blitzstein and Welles, on the problems of a theatre writer who must eventually surrender his text (and the statement of his politics) to the stewardship of a director (Welles, the play's antagonist) who is no respecter of authors or authorial intentions.

The action of Orson's Shadow by Austin Pendleton, the subject of my third chapter, revolves around an ill-fated but richly-starred 1960 production of Eugene Ionesco's Rhinoceros directed by Welles and starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Plowright. Vivian Leigh is also a character, and the critic Kenneth Tynan, a friend and sometime champion of Welles's, narrates. The play is essentially a confrontation between Olivier and Welles, whose contrasting aesthetics and approaches to living (as Robert Simonson notes in his introduction to the published script) are expressed in their complementary judgments of one another (Pendleton 4): Welles remarks of Olivier that "He always has a triumph. It is his strategy for absolutely everything," (22) and Olivier says of Welles, "I mean Orson fails, doesn't he. He fails" (37). The play has something of a Rich Dad, Poor Dad dichotomy, echoing not just the comparative life strategies of Olivier and Welles but the dilemma of the doubly-fathered Prince Hal, a once and future king played by ____________

10 Cradle was restaged in 1983 by The Acting Company in a production narrated by Welles's old partner/nemesis John Houseman, a deliberate ghosting of its original staging in which Houseman played a critical role. In this production Patti Lupone played the Moll and Sister Mister.
Olivier in his film of *Henry V* (1944) and staged by Welles in his *Chimes at Midnight* (1965). Robert Simonson writes that "*Orson's Shadow* is a condensed, concentrated conjecture about how show people – grand, neurotic, needy, talented at reproductions of living but challenged by life – muddle through each day" (6). Pendleton's play benefits from the experience of its author, who – as a stage and screen actor (Pendleton worked with Orson Welles on several occasions), director (he served tenures as artistic director of the Williamstown Theatre Festival and the Circle Repertory Company), playwright, Shakespearean, and as a stutterer (a disability Pendleton shares with his character Tynan) – has lived and played many of the same kinds of roles as the show people he stages.

*War of the Worlds* by Naomi Iizuka (who shares credit for the script with director Anne Bogart and the Saratoga International Theatre Institute) differs from the plays of Sherman and Pendleton both formally and in its treatment of Welles. Structurally this play takes its cue from *Citizen Kane*, beginning like so many Welles projects with the death of its protagonist, who to some degree narrates and stage manages the play. This Welles is staged as a ghost, remembering and performing the events of his life (there is also a questing reporter, Thompson, assembling a post-mortem account of Welles by interviewing fictionalized versions of his collaborators, friends and lovers). Like Mark Jenkins's one-man show *Rosebud: The Lives of Orson Welles* (2004), *War of the Worlds* assesses Welles's life globally, in much of its dense particularity. Iizuka and Bogart in this work are interrogating the postmodern fracturing of a lexicon of memory inherited from modernism. The "young Orson Welles" appears in this play to dialogue with, evade, and escape the historical judgments applied to his older self. Bogart has said that she is interested in discovering (and staging) answers to the guiding question "Where does theatre in the United States [come] from?" In *A Director Prepares* (written at about the time of
the Iizuka/SITI production) she writes, "I wanted to actively remember the past in order to use it. Whom and what could I channel?" (Bogart 2001, 23). War of the Worlds is an attempt to understand, remember, assess and channel Welles. In War of the Worlds Bogart's collaborator Naomi Iizuka has created a script that requires of its audience a nuanced reception and an encyclopedic awareness of Welles's life and work. The play is a meditation on problems of memory and subjectivity, and in many ways is similar to another Iizuka piece, 36 Views (2002). Both works are about fabrication, deceit, and the construction of authenticity; both explore the problems of a postmodern awareness of the fallibility of human memory. Thus Iizuka and Bogart are exploring subjects that engaged Welles, even as they stage and channel him.

I am further interested in these plays because they tend to emphasize pieces of the Wellesian puzzle which have not held sway in received assessments of his life and work (by

11 36 Views is about the discovery, by an art dealer and an art historian, of an "ancient manuscript" (Alan MacVey's "Introduction" to the published script, 5). "They try to learn whether it's authentic and then deal with the results. As they make their way through the contemporary art world, they and four other characters are revealed to us a bit at a time, surprising us with their growing complexity" (5). The "ancient manuscript" turns out to be a "fabricated" pillow book, the text of which is evoked so beautifully as to raise the question of exactly how much it matters whether a thing of beauty is "authentic" or not. The question, also, of the interrelationship between "authentic" art and its commercial value is raised. All of these preoccupations are reminiscent of War of the Worlds, which approaches Welles as a kind of "ancient manuscript," the authenticity of which must be raised, doubted, affirmed and interrogated in the course of the play.
"received," I mean the more accessible and influential biographies of Callow or Thomson, or films like RKO 281, The Battle Over Citizen Kane, or Me and Orson Welles). The plays have power as performative works that, in some ways, trouble or contest grand recits (Jean-François Lyotard's phrase, often translated as "master narratives") and because they enter into the heated discussion about Welles by a nontraditional route – the theatre. Reading Welles as a figure of theatre history by staging him is a new tactic: most iterations of Welles with biographical resonance have occurred in reproducible formats, such as film or print journalism. In a sense, his figure is tabula rasa on the stage. We are not yet quite used to him there, and what he means for a collective audience is still negotiable. In these plays by Sherman, Pendleton and Iizuka, we may catch a glimpse of a stage figure in utero. The staged Welles is subject to the grand recits of his role in film history and troubled by mythic baggage, but is still fresh, in the sense that he is alive, not reproducible, not an artifact of history.

The final chapter of my study is a summation of all of my thinking regarding the place Orson Welles does and should hold in our collective memory. It is autobiographical, in that I enter into it as a character (much as Thompson leaves his shadowy silhouette behind to admit defeat in his quest to solve Kane's mystery in Citizen Kane). This chapter ventures beyond the critical fourth wall to some degree. In it, I offer my own self-positioning and discuss where we are left at the end of a century and more of Orson Welles representations. In chapter five I offer suggestions about how Welles might be more usefully remembered. To an extent, the last chapter of the study is about how we who have collectively remembered and sought to reinvent Orson Welles have, collectively, failed him.
THE BATTLE OVER ORSON WELLES

Orson Welles exerts a particularly hypnotic power over theatre audiences who collectively desire to remember him on the stage. That staging, owing to his influence and to the signified anxieties and erasures for which his ghosted figure is the sign, presents particular challenges to playwrights, actors and directors. There is a desire to witness Welles's return – a longing that can only be answered in the theatre, where "things return again" to haunt the living, who have gathered precisely because they wish to be haunted – and a concomitant urge to repress or carefully edit the ghosted body that is recuperated. Joseph Roach stresses that "memory is a process that depends crucially on forgetting" (2), and this seems particularly applicable to Orson Welles. The texts that constitute his historical body are many and difficult to wield. Though he is not unique in this regard, his biography is painfully difficult to arbitrate. The pieces of the Wellesian puzzle are strewn across the world; at times he seems literally too big to be considered in his entirety. Simon Callow calls his subject a "one-man diaspora" (a joke on Welles's reputation as a "One-Man Band") (2006, xii). The perspective required to appreciate Welles can seem godlike. As a result he remains in some ways a king of shreds and patches, subject to the ideological puppeting Rosenbaum describes – to an "acting out" that is, in psychoanalytic terms, an "unconscious ego defense mechanism" (Simon). Acting out is a kind of compromise that "serves to ease the emotional pain and anxiety associated with an unconscious conflict" between "primal instincts" and "conscience." Acting out with Welles, then, addresses what (whose?) emotional pain? What are the conflicts with which Wellesian anxiety is associated? What worries, to return to Rosenbaum, does acting out (or staging) Orson Welles seek to set at rest? The shadow of failure, raised by Austin Pendleton in Orson's Shadow, is just one of the shadows, and maybe not the most portentous one, that Welles casts over his
successors. Theatre artists – writers, actors, and directors – all feel the anxiety of his influence, sometimes without being fully aware of it.\textsuperscript{12}

There is a persistent tendency among Welles's biographers to read the narrative of his life as an Icarus tale or a Faustian sell-out story. It is as if a council of Salieris had decreed that Mozart's story should only be staged as a parable of obscenity, with insufficient regard to the

\textsuperscript{12} Though Harold Bloom's "theory of poetry" (\textit{The Anxiety of Influence}, 1973; second edition, 1997) is meant to address specifically questions of poetic influence, I think it applies here. Bloom (who "murmurs" that his book has often been "weakly misread") writes that "influence-anxiety does not so much concern the forerunner but rather is an anxiety achieved in and by the story, novel, play, poem or essay" (xxiii). He goes on: "What matters most [...] is that the anxiety of influence comes out of a complex act of strong misreading, a creative interpretation that I call 'poetic misprision.'" Bloom acknowledges that "there must be a profound act of reading that is a kind of falling in love with a literary work." At stake in the plays I am analyzing is a similar – though not identical – process: Sherman, Pendleton, and Iizuka and Bogart are engaged in a "profound act of reading" of the life and work of Orson Welles, and I see their works as a consequence of misprision in that reading. Bloom writes that

\begin{quote}
The dead may or may not return, but their voice comes alive, paradoxically never by mere imitation, but in the agonistic misprision performed upon powerful forerunners by only the most gifted of their successors. (xxiv)
\end{quote}

I would like to adapt this insight to my study, insofar as Orson Welles is a kind of "strong forerunner" whose gifted successors include Jason Sherman, Austin Pendleton, Anne Bogart and Naomi Iizuka. The plays considered here are a manifestation of "agonistic misprision" in that they are, to return to Joseph Roach, examples of memory "imperfectly deferred."
beautiful things the artist brought into the world and in defiance of his accomplishment and innovation. Remembering Mozart as vulgar sets off his genius as a foil sets a gem. It also elevates Salieri, whose sobriety, propriety, and taste offset his essential mediocrity.\textsuperscript{13}

Remembering Welles as a failure or over-hyped opportunist can have a similar effect: his "genius" becomes almost a curiosity, a wistfully observed idiosyncrasy in a colorful character who, we are edified by the margins, never lived up to his full potential. This kind of remembering always borrows (perhaps I should say steals) authority from Welles and lends it to the critic. This kind of writing always tells the reader far more about the critic than it does about Orson Welles. As Jonathan Rosenbaum remarked, we do not feel this anxiety toward Franz Kafka, who left many books unfinished and some unpublished (239) – we are merely grateful to have the work that Providence has left us. Bart Whaley, Welles's biographer (\textit{Orson Welles: The Man Who Was Magic}, 2005), makes a similar point using Albert Einstein, whose "enormous creativity peaked between ages 26 and 31 and [who] then drifted for 44 years on old fame" (Whaley 4) – no one is concerned with "what went wrong" with Einstein. There is a tropic preference with Welles to focus on the negative of his image. Only a few of his biographers escape it (Barbara Leaming's 1985 \textit{Orson Welles: A Biography}, Frank Brady's 1985 \textit{Citizen Welles}, and Bart Whaley's book are the best examples).\textsuperscript{14} The maintenance of Welles's shadow

\textsuperscript{13} I borrow here the figures of Salieri and Mozart used by Peter Shaffer in his play \textit{Amadeus}, itself an extrapolation on Pushkin's "dramatic dialogue" \textit{Mozart and Salieri} (conceived in 1826, later the inspiration for a Rimsky-Korsakov opera). My analogy is to the fictional (or metafictional) versions of these characters.

\textsuperscript{14} Jonathan Rosenbaum has never written a Welles biography, but both \textit{This is Orson Welles} (a collection of interviews with Welles conducted by Peter Bogdanovich, edited with a useful
is an ongoing, collective project. Those who perpetuate it have something to sell and they clearly perceive a commercial demand. All of the plays considered here in some way draw on the dark brand appeal of this Wellesian shadow. They all proceed from the assumption that audiences know the figure of Orson Welles and that they will bring specific associations to the process of reception.

The two threads of this study – an examination of the way collective memory works on the stage, using Welles's case (as we find him in these plays), and a critical reflection on the meaning of Welles's ghost (using Carlson and Roach for inspiration and illumination) – combine to form its spine, or superobjective, which is ultimately to question the usefulness of traditional interpretive approaches to Orson Welles. This may be a quixotic endeavor. Richard III's historical reputation had long since been formed (and re-formed) after the damage done to it by the Tudor myth that Sir Thomas More sketched and Shakespeare's play rehearsed; yet everyone prefers Shakespeare's wicked hunchback to the early modern practitioner of realpolitik found in more recent biographies. Nor is my project hagiographic. I concede that there are many accurate portraits to be made from Welles's negative image. Simon Callow, perhaps Welles's most critical and exhaustive biographer, wrote that "the real story, though sometimes less sensational, is often more remarkable than the extrapolations" (by "extrapolations," Callow means Welles's own fabulations about his life story), and I agree, with the reservation that "the real story" is a fundamentally naive formulation and can never finally be established – which is not to say that I am not deeply grateful for the tireless, decade-consuming research Callow has conducted (1995, xii). Callow also errs in his assumption that Welles was the sole architect of career chronology by Rosenbaum) and Discovering Orson Welles contain essential, often corrective, biographical perspectives on their subject.
his mythology, but his larger point – that the evidence yields a far more interesting portrait than the shorthand or truncated versions that the myth provides – is well taken. This is why I phrase my synthesis question towards a finding, specifically, of "usefulness." True renderings of history are not the point of staging it. I do not especially long for a Wellesian play written wie eigentlich gewesen.15 What I do long for are plays that wring beautiful meanings from the life of a troubled but beautiful man whose art held tremendous power to provoke both feeling and serious thought, a rare enough achievement in America. I would not mind, either, if the plays and stories got the villain right. It is not in Welles's nature alone, but in a view that includes both Welles and his context, wherein we may find credible reasons for his "failure."16 Shakespeare's Richard III is staged in spite of our knowledge that it is bad history because it is excellent drama – it shows us not what happened, but what can happen, in Aristotle's formulation. Most of the popular narratives being spun from the various Wellesian yarns are bad history and bad drama. They tell us neither what happened, nor do they illuminate any paradigm for understanding future events.

RKO 281, for example, tells us merely that self-destructive men self-destruct, and that this is noisy and entertaining, but signifies not very much – least of all to students of Citizen Kane, who might like to know that more was at stake in Welles's work on that film than an attempt by one ego to capsize another. Tim Robbins's Cradle Will Rock tells us that Welles was an obnoxious, brilliant, opportunistic drunk. It does not tell us (as Michael Denning does, in The

15 Leopold van Ranke's phrase for the historiographical imperative, i.e., to present events as they actually happened.

16 Simon Callow's stated goal in The Road to Xanadu is in line with this – he wishes to "put [Welles] back into the context from which he wrenched himself" (xii) – but again, the portrait of Welles as intended arbiter of his own myth is incomplete.
Cultural Front) that the political implications of the Federal Theatre productions he oversaw with John Houseman were crucially significant to this artist, whose anti-fascist, Popular Front ideals were a lifelong preoccupation (Denning 362). Richard Linklater's Me and Orson Welles wants us to know that Welles (played beautifully by Christian McKay, who perfected his interpretation of the role in Rosebud: The Lives of Orson Welles) (Jenkins 2004) was a glory-hog and a credit-stealer who could occasionally be counted on for a flourish of showmanship – but little else – and it manages to recreate the effects of Welles's 1937 Caesar: Death of a Dictator with little sense that Welles had something important to say with that production.

Why should we prefer popular narratives that obscure rather than foreground what might be called the redeeming qualities of Orson Welles? Toward what end do these biopics that puppet a self-loathing monster tend? If films, plays, or even biographies featuring Welles can be construed (in Kenneth Burke's phrase) as "Literature as Equipment for Living," what is the utility of this equipment in its current state? (293) Why do Wellesian puppeteers want to exchange the portrait of an artist for that of a self-destructive drunk? Why do American audiences trade down a public intellectual – a multinationally respected citizen of the world – for a shabby fraud? Why do we insist on depicting a man who never stopped working – even death found him at his typewriter – as a lazy wastrel or a has-been who failed to live up to his promise? 17

The too-simple answer to these questions is that the negative image of Welles contains much truth, and a certain impulse of yellow journalism (ironically, given Welles's antagonism with Hearst) creeps in. It is much easier to write a gripping narrative around a Frankenstein.

17 Bret Wood's Orson Welles: A Bio-Bibliography gives an exhaustive account of Welles's lifetime of constant work. See also Jonathan Rosenbaum's "Welles's Career: A Chronology" in This is Orson Welles (323-453).
assemblage of character defects than to accept that both mediocrity and the sublime can coexist in a single figure. Welles drank, ate too much, smoked cigars. At Federal Theatre rehearsals, he made a point of dining sumptuously on rich, expensive meals, conspicuously overconsuming food he could afford to pay for with his radio earnings, while hungry actors surviving on the WPA's meager paychecks looked on (Nouryeh 62). He was chronically blind to the needs of the people around him, often choosing to portray disagreements as betrayals (his incendiary blowout at Chasen's restaurant, in which he hurled not one but two cans of flaming sterno at his soon-to-be ex-partner, John Houseman, is only the most famous example of Welles's bilious rage when betrayed) (Houseman, Run-Through, 439). He betrayed his wives and bragged prodigiously about his sexual conquests. He was hopeless with money, and he had a tendency to begin new projects before old ones were done, sometimes causing the latter to fail. He frequently lied (or misdirected) about his past accomplishments and sometimes about his professional credits. He grew fat, "spreading himself thin," as his friend, the critic Kenneth Tynan wrote in 1967 (Estrin 126). By the end of his life, he was so heavy that he was nearly immobile. ¹⁸ He left thousands

¹⁸ The negative assessment of Welles's corpulence, often both implicit and explicit, is a gauntlet for fat studies scholars to take up. Simon Callow writes (in The Road to Xanadu) that one of two "main" questions about Welles – "why did he get so fat?" – is "by no means a foolish or shallow one" (xv). The abundant materiality of Welles's body seemed to echo and mock his outsized reputation as a genius with a massive body of works. He somehow managed to be both "fat king" and "lean beggar," to borrow from Hamlet. In his last years, when his popularity waned and his work opportunities were few and far between, he was at his largest. Whether the question of "why" he got so big is "foolish or shallow" or not, it does seem to be the case that
of projects in varying states of incompletion (leading his biographer Charles Higham to concoct a pseudo-Freudian theory of "fear of completion" to explain Welles's patchwork oeuvre) (Higham 1970, 192). He expressed defiance when criticized about his seeming inability to see a project through. Later in life, when he was forced to work on films directed by younger artists whom he felt to be his inferiors, he was often tetchy and uncooperative, essentially a diva.

Austin Pendleton, who worked with Welles on Mike Nichols's film of Joseph Heller's Catch-22, referred to him as a "pill" who tried to "sabotage" the film (Pendleton, A. V. Club Interview 1) though Peter Bogdanovich, who interviewed Welles during the filming and witnessed some of the behavior Pendleton is describing, paints a different picture (Bogdanovich 1998, "My Orson," xv). Welles certainly rewrote large portions of the parts he played in many projects, and sometimes attempted to direct his own scenes. He was temperamental and over-sensitive, and on occasion mistreated subordinates. He was a mostly absent and longed-for presence in the lives of his children, according to his oldest daughter, Chris Welles Feder.

To this list we might add qualities that strike us perhaps more discordantly than they did Welles's contemporaries: Welles's alleged racism, homophobia and sexism. In his productions, Welles sometimes indulged in modernist primitivism (as Marguerite Rippy notes) and tended to depict black characters as exotic, alien, or native types (Rippy 68). Welles played Macbeth in critics often read Welles's body moralistically. Like Sir John Falstaff, to be fat was to be hated, and certainly an outward show of an inward vice.

19 Rippy writes that Welles's "view of primitivism was heavily rooted in the belief that the white male psyche would be rejuvenated through exchanges with the primitive, as did other modernist authors and artists" (68). She adds that "His genius, however, was that of the griot, a cultural storyteller able to assimilate the longings and fears of a group and convey them through a
blackface, on the Indiana tour of his famous all-black Negro Theatre Production, when the lead actor was unable to perform (Callow 245). Welles later bragged that no one noticed he was white (Leaming 109). He was at times homophobic, taking pains to distance himself from being perceived as homosexual (Leaming). Though he denied categorization as a "macho" (in an appearance before an audience of film students, recorded in the film Orson Welles: The One-Man Band), Welles claimed an affinity with the macho Hemingway, and like Hemingway he had a taste for bullfighting. The women in his films are rarely more than exotic, mysterious and beautiful ciphers (for example, Marlene Dietrich and Janet Leigh in Touch of Evil), giving his compelling narrative." Rippy describes Welles's speaking, in his "primitivist dramas of the 1930s and '40s," "for an anxious white collective, often exploring the shifting paradigms of white colonial desire and conquest" (68-69). This is a basically accurate but critically incomplete assessment. Rippy's book tends to read Welles through a post-colonial lens, which yields valuable critical insight but ignores Welles's historical context, resulting in a portrait lacking in nuance. Welles certainly indulged in modernist primitivism, as evidenced in his plans for a film of Heart of Darkness and his Negro Theatre Project Macbeth. He may have been, on some occasions, the spokesman for "an anxious white collective." He was also the spokesman and radio advocate for serviceman Isaac Woodard, who was beaten by white assailants when he asked to use the restroom at a bus stop in Aiken, South Carolina (Callow 2006, 328). Welles's constant radio harangues against "Officer X" (the unidentified police officer who blinded Woodard) did little to improve his reputation in the American South and are poor testimony for his role as a spokesperson for a "white collective." Callow writes that Welles "was, in a way that few of even his most liberal colleagues were, genuinely 'colour-blind'" (324).

20 Callow writes that "This well-attested event is best contemplated in awed silence."
work patriarchal and sexist overtones. Katherine Howlett notes (in Framing Shakespeare on Film) that Welles's "Voyeuristic Pleasure of Pain" resulted in his biting his stage co-star, Eartha Kitt, in a production of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, which Howlett reads as a revealingly misogynistic act (Howlett 54).

These indictments are substantiated, and well-rehearsed. Quite a few of them are tropic elements that recur in Welles's stage and screen effigies: Iizuka's War of the Worlds references the incident with Kitt, for example ("He kissed me one night on stage, and bit my lip so hard, I bled," 150); and Me and Orson Welles, It's All True, and RKO 281 all portray Welles as a womanizer. My point in raising this list of Welles's tropic sins is not to expurgate them but to acknowledge them. They are details of a larger work, and should not be effaced or erased in remembrance or representation. They do tend to proliferate, however, and hold sway over Welles's brighter moments – perhaps because of that certain tendency of yellow journalism, previously noted – in depictions of Welles on stage and on screen. It is perhaps easier to remember Welles as a collection of vices than to memorialize his triumphs. As Marc Antony laments in Julius Caesar, "The evil that men do lives after them, / The good is oft interred with their bones." If a list triumphs were desired, it would include, among other citations: the marvelous and storied rise of his early career, with its revolutionary strides in the theatre and on the radio; the innovations and influences of Citizen Kane; a dozen films, many of which are ranked among the greatest; Welles's defense and championship of Isaac Woodard, a black veteran of the Second World War blinded by southern racism (see footnote 19); Welles's characteristic courage, particularly in his later years, and his good humor in bad times; and his universally remembered kindness and good grace, which inspired loyalty and fondness in many who knew him.
Welles's is obviously a contested legacy. The 'Battle Over Orson Welles' is ongoing. It is an evolving dialogue about the nature and significance of Welles's life and work, and about clarifying the "ideological worries" we continue to express about both. This conflict's resolution also has larger consequences, particularly for those of us working in Welles's shadow and in the American media over which he exerted his influence and under which his genius may have been rebuked. The plays I consider in my study contribute to this dialogue. The ways in which they assess, include, omit, remember and reinvent Orson Welles can tell us something about our cultural priorities, and about how we choose to remember and forget. They can tell us something about who we are.

Welles was an artist whose most famous work, a film about the struggle of a journalist to construct a coherent narrative of a man's life and give meaning to the event of his death, ends on a note of abject failure. The reporter Thompson, in Citizen Kane, has fixated on a single detail – the tantalizing psychobiographical clue "Rosebud." Failing to uncover its meaning, he admits the futility of his enterprise. No single word or text can explain a human life. Though this is as true of Welles as of anyone, the incredible saturation of Wellesian texts across his fifty-year career is staggering, and certainly this overabundance of texts plays its part in ensuring that we will never stop trying to explain him. What appears at first to be a biography with many gaps and dimly-lit periods is at least in some sense "multi-layered" (Callow's word). The pieces of the Wellesian puzzle appear to be missing, but are actually scattered, literally around the world. Narratives featuring Welles, whether offered as biography or metafiction, are often constructed in apparent ignorance (or in despite) of the Wellesian evidentiary challenge. Myth enters in where fact has not been established. In defiance of the futility that Thompson recognized, we
who find Welles fascinating perhaps quixotically wish to explain what his life means and we often want to do it – despite the obvious paradox – authoritatively.

The 'Battle Over Orson Welles' takes place, crucially, in the lieu de mémoire, or places of memory, where Welles's textual body is still in flux. This battle is waged by historians, critics, and playwrights over the power to arbitrate meanings and craft Wellesian grand recits. The gaps in the evidentiary record widely accessible on Welles contribute to his suitability for use as a site of mythic imagining. The meaning of his story is still up for grabs. The plays I focus on in this study map key battlegrounds in the Wellesian conflict. They are sites for the "acting out" of fantasies, memory plays that stage Orson Welles in an effort to "remember and reinvent" his story. These plays continue the debate on Welles's significance and invite a reconsideration of his sign. Part of my project is to answer that invitation, and question not only the ghost of Orson Welles but the artists and audiences that have sought to summon him.

In this study I think through the ways in which Wellesian narratives have been presented and how they have evolved, and with what historiographical consequences, both for Welles and for the theatre as a site for staging history. A thematic undercurrent of this work (a synthesis of the two threads mentioned earlier) arises from my conviction that, at least in America, we have not quite caught up to Orson Welles and what his life and work have to say to us about who we were and are. Why does Welles continue to haunt our stages? What is there about him that continues to fascinate or engage us, and/or what historical matters remain unresolved?

Each of the plays I analyze in my study, to a greater or lesser degree, finds a middle path between the poles of invective and hagiography rehearsed here. None of them is so reductive as to be mere caricature (like RKO 281 or Cradle Will Rock), and each offers some degree of depth in its portraiture of Welles. They are, however, selective with regard to which details they
choose to include or omit: what each of these playwrights reveals is often less meaningful than what they choose to leave out. I think it is worthwhile to consider their inclusions and omissions, because it may tell us something about how (and with what consequences) we remember and stage Orson Welles in the theatre of our collective memory.

I am not quite what Simon Callow has called an "Orsonolator" (2006, xv). As I have attempted to make clear, I am aware of Welles's personal faults. I retain, however, a (perhaps naive) commitment to the ideal of balanced reportage, and I hope to avoid wholeheartedly joining any particular camp. I'd much rather visit the camps, and interview their inhabitants, reporting back on what I learn. This is not to affect neutrality for its own sake. Though this is a study of plays, it amounts to a biographical assessment of Orson Welles. Though objectivity in such an endeavor is impossible, as Welles demonstrated in Kane, it is not to a postmodern aesthetic of atavistic relativity that we must turn but rather to a post-postmodern acceptance of the unruly complexity of human truth. I think that the truth about Orson Welles is, as Callow wrote, "multilayered," and like Callow I believe it exists. I think that in general – if we are talking about legacies and reputations – the evidentiary record tends to favor Welles. As Rosenbaum makes clear, to take up writing about Orson Welles is to risk "acting out" fantasies – whether one acts to grind an axe or make a career – and this is a danger of which I'm aware. In this study I have tried to avoid constructing imaginaries, establishing credentials of objectivity (a sin I think Marguerite Rippy commits in her otherwise excellent book by damning Welles as a colonizer and racist in small doses so that she can credibly valorize him overall), or retreating into academic discourse as a smokescreen for having little to say. All of these approaches would be ways of using Welles, rather than revealing him. I do not want to ventriloquize Orson Welles or to regard him as a career venue. I think the key to avoiding "acting out" is to take a cue from
Thompson in *Kane*: I've tried to be as clear as possible about what I'm trying to do at the outset, and then, at the end, I should be able to acknowledge (at least in part) the futility of the enterprise.

**SOURCES OF THE STUDY**

Though the present study focuses on mediated history (stage plays) and not on primary sources, part of my interest in these plays has to do with their vital power to narrate important and missing pieces of American Theatre History. The plays I consider in this study are, effectively, stagings of theatre history. They do historiographical work in the very place to which that work is consecrated. Two of the plays (*It's All True* and *Orson's Shadow*) concentrate attention specifically on Welles's theatre work. *War of the Worlds* is more broadly biographical and includes references to Welles's film and radio work. To evaluate the ways in which the dramatists whose work I am analyzing have shaped the raw material of Welles's career, it is important to consider their likely (and in some cases, acknowledged) source material. In this section, I want to review some of the critical texts that have shaped Welles's historical and biographical reputation, and that inform his status as a "mythical and ideological figure."

There is little published scholarship on Welles's theatre work. The vast preponderance of material is understandably devoted to his achievements in the cinema. Richard France's *The Theatre of Orson Welles* (1978) is the only full-length study devoted to this subject in print; Andrea Nouryeh's unpublished dissertation, *The Mercury Theatre: A History* (1987), is invaluable. Both works are important contributions to the scholarship of Welles's theatrical career. France and Nouryeh both conducted interviews with Welles's collaborators (France interviewed Sam Leve, Richard Wilson, Edna Thomas, and John Houseman, among others;
Nouryeh interviewed Leve, Wilson, and Norman Lloyd, among many other veterans of the Mercury Theatre). Neither France nor Nouryeh reflect Welles's continued involvement in the theatre after the 1940s (this is in keeping with Nouryeh's project, but it is curious that France chose an all-inclusive title for a work devoted only to Welles's early work). France ends his study with *Five Kings*, Welles's ambitious conflation of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays with *Richard II* and *Henry V* (which he later adapted as *Chimes at Midnight*) for the Theatre Guild in 1940. France leaves his reader with the implication that Welles, launched by the *War of the Worlds* radio panic controversy to new heights of national celebrity, abandoned the theatre thereafter for Hollywood. Nouryeh's more comprehensive study follows the Mercury Theatre to its arguable endpoint, the Utah Shakespeare Festival production of *Macbeth* staged by Welles in 1947 (the production on which his 1948 Republic Pictures film is based). Neither scholar considers Welles's work in the 50s or 60s. Though he returned to stage work with less frequency as he got older, Welles did continue to make important contributions. His bare-stage adaptation of Melville's novel, *Moby Dick – Rehearsed* (1955), his Dublin *Chimes at Midnight* (1960), and his aforementioned *Rhinoceros* with Olivier are all in need of closer scholarly attention. France's study is more than thirty years old. Nouryeh's was written soon after Welles's death, when interest in his career was on the rise (witness the biographies of Barbara Leaming and Frank Brady), and remains, unfortunately, unpublished. A new study, or a revision of older work, is called for, not least so that new scholarship – for example, Barry Witham's challenge to the received version of the *Cradle Will Rock* myth as government censorship (based on "a fascinating document" he "came across" in the National Archives) – can be integrated into the mosaic (215).
In terms of *grand recits*, new historiographical strategies for approaching Welles demand consideration. A relative minority of writers – the Michaels Denning and Anderegg are prime examples – have elected to consider Welles as an exemplary figure for recuperating non-traditional paradigms for understanding the Popular Front years of the American Theatre, and the importance of Welles's work to the larger picture of that era. Denning, in *The Cultural Front* (1996), tracks Welles's devotion to what he calls an "Aesthetics of Anti-Fascism" (375). Anderegg, in the aforementioned *Orson Welles, Shakespeare, and Popular Culture*, acknowledges Welles's crucial role as a "mediator between high and low culture" (ix) and as "someone who was simultaneously an icon of popular and elite culture" (x), and finds in him a transitional figure of the mid-20th century. Both of these writers establish new perspectives from which to view Welles and his work, and they offer alternatives to the reductive single formula approach.\(^\text{21}\) I hope to follow this example, and offer a new perspective by looking at Welles through the attempts of others to stage and remember him.

In terms of theoretical frameworks, the discussion that follows is based on the work of Marvin Carlson and Joseph Roach, as noted previously, but also integrates insights gathered \(^\text{21}\) Curiously, the best (by which I mean, the most "sympathetic and inquisitive") biographic work on Welles is often done by writers who are not expressly writing biographies. The works of Denning, Anderegg, Rippy, Benamou, and Naremore contain perhaps the most revealing insights about the man behind the works that are their putative subject. This may have to do with a purposeful confusion, or sleight of hand, on Welles's part, between his life and his work, or it may be because these writers are not delimited by what they find in the evidentiary record, and may prefer to find the artist in his work, rather than in attempting to represent, via the evidence, a warts-and-all portrait of the "real" Welles.
during the course of my writing from reading Linda Hutcheon, Walter Benjamin, Elinor Fuchs, Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart, Rhonda Blair, Marguerite Rippy, James Naremore, Michael Anderegg, and Stephen Heath. Solving the Wellesian puzzle almost demands a piecemeal approach. I cannot say that I have solved it, but I have learned a great deal from comparing the ideas of these writers to various facets of the vast collage presented by Orson Welles's life and work. Linda Hutcheon's theorizing of the postmodern in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) and particularly her reference to "historiographic metafiction" have been instrumental to my understanding of Welles's inner postmodernist. Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) proved helpful in that it cleared some cobwebs from my mind regarding an art that Welles mastered – he is one of the 20th century's most prolific adapters of texts. His adaptation of the text of "Orson Welles" in itself was a prodigious accomplishment. It was a work he never stopped revisiting, revising, or redeploying in performance. Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller," though his specific ideas are applied to Nikolai Leskov, has helped me to understand the role Welles played as a combination griot and master of what Joseph Roach has named "orature" (Benjamin's insights on the Storyteller inform my last chapter). Elinor Fuchs's *The Death of Character* helped me to see that the anxieties bottled up in modernism find release in postmodern expressions, which is directly applicable to Welles as a transitional figure between these broadly construed categories. McConachie and Hart's *Performance and Cognition*, along with Rhonda Blair's work, have suggested that embodied realism and cognitive blending may have more to do with remembering in the theatre than we may think. I am indebted to Marguerite Rippy for her wonderful conceit of the "Wellesian brand" persona, and to the role its creation played in the successes and difficulties in Welles's life. James Naremore's book on Welles is indispensable to any study of his work: I have constantly returned to *The
Magic World of Orson Welles for his clarity of insight. Michael Anderegg's Orson Welles, Shakespeare, and Popular Culture is similarly indispensable. Heath's Questions of Cinema provided a clear delineation of "instances or categories" by which "the presence of people can be broken down" – particularly, his notion of the "figure" as a repository of the "circulation" of the other elements was pivotal for my discussion of the stage figure of Orson Welles (see footnote 7).

The major biographies of Orson Welles have been my close companions throughout this study. I have relied primarily on Bart Whaley, Simon Callow, Barbara Leaming, David Thomson, and the Peter Bogdanovich-Orson Welles collaboration, This Is Orson Welles (edited by Jonathan Rosenbaum). Whaley's is the best and most comprehensive biography – he is one of the few writers on Welles in any field (another is Peter Tonguette) who grasps the importance of magic, illusion, and deception to Welles's life and aesthetic – but Orson Welles: The Man Who Was Magic is unfortunately available only online. Callow's multi-volume series (he projects a trilogy, having at the time of this writing completed two volumes, but he has thirty-seven years yet to chronicle, and volume two covered only the seven years between Citizen Kane and Welles's departure for Europe in 1948) is built on prodigious, exhaustive research. Yet he has axes to grind, which may or may not have to do with his close association with two of Welles's associates: Micheál MacLiámmóir (for whom he served as a dresser) and John Houseman, both of whom have written entertaining memoirs chronicling their professional and personal ups and downs with Welles (Callow 1995, xiii).22 I have relied on Callow's research, and I admire his

22 In a review of Richard Linklater's Me and Orson Welles (accessible at: http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/stage/theatre/article6933290.ece), Callow writes that "I knew John Houseman, well; indeed, at his own request, he talked to me
devotion to (and obvious love for) his subject. Callow's frequent scoldings of Welles are not always inappropriate, and they are in any case a small price to pay for the decades of scholarship he has committed to his project. Barbara Leaming's book on Welles, under a very thin patina of star struck Hollywood hero-worship, benefits from the not-insignificant advantage of having been written in conjunction with a series of interviews with her subject. Though not an "authorized" biography – Welles was saving that endorsement for his interview book with Bogdanovich – Leaming's work retains a wonderful balance of admiration and critical sobriety towards her subject. Leaming, unlike Callow, seems to understand that for the biography of a great magician, the occasional fabulation is not a serious crime, and she indulges some of Welles's extrapolations without becoming over-credulous. David Thomson's Rosebud does not fare well in comparison to the other works listed here; Thomson writes beautifully and researches poorly. Unlike Leaming, he condemns Wellesian fabulations while allowing his own to body forth, unhindered. As a work of historiographic metafiction (Thomson's narrative is an intercutting of real events and impossible, disembodied dialogues with Welles and other unidentified voices), Rosebud was a source for this study because it appears to have influenced Naomi Iizuka and Anne Bogart in their production War of the Worlds (see Chapter Four).

Finally, the Bogdanovich-Welles-Rosenbaum collaboration, This Is Orson Welles, begun in the late sixties as a series of recorded interviews between Welles and Bogdanovich and edited by Rosenbaum after Welles's death, comes closer than any other document to being Welles's autobiography. This book has something of a My Dinner With Andre quality. The taped interviews were edited in transcript by Welles, who took the same kinds of liberties with the

about Welles, on his deathbed. He and Welles had fallen out terribly, but he said to me: 'Meeting Orson Welles was the best thing that ever happened to me in my life.'
material that he did with his dramatic source-texts. He changed the locations of the interviews, attributed statements to Bogdanovich that Bogdanovich had not made, and probably shaped a more flattering portrait of himself (Bogdanovich-Welles xix-xx). After one spends enough time with Orson Welles (as his character is revealed in biographies and in his films) one can readily enough come round to the view that it is well to keep both his adaptations and the often banal realities in equipoise: a good magician can do nothing without a willing audience, and most of us are up for the occasional misdirection. This Is Orson Welles was intended to "set the record straight," and (perhaps paradoxically) it brings us much closer to Welles, even if we must glimpse him through a veil of fabulation, than do the works of Callow or Thomson.

A profound anxiety over Welles's influence worked to make him "forgotten but not gone" in his own life time (Roach 2). Now that he is gone, we are quite palpably working through a process of "unforgetting" Orson Welles. "Memory is a process that depends crucially on forgetting." With Welles, a great deal has been forgotten or obscured before it could be collectively remembered, or established in grand recit form. Only a skeleton of his life's narrative is easily perceptible to the layperson. The efforts of playwrights to bring portions of that narrative to the stage represents an attempt to surmount old anxieties and remember the invisible portions of the Welles narrative, to re-write the history that is felt to have been lost or abandoned.

The plays in production do this by surrogating Welles, or reanimating his irreproducible body in effigy. The body of the actor surrogating Welles in live performance ghosts the collective memory of Welles, and thus literally demands forgetting so that we may remember (because "the fit cannot be exact," in Roach's words). Welles is a suitable subject for this process of surrogation because so much of his received mythology is built upon an emptied shell.
The truth of Welles's various narratives has been vacated, disappeared, as in a magic trick. There is something appealing about making these truths reappear. It seems to me that the plays considered in the pages that follow try to do exactly this kind of magic. They bring back what was lost, which almost makes us feel as if it were never really gone. Part of the impetus for my study has been my desire to peek behind the curtain with these plays, and perhaps learn a bit about the secrets involved, to satiate my curiosity about exactly how this trick is done.
CHAPTER TWO: NO MORE EXALTED KINGS

The story of The Cradle Will Rock is well known, but a brief retelling may help to illuminate Jason Sherman's process of adaptation of the historical record in his play, It's All True. In 1937, at a midpoint in the lifespan of the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Theatre Project (FTP), composer-librettist Marc Blitzstein's "play with music" was staged in New York by Project 891, the theatre unit run by John Houseman and Orson Welles. More precisely, it was staged under duress and despite remarkable, adverse conditions.

On June 10, Washington ordered a 30 per cent cut to the New York project, "involving the dismissal of 1,701 workers" (Flanagan 202). No "new play, musical performance, or art gallery" could open before July 1. This decision directly applied to Project 891's production of The Cradle Will Rock, and although it was not the only production affected, the directive was perceived as government censorship. The play, set in "Steeltown, U. S. A.,” was (as Blitzstein later wrote) "hot stuff” – its subject and characters bore an uncanny similarity to events playing out on the national stage (Rosenthal 19). 1936 had seen General Motors' recognition of the United Auto Workers and in 1937, Big Steel had capitulated to the unions. Little Steel (the

1 The best account is Blitzstein's, quoted in Rosenthal. Also excellent are the accounts in John Houseman's Run-Through and Eric Gordon's Mark the Music. Houseman's is the most engaging subjective account by a participant. Gordon's account foregrounds the author (naturally), and therefore presents a highly-resolved picture of the origins and contexts of the work. For an excellent recent account, see chapter five ("Why Sing of Skies Above?: Labor Musicals and Living Newspapers") in Ilka Saal's New Deal Theater: The Vernacular Tradition in American Political Theater (pp. 111-123).
combine consisting of National, Republic, Inland, Bethlehem, and Youngstown Sheet and Tube) held out, and in a confrontation in Chicago between strikers and police on Memorial Day, ten people were killed (Gordon 136, 140).

The Cradle Will Rock was set to open on June 16. The script had been vetted by Washington – both FTP Director Hallie Flanagan and WPA Director (and close adviser to Franklin Roosevelt) Harry Hopkins had given their thumbs up – but now the lights were red, not green. The WPA itself was under threat from Congressional reactionaries seeking to undermine Roosevelt's New Deal, and perhaps the powers that were saw writing on the wall. The Cradle's raisonner, Larry Foreman (Howard Da Silva), calls in the play for an organization of labor to resist Mr. Mister (Will Geer), and from the stage of a federally subsidized theatre such an invocation would make a powerful statement. Flanagan wrote in Arena that the play was perceived by many in Washington as "dangerous" (202). The FTP had scored its greatest hits with controversial productions that played strongly to the left of its audience. Perhaps Blitzstein's Cradle was seen, even by Federal Theatre administrators who might sympathize with its message, as a bridge too far.

The Maxine Elliott theatre was locked down by "a dozen uniformed WPA guards" called "Cossacks" in several accounts; Blitzstein wrote that "the Military appeared" (Rosenthal 19). Welles went to Washington to appeal directly to Harry Hopkins, but had to settle for his subordinates David Niles and Ellen Woodward, who were adamant that the show must not open. Welles threatened to produce the play on his own. Niles and Woodward countered by expressing disappointment with Project 891's lack of solidarity and by threatening to withdraw as producers (Witham 1992, 217-218). For Welles to carry out his threat would shift the financial burden of the production entirely to the Welles-Houseman partnership, an unpalatable option given the
costs of producing the show without federal subsidy. He returned to New York effectively checkmated.

In a desperate search for options – and in keeping with the spirit of Blitzstein's pro-union piece – the performing artists' unions were consulted. Actor's Equity told Houseman, incorrectly, that no actor could "perform [Cradle] on any other stage under different auspices without losing their status on the project" (Rosenthal 19). "Then we were told," wrote Blitzstein, "by the Musicians' Local that moving our orchestra to another theatre pit would set us in competition with regular Broadway musicals and that not only would the men have to be paid Broadway salaries, but we would have to increase the number of musicians instead of reducing it" (20). Amidst the compounding ironies, the master improvisers Welles and Houseman staged a coup de (political) theatre. They led a grand march from the Maxine Elliott to the serendipitously available Venice Theatre, instructed the actors to sit in the audience, and put Blitzstein alone onstage with a rented upright piano. Prepared to perform his work solo, the night truly became an "event" when Olive Stanton stood in the auditorium to sing the part of Moll, adding her voice to Blitzstein's. One by one, most of the actors followed suit, and the performance – quite at odds with what Welles had originally intended – became one in which the lines between actors and audience were blurred. Similarly muddled was the traditional sense of boundary between a director's panoptic vision and an audience's collective will.

The story was already a mythic reference point in 1938, when Archibald MacLeish introduced the published version of the script ("the genius of the present production lies in the willingness of its director to accept the pattern of an accident and give it balanced form") (9). Over the years the legend of Cradle took on, as Blitzstein noted, a "legendary gloss and blur," narrated anecdotally, visible only by portions, like the piecemeal portrait of Charles F. Kane the
reporter Thompson assembles in Welles's famous picture. Pieces of the narrative were contributed in the memoirs and biographies of Blitzstein, Houseman, Welles and Flanagan, oral histories of the Federal Theatre, in interviews, and in scattered remembrances. By 1972, when Houseman's Run-Through was published, a renewed interest in New Deal theatre was palpable. Americans were possibly tired of the postwar conservative hegemony under which Popular Front history had received little reference or attention. When Blitzstein composed his account of Cradle (recounted in lighting designer and Cradle collaborator Jean Rosenthal's 1972 memoir, The Magic of Light), he wrote that "It is not very fashionable these days to refer admiringly to the Federal Theatre Project," implying a zeitgeist of condemnation for what was perceived in some quarters as socialist theatre (Rosenthal 18).

Roughly a decade after Blitzstein's death (the composer died in 1964), Orson Welles enjoyed a short-lived reconsideration by the Hollywood peerage. Welles was selected as the third recipient of the American Film Institute's Lifetime Achievement award in 1975.² As a rebel-hero to young Hollywood, a recalcitrant maverick and hero of the Left, he had by the mid-1970s become something of an icon to the counterculture. Richard France's The Theatre of Orson Welles was published in 1977. In it, France drew attention to The Cradle in a short chapter chiefly notable for the way it troubled the received narrative.³ At some point it became

² His speech at this award ceremony, partially recorded in Orson Welles: The One-Man Band (1994), is both an important piece of Wellesian orature and a key to understanding Welles's sense of his own character and accomplishment. In essence, it is a statement on how he wished to be interpreted by his peers. I consider his AFI remarks at more length in chapter five.

³ In his fifth chapter, "The Cradle Will Rock: A Comment," France challenges the composite picture of Cradle gleaned from the various memoirs and biographies. He quotes Bil Baird (the
apparent that the Cradle story had commercially viable cinematic possibilities. Ring Lardner, Jr. wrote an unproduced, unpublished script based on the events. Welles was sent Lardner's screenplay but as usual wrote his own, which he was set to direct in 1985, the year of his death (McBride 2006, 278). Welles's screenplay, published posthumously in 1994, might have been his last film project. Neither Steven Spielberg (whose soon-to-be ex-wife Amy Irving was tentatively cast as Welles's first wife, Virginia Nicolson, in the project) nor Warren Beatty (who saw the film along the lines of his own historical epic, Reds) could overcome their respective anxieties of Wellesian influence sufficiently to help fund the film.4 The Welles script subsequently took on a life of its own as source material for several projects, including Jason Sherman's play It's All True and Tim Robbin's Cradle Will Rock. Some traces of its influence are to be found in the book and film of Robert Kaplow's Me and Orson Welles.5 Welles's script is an important piece of autobiographical material, one of his last statements on his life and work.

puppeteer of Welles's Dr. Faustus for Project 891) as maintaining that "the plethora of stories that have been spawned by this event are simply "embroidery,"" enhancements of collaborative mythmaking (102). France suggests that the impromptu nature of Cradle is a narrative staged by Houseman, Welles, and their collaborators, to enhance their reputations for their largely leftist audience.

4 See Rosenbaum's "Afterword" to Welles's screenplay (Welles 1994, 118) and McBride, Whatever Happened to Orson Welles, 278-283.

5 Particularly, Sneden's Landing (where Orson Welles and Virginia Nicolson Welles lived during Cradle and Mercury days) is referenced in both texts. The character of Virginia (Christopher Welles's mother) is rendered sympathetically by Welles, although he does depict her as prone to adultery, a sin more properly attributable to him.
Norman Lloyd, a Mercury Theatre veteran and prolific Federal Theatre actor, remarked of Welles's *Cradle* script that "Orson could have been the only person to shoot this," hinting at the deeply personal nature of the screenplay (Schwartz 33). Welles's desire to tell the story of his friend Marc Blitzstein's legendary labor opera may have been unconsummated, but his gauntlet was taken up by successors. Narratives of the youthful Welles set against the backdrop of the New Deal Theatre have proliferated in the last decade.

Jason Sherman's play *It's All True* was the first realized project to take up this gauntlet. Sherman's play adapts Welles's screenplay and material from Houseman's *Run-Through*, Eric Gordon's *Mark the Music*, Simon Callow's *The Road to Xanadu* and several other sources (see "Playwright's Notes" in Sherman, *It's All True*) into nineteen scenes that neatly present the famous story. Sherman's contribution to the *Cradle* story is to streamline the mass of historical detail into an engaging, coherent drama that foregrounds the collaborative trio of Blitzstein, Welles, and Houseman. Sherman's focus in *It's All True* is primarily on the characters (Howard Da Silva, Olive Stanton, Virginia Nicolson and Jean Rosenthal also appear) and their personal relationships, framed against an historical backdrop that serves mainly to allegorize the *Cradle* story as a tale of government censorship and the challenge of making art under capitalism. Sherman's interest in the historical substance of the *Cradle* narrative is less acute than is his desire to read a moral in the events he chooses to stage that is directly relevant to his turn-of-the-millennium audience.

Sherman's approach to his source materials gives his work the quality of assemblage. *It's All True* is a fascinating combination of historical bits, quilted to present a different, arguably

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6 Lloyd also appeared in the Living Newspaper productions *Triple-A Plowed Under*, *Injunction Granted* and *Power* (Schwartz 27-30).
fresher, picture of the narrative than the one we are used to. I hesitate to describe Sherman's approach towards his historical subject as pretending to objectivity, but like Austin Pendleton, he has a good playwright's sense for fine character detail. Sherman's Marc Blitzstein is a fascinating mess of contradictions, chasing after the commercial success that will advance his Marxist agitprop, flirting with a devil (Welles) and offering his soul to achieve his dream. Sherman's Orson Welles is an abusive little boy, chained to, and obsessed with, his own rising star, but also a maker of magic, a man who can turn a careening failure into a triumphal march with the theatrical alchemy of his last minute innovations. Structurally, the play jumps about in time. Its narrative, like many Wellesian narratives, is nonlinear. Sherman's characters are rendered as believable personalities, but the play's scenes are not seamlessly assembled to foster a feeling of verisimilitude. Fourth walls are broken, and actors remain present in scenes when their characters are not part of the action, for example.

First produced by Toronto's Necessary Angel Theatre Company and Tarragon Theatre in late 1998, Sherman's play opened more than a year before the release of Tim Robbins's film, Cradle Will Rock (Sherman 2000, 1). As a more or less fictionalized account of the events of Welles's and Houseman's legendary attempt to mount Blitzstein's The Cradle Will Rock, It's All True has some superficial similarities to Robbins's film. Both the play and the film foreground the character of Olive Stanton, the relief worker turned actress who originated the part of the Moll in Blitzstein's play. Both the play and the film dramatize the hot-and-cold relationship of Houseman and Welles, presenting it as an artistically fecund but personally costly marriage of convenience. Both projects depict the potential compromise to which Blitzstein subjected his work by entrusting it to Welles, whose evolving political sensibilities may have been naive in 1937 and who was arguably less interested in rocking cradles than in making his reputation in the
theatre. Both the play and the film deal, as does Blitzstein's musical, with prostitution, conceived broadly enough to include not merely the Molls and Mr. Misters of the world, but also the subtler whores Bertolt Brecht guided Blitzstein towards when the two met in New York in 1935. Brecht suggested Blitzstein stage the arbitrators of culture (journalists, critics, academics) but also the artists, too: the Orson Welleses and the John Housemans and the Marc Blitzsteins.

Beyond these points the projects differ. Robbins's film is a panoply, narrating the tumult and teleology of 1930s socialist art. He adapts the 1933 controversy of Diego Rivera's (Rivera is played by Rubén Blades) mural "Man at the Crossroads" commissioned for Rockefeller Center but rejected by Nelson Rockefeller on political grounds. The Rivera mural becomes a metaphor for Robbins's picture. In the deep background of his film's mural, Robbins portrays FTP Director Hallie Flanagan (Cherry Jones) as the binding force of America's first national theatre. Harry Hopkins (Bob Balaban) is a comparatively minor character, a middle man caught between New Deal imperatives and the Martin Dies committee that helped bring the Federal Theatre down. Finer details in Robbins's mosaic include representations of Oscar Saul and Louis Lantz's *Revolt of the Beavers* and Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (Marx-inflected works like Blitzstein's *Cradle* that were aimed at young and community audiences, respectively). All are woven into a mosaic that centers on the Blitzstein plot. Robbins laments the death of vaudeville with a fictional character, ventriloquist Tommy Crickshaw (Bill Murray); Crickshaw is a red baiting closet comrade whose relationship with his dummy becomes synecdochal for the predicament of the artist under capitalism. Robbins's stated purpose was to give "an indication of the American business and government complicity in the rise of the European war machines," because this history had not been presented in a popular film. He also wanted to accurately portray the human experience of the Great Depression in a "Preston Sturges, Frank Capra, and Howard
Hawks’ screwball comedy style (Robbins 1-2). Jason Sherman's play, which takes its title from an unfinished 1942 essay-documentary-travelogue by Welles that (in conception) incorporated fact, fiction, and metafiction, is both less and more ambitious than Robbins's film.

*It's All True* is less ambitious than *Cradle Will Rock* in that it does not attempt to make broad assessments of what Robbins refers to as "the Moment." Robbins's film depicts American art at a crossroads during the Federal Theatre era of 1935-1939. Robbins presents the events he narrates as a kind of unregistered dream in American historical consciousness, a dream that he is attempting via the film to recuperate. His movie is a pastiche of teachable moments, pedagogic scenes from New Deal days, and an attempt to revivify the liberal sensibilities of the Popular Front for his *fin de millennium* audience. In *Cradle Will Rock*’s poignant final scene – in which the "corpse" of Crickshaw's dummy (wearing a placard marked "Federal Theatre") is borne around the corner of a 1930s street into a vista that includes a neon-infected, hyper-commercialized 1999 Times Square, Robbins's takeaway message is effectively delivered.7 The end result of submission to marketplace ideology in America is a more and more prostituted cultural landscape. What is past is prologue. Blitzstein, whose messianic message was compromised and diluted when it was forced to interact with the commercial realities of the American theatre (represented by Welles and Houseman), is, according to Robbins, a figure of proleptic vision whose play can still speak feelingly to American artists and audiences today. Sherman's play is more ambitious than Robbins's film, however, in that it more completely takes

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7 The Tommy Crickshaw subplot borrows this episode from an "improvised march" following the announcement of the Federal Theatre's closing in June, 1939. The puppet in the coffin was the star of Yasha Frank's *Pinocchio*, a Federal production that had put vaudevillians to work. The march paraded silently to Duffy Square (not Times) (Buttitta and Witham 227).
to heart Brecht's warning to Blitzstein – that "artists are whores, too" – by presenting the author/ideologue Blitzstein as himself able and willing to compromise or "sell out."

In It's All True no figure is as idealized as Robbins's version of Blitzstein (Hank Azaria). In Cradle Will Rock Blitzstein is haunted by the ghost of his dead wife Eva Goldbeck (Susan Heimbeinder) and by Brecht himself (Steven Skybell). They enact a tag-team guilt trip on the playwright-composer, appealing jointly to his artistic and political consciences and pushing him to write The Cradle. A dark cloud threatens Blitzstein's pure vision when he entrusts his play's production to Orson Welles (Angus Macfadyen) and John Houseman (Cary Elwes), played as a drunken opportunist and a pretentious poseur, respectively. Robbins's Blitzstein is incorruptible,  

8 Blitzstein dedicated The Cradle Will Rock to "Bert Brecht." When Brecht was in New York supervising the Theatre Union's troubled production of The Mother, Blitzstein "sat Brecht down and played him his sketch that included the song "Nickel Under the Foot." The song reflects the hard-boiled, hard-bitten world view of a young lady economically forced into selling herself. Brecht rose to his feet when Marc had finished, saying, "Why don't you write a piece about all kinds of prostitution – the press, the church, the courts, the arts, the whole system?" (Gordon 113). Robbins makes Brecht and Eva Goldbeck shaping fantasies of Blitzstein's seething brain, the inspirational poet and lover, respectively, of his compact imagination. Brecht is present as a motive force, and Eva is a literal ghost (she died in 1936). Sherman also stages Eva as a ghost, and makes no mention of Brecht (neither the play nor the film makes mention of Kurt Weill, long an interest and influence of Blitzstein's). Blitzstein never remarried, preferring male partners for the rest of his life. In the first production of It's All True, according to the published script, the same actor (Melody Johnson) played both Eva and Olive Stanton, whose Moll sings "Nickel Under the Foot " (Sherman 2000, 1).
set off from the magnificent Bickersons – Houseman and Welles, played as a screwball comedy act – by an ideological exchange over a dinner table at "21":

WELLES. There's nothing wrong with money, Marc. Everyone digs that beat, wants in. It's all the rage. Even the boys in the Kremlin are starting to roll around in it. You think that Mr. Stalin is eating the same meal as the factory worker? We call it the Ritz, you call it the Comintern Club.

BLITZSTEIN. I have no problem with money. I need it just like everyone else does. The question is what will you do for money? Where do you draw the line? Cradle Will Rock is about prostitution. Prostitution of education, prostitution of the press, the courts, and most important for you and me, prostitution of the artist. Where do you draw the line, Orson? Or do you draw the line?

HOUSEMAN. Well, this is going extremely well. (Robbins 62, italics in original)

Though Robbins's Blitzstein will risk the integrity of his vision insofar as he needs Welles and Houseman to stage his work, he is never more than tempted by actual whoredom. His line is clearly drawn.

In contrast, Sherman presents Blitzstein as capable of compromising his own principles in order to see his play through to successful realization. In It's All True, Sherman has Blitzstein suggest to Welles that Stanton, the proletarian amateur whose weak understanding of Cradle (and her part) is causing both men headaches, can be manipulated into a better performance if her lover (Howard Da Silva, in the play's conceit) can be persuaded to jilt her. Thus Sherman's Blitzstein is no idealized champion of the working classes (as is Robbins's), but a variation on Brecht's artist-as-prostitute. Sherman's Blitzstein is an artist whose avowed audience is the
American middle class but who is not above sacrificing a working girl's personal integrity and peace of mind to the greater project of his political vision. The difference is crucial, and I draw attention to it to characterize Jason Sherman's dramatic vision. Sherman's honesty in his treatment of artist-surrogates like Blitzstein and Welles in It's All True is at odds with the more popular but less keenly perceived sketches by Robbins and company. Where Robbins sees an idealized self – the artist as champion of the common person – in the figure of Marc Blitzstein (and sees, by contrast, a series of straw whore-plutocrats in his renderings of Hearst, Nelson Rockefeller and Margherita Sarfatti), Sherman sees a mirror. Like the funhouse mirrors Orson Welles would deploy in The Lady From Shanghai, Sherman's dramaturgy reflects ugly iterations that delight precisely because they deepen our understanding (and enhance our awareness) of the artist who made them. This reflects an approach to art that Welles might have appreciated – a "radicalization of style," to use James Naremore's phrase, that forces an audience's awareness of the presence of the author as narrator of the events (Naremore 111).

9 In the closing sequence of The Lady from Shanghai (1947), Welles stages a spectacular shootout in a nightmarish funhouse. James Naremore writes of this sequence (in The Magic World of Orson Welles) that it is "the grandest example of Welles's delight in movie illusionism," and that "it is such a brilliant moment that it almost transcends its fictional content" (128). In the scene, protagonist Michael O'Hara (Welles), the eponymous lady, femme fatale Elsa Bannister (Rita Hayworth), and Elsa's husband, trial lawyer Arthur Bannister (Everett Sloane), find themselves in a house of mirrors. Elsa and Arthur fire shots at each other, and one by one, the mirrors (and their unflattering reflections) are smashed.

10 "The Radicalization of Style" is the title of James Naremore's fifth chapter in The Magic World of Orson Welles. Naremore uses this phrase to describe a shift in Welles's approach to
It is important to consider Sherman's play in light of Tim Robbins's movie because as a popular version of an important historical moment the latter has overshadowed the former.

Sherman lamented that Cradle Will Rock "killed any possibility of [It's All True] being picked up anywhere" in a 2000 interview for American Theatre. Although the play has been staged repeatedly since 1998, the Robbins version is probably better known to a greater number of people (Nunns 32). Both the play and the film (as well as the screenplay by Welles on which politics and art "after the fall" (Welles's loss in popularity and commercial viability after the perceived failures of The Magnificent Ambersons and It's All True) (112). Naremore writes that, in this period (roughly the second half of the 1940s), "the frenzy and unorthodox form of [Welles's work. . .] may be seen as partly a response to the growth of reactionary politics in the country, and can be related not only to Welles's working conditions but to his growing dissatisfaction with American life" (117). The "radicalization of style" also refers to the way in which, more and more as the years wore on, Welles's cinematic style incorporated pseudo-Brechtian epic narrations. The presence of his star/brand persona is strongly marked in his films, not merely by his frequent appearance as an actor in them, but by his careful manipulation of his audience's awareness of his directorial presence. Jason Sherman, it seems to me, borrows a little of this Wellesian magic in It's All True.

11 The play had its American premiere at Philadelphia's InterAct Theatre Company during the 2000-2001 season (http://www.interacttheatre.org/play-submissions.html), and has been frequently restaged. In 1999, the American Century Theatre staged the play in conjunction with a production of Blitzstein's Cradle (http://www.bostonphoenix.com/boston/arts/theater/documents/02692336.htm); TimeLine Theatre in Chicago produced the play in 2005 (http://www.timelinetheatre.com/its_all_true/).
both are partly based) rehearse tropic elements of the *Cradle Will Rock* mythology, but they do so in very different ways, concentrating on different corners of the historical mural. A consideration of this key difference may be useful. In what follows, I place Jason Sherman's *It's All True* in context with several other sources that narrate the events of Welles's early theatre career. My mode is for the most part analytical, combining a close reading of Sherman's play with some parallel readings from his acknowledged sources, in the hope that his inclusions and his departures from his sources will reveal something of his intent.

In the balance of this chapter I consider Sherman's approach to the materials from which he crafted his play (building on the play's contextual history I have sketched thus far and a short review of the evolution of the *Cradle* narrative), offering a tentative assessment of his "poetics" and applying this assessment to his treatment of Orson Welles as a stage figure. In keeping with the guiding questions of this study, which ask why and how Orson Welles is staged for a collective audience and what his ghost means to the American stage, I read Sherman's positioning of the character of Blitzstein as a Wellesian epic narrator and as a figure of identification for the playwright (as the figure of "the Writer," broadly construed). I emphasize Sherman's iterations of Welles's stage figure: the playwright stages Welles variously as a magician, a dictator, a sell-out and a fake. I briefly analyze these iterations and read them as tropic elements of a recycled narrative, reading Sherman's adaptation of his source materials through Marvin Carlson's conception of "the Haunted Text." Additionally, I consider Sherman's play as staged theatre history and assesses the moral we derive from *The Cradle*'s origin myth as a politically charged "event" and as a resistance to government censorship. Ultimately, I am concerned with the ways in which Sherman's play remembers and reinvents Welles. As an
antagonist to Blitzstein in It's All True, I read Sherman's Welles by the reflected light of Sherman's Blitzstein, the play's protagonist.

ROCKING CRADLES AND GRAND RECITS: REMEMBERING THE CRADLE MYTH

The history of Blitzstein's play in its original moment has had many iterations. It is a favorite topic not just of dramatists and filmmakers, but of historians and biographers. Though some elements are consistent among the versions, The Cradle's stage-managed qualities have often been downplayed or effaced altogether. Barry Witham has challenged the traditional reading of the WPA budget cuts that resulted in The Cradle's impromptu staging at the Venice Theatre as a deliberate act of censorship (1992, 218). Richard France has pointed out that Welles and Houseman were likely "about the business of mythmaking" (1978, 102). Having courted a Leftist audience since their first joint venture (Archibald MacLeish's Panic in 1935, an oratorio about a plutocrat doomed by the 1929 market crash), the duo must have guessed that a good story about resistance to the censorship of "Cossacks" would play well to their largest demographic. Welles's mad dash to Washington to meet with Niles and Woodward to prevent the stopping of Cradle has, as noted previously, the brimstone whiff of political theatre about it. It may have been a Faustian misdirection to earn bragging rights with allies on the Left, to enhance his own mythology, and in a fell swoop cast his FTP bosses in the Mr. Mister mold.

To admit this possibility is not to say that the effort was not heartfelt on Welles's part. He was twenty-two in June of 1937 and may well have believed that his theatre was being deliberately censored and that an impassioned plea by a firebrand could reverse the national directive. It is also not to say that the WPA's cuts weren't thinly-veiled censorship. Flanagan wrote in Arena that she interpreted the cuts as "censorship under a different guise" (202-203). It
is rather to acknowledge that the history of *The Cradle Will Rock* is complex—a story that, like *Citizen Kane*'s, must be seen at subjective angles and never as a totality. A simple understanding of Blitzstein's play in its historical moment as a battle between good artists and evil politicians obscures parts of the narrative that are worth remembering. Reading a simple moral in this history (censorship is bad and must be resisted, with Robbins's corollary that the dream of nationally subsidized American art was killed by short-sighted, censoring politicians) softens the focus in the portraiture of both the artists and the politicians, who become abstracted types. Such a reading falsely demarcates the types, a painful mistake in an era when the politicization of art and the artfulness of politics emerged as dominant themes. Such a reading also moves the reception of *Cradle* toward a sentimentality that would likely have displeased Blitzstein, who was quite conscious of the susceptibility of artists to prostitution: the violinist Yasha and the painter Dauber are two of the most egregious whores in his play.

Memory is a process that depends crucially on forgetting (Roach 2). It is important to excavate the *Cradle* myth for historical traces that have been less frequently emphasized. We persist in remembering *The Cradle*'s Venice Theatre opening night as purely improvised Popular Front theatre, despite the exposés of the men behind the curtains published by France and Witham. We should ask why we also persist in ignoring the details that contradict the popular versions. The improvised staging of Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* has been adopted as a foundational myth of the Federal Theatre specifically and of the New Deal and the Popular Front more generally. When figures from this myth are surrogated on stage, the *grand recits* in which they play key parts are rehearsed and the figures recuperated accordingly. *It's All True* cuts directly to an unsentimental staging of the problems of collaborative art under capitalism, where the dream of national subsidy of the arts is alive but under threat. Because the play was written
by a Canadian author observing the theatre history of a neighbor country, it is perhaps couched at a safe critical distance from the tendency toward national mythmaking that mars Robbins's film.

Sherman's play may provide a useful example of how the process of collective/selective memory works when applied to a narrative (the stage history of Cradle) with a living legacy – Canadian and American theatre artists still grapple with the problems of founding sustained, organized repertory companies, and the dream of an American national theatre may be deferred but is not quite dead. Project 891, though subordinate to the FTP, became the foundation of the short-lived Mercury Theatre. The histories of the Mercury and its sometime competitor, the Group Theatre, have strong resonance for artists and audiences today who would sustain repertory companies and champion a national theatre. The figures of Sherman's play are confronting exactly these problems.

Though Sherman emphasizes many of the familiar tropic elements of the Cradle myth, he undercuts stereotypes by following his characters in unexpected directions (his Blitzstein sells out and his Welles rejects sentimentality). Sherman challenges the audience's expectations by subtly revising the effigies he stages. The things that return again to his stage return deliberately reformed, and the alterations of the reforming hand may be considered and analyzed. Sherman has kept a careful eye on the crucial process of selectively forgetting – the figures he recuperates derive their freshness and dimensionality from his attention to detail and his willingness to challenge stereotypes. If Sherman's Welles is a somewhat battered effigy – Welles is the play's antagonist, and the character's tyrannical tendencies are foregrounded, both to serve the play's thematic opposition between autocracy and democracy and to in some measure reflect reality – he is despite this (or perhaps because of it) a balanced and believable figure. In It's All True Sherman renders the mythologically outsized figure of Welles in a credibly human portrait.
JASON SHERMAN'S MARC BLITZSTEIN: THE FIGURE OF THE WRITER

Because Jason Sherman presents the story of The Cradle Will Rock primarily from Marc Blitzstein's perspective, the play stages a writer's eye-view of Orson Welles. It is worthwhile to consider the figure of Blitzstein and what he may signify for Sherman, because as the play's pivotal character he is a strongly sympathetic figure whose line of action is directly threatened by Welles's countervailing line of action. Welles is (in part, at least) the negative to Blitzstein's positive, and Sherman's staging of Orson Welles is accomplished by a careful contrast with his staging of Marc Blitzstein. In It's All True Sherman makes the very Wellesian move of choosing a protagonist who is in some respects an autobiographical reflection of his author, as a short list of their similarities reveals.

In the play, Blitzstein must subject his work to Welles's concept interpretation (conspicuously expensive rolling glass wagons cluttering Blitzstein's imagined bare stage). Sherman's presentation of Blitzstein's dilemma illustrates what Welles's involvement in a project meant to his collaborators. Entrusting a play to "production by Orson Welles" could mean surrender of authorial control to a subsuming vision that obscured collaborative contributions under the Wellesian marquee. Staging Marc Blitzstein's partnership with Welles allows Sherman to raise the mythic specters of Howard Koch (author of the radio program War of the Worlds), Herman Mankiewicz (co-author with Welles of Citizen Kane), or Sam Leve (scenic designer of the fascist Mercury Caesar). Stories told about these and other artists have enhanced Welles's reputation as a megalomaniac credit-stealer. Welles was, infamously, no respecter of texts or

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12 Pauline Kael's 1971 essay Raising Kane is probably the best known indictment of Welles as an arrogant credit-stealer. Kael's most damning assertion was that "Welles didn't write (or dictate) one line of the shooting script of Citizen Kane" (Kael 38). This was contradicted by the
authorial intentions, and he strove mightily to foster the notion of himself as a "One-Man Band" (this was an easy impression to create, because it was largely true). He had a great gift for adaptation, but his textual prestidigitation came at a price. Particularly in his early theatre productions, Welles filled the gaps left by his rapacious cuts with substitutions evocative of his scholarship of Robert Carringer (in his essay "The Scripts of Citizen Kane" – see also Carringer's 1985 The Making of Citizen Kane). Peter Bogdanovich published a rebuttal ("The Kane Mutiny," partly ghost-written by Welles) and Jonathan Rosenbaum challenged Kael's calumny in a 1971 book review (titled "I Missed It At the Movies," reprinted in Discovering Orson Welles, 16), but the damage to Welles's reputation was long-lasting. The truth is that Welles's particular gift as a writer (and as a creative artist) was in the adaptation of his materials. Herman Mankiewicz provided the raw material of Kane's story (a composite of the biographies of William Randolph Hearst and Orson Welles); Welles cut and rearranged the material into its final form. Welles often did present himself as the sole author of many of his productions, but as Marguerite Rippy notes, this was a commercially savvy branding maneuver designed to increase the viability of the Welles/Mercury brand, which combined Welles's star persona with the Mercury's reputation for successful theatrical collaboration (Rippy 28). Andrea Nouryeh recounts the evolution of the scene design of the Mercury Theatre's Julius Caesar as a "collaborative effort" (Nouryeh 46). Yet in the book and film versions of Me and Orson Welles, Welles is depicted as attempting to falsely represent himself as the sole originator of the famous set. On balance, the trope of Welles as credit-stealer is a reductive distortion. The trope survives on the basis of a handful of accounts (Kael, Leve, etc.), though much later testimony from Welles's collaborators (as for example the oral histories gathered by Peter Prescott Tonguette for his 2007 Orson Welles Remembered) paints a very different picture.
own evolving brand persona (a combination of his audience's growing awareness of him as a star actor-director with a recognizable stylistic approach and his propensity toward sublimated autobiography in his work). For example, Project 891's production of *Doctor Faustus* – which immediately preceded *Cradle* – was reduced to fifteen fast scenes and relied for its impact less on Marlowe's text than on Welles's black art magic and the play's thematic parallels with what Houseman called "Welles's own personal myth" (235). *Faustus* and the later, modern-dress Mercury *Caesar* benefited greatly from this reductive-adaptive approach, but in the case of Marc Blitzstein and *The Cradle Will Rock* Welles faced a text the political significance of which he may not at first have entirely understood. *Cradle*'s pro-union message and its intent – noted by Archibald MacLeish – of destroying the "worldly audience" to "change it back to men and women who will think and judge" may have been lost on the young Welles (Blitzstein 7). It seems clear in retrospect that Welles learned and profited immensely from his engagement with Blitzstein (the debt to *Cradle* owed by *Citizen Kane* has rarely been acknowledged) and that after this partnership Welles's political awareness matured profoundly.13 Yet at this point in his career

13 A short list of similarities between *Cradle* and *Kane* would include their flashback structure, their reduction of characters into quasi-Brechtian types (admittedly a practice used with more sophistication in *Kane*), and their profound antifascist message. Welles was an enemy of fascism before *The Cradle Will Rock*, but all of his serious early statements against fascism occur in its wake: *Caesar*, *Kane*, etc. Add to this that Blitzstein had written an opera about the Biblical first murderer, *Cain*; and that in all of his work for the FTP, but perhaps most dramatically in his partnership with Blitzstein on *Cradle*, Welles earned the ire and suffered the big-voiced critique of W. R. Hearst. Welles dedicated his screenplay of *Cradle* to Blitzstein and ended his script
and with this text, Welles's adaptive strategy of substituting of his own personality and bravura showmanship for the thematic "meat" of a given work was doomed to failure. In the event, his gift for last minute improvisation, forced into service by the demands of the moment, got the better of his autocratic vision – and Blitzstein's play benefited. In choosing Blitzstein as his central figure and Welles as the hero-writer's bewitching nemesis, Sherman stages a battle between the democratic and the autocratic in art; a conflict between political theatre and the culinary theatre of the middlebrow; and a contest between sobriety and escapism for the audience as the purposive ends of drama. He does so in a way that exposes the hypocrisy inherent in these simple oppositions, rendering not just the idealist but the autocrat in Blitzstein and not just the dictator but the collaborator in Welles. It is worthwhile, then, to consider the connective tissue bonding the writer Sherman to his character Blitzstein.

Like Blitzstein, Sherman is Jewish, but neither artist can be easily labeled as orthodox or devout. Though Sherman's plays (particularly The League of Nathans, The Retreat and Reading Hebron) have dealt controversially with Jewish identity and Israel, Sherman "sees himself within a grand tradition of modern humanistic thinking in secular Judaism." His interviewer Stephen Nunns points out that "trying to peg Sherman as a "Jewish Playwright" may be doing him a disservice," because his approach to his work is eclectic and not primarily ideological (Nunns 32). Similarly, "Blitzstein rarely thought about his Jewishness and took no pains to explore Jewish themes in his work," though he was outspoken in his opposition to anti-Semitism (Gordon 319). Sherman's play Reading Hebron, a Marat/Sade-style interrogation into the 1994 Hebron massacre, has received few productions (particularly in the United States) and suffers with this line: "Marc Blitzstein is sorely missed. This film is dedicated to him with much affection" (112).
from what Sherman refers to as a "climate of fear gripping [theatre] programmers" (Modern Jewish Plays, "Outro," 365). Hebron's "heavy subject matter is counterbalanced by a frantic, often hilarious structure" that borrows stylistically from vaudeville (Nunns 31-32). Hebron's protagonist, Nathan, fantasizes encounters with Edward Said, Noam Chomsky and A. M. Rosenthal, among others, in which he dialogues amusingly with their conflicting ideas about Jewish identity, the state of Israel, and the Hebron killings. Ultimately Nathan fails to arrive at a neat, ideologically approved conclusion, and most of his questions remain unanswered.

Sherman's desire to "question things" and his irreverent treatment of material deemed commercially risky is analogous to Blitzstein's firebrand determination to stage The Cradle Will Rock in the context of steel strikes and a climate of conservative hostility to Federal Theatre.

Unsurprisingly, both writers are passionate about the need for national subsidy of the arts. In a 1928 lecture, Blitzstein opined that "the ideal situation for the self-respecting artist [is one] . . . in which he feels himself essential to the community, and recompensed for the importance of his work accordingly, not by a patron, upon whom depends the money, but by a fixed fund, established nationally" (Gordon 40). In a 2005 interview with the Artistic Director of TimeLine Theatre Company in Chicago, PJ Powers (occasioned by TimeLine's production of It's All True), Sherman lamented that "under [then current] circumstances" (corporate sponsorship of the arts, necessitated by a "massive drop in real dollars for the arts" in Canada and the U. S.), "artists find themselves under subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle, pressure, to create conformist art" (2). Doubting the efficacy of a reactive strategy to a gradually diminishing governmental support of the arts in the last decades of the 20th century, Sherman denies that "Culture" writ large need be justified by its "economic impact." Rather he asserts that

The arts are important not because they make people go to restaurants, take taxis
and buy a piece of cake after the show, but because they are an irreplaceable part of the human experience, the import of which cannot be measured by bean counters. (3)

This position echoes both The Cradle Will Rock's 1937 staging and the treatment it has received from Sherman and Tim Robbins. Blitzstein's play, with its call for unionization and its dramatization of bourgeois prostitution infecting all demesnes of American life, is reflected in Sherman's defiance toward concession to "bean counters." Cradle's reception as agitprop and a theatrical "event" – as a staging of both political and cultural theatre – accords with subsequent iterations of the Cradle myth, and find their contemporary inheritor in Sherman's opposition to the subordination of "Culture" and art to marketplace imperatives under capitalism.14 A key difference between Sherman and Blitzstein, of course, pivots on the latter's commitment to communism. Sherman has expressed ennui about his plays' commercial failure, but stoically prefers to assess his work as inadequate (". . .coming to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that the plays just aren't any damn good") rather than assign blame to a hegemonic system. (Sherman 2007)

Blitzstein in Cradle and Sherman in It's All True share an eclecticism of style that alternates a vernacular idiom with high culture modes of dramatic expression. Sherman's Blitzstein is a writer struggling to express an egalitarian vision within a system of production that

14 It should be noted that Welles expressed a similar view throughout his life. In a televised interview given shortly before his death in 1985, he said that "the marketplace is always the enemy of the artist" (I return to Welles's critique of the artist's role in the marketplace in chapter five). Yet in Sherman's play (and perhaps historically) the 1937 Orson Welles has less practical awareness of the dangers of commercialized art.
yields power to a myopic and limited centrality, personified by Welles (in the cultural and commercial arenas) and the censoring WPA (on the political stage). Sherman's writer is the central character in a play the resolution of which comes in painfully achieved collaboration. The finale of It's All True, in which Cradle's improvisatory staging takes place despite Welles's efforts to adapt Blitzstein's text to his own autocratic designs and despite the threat of censorship suggests that it is only when art is liberated from a top-down authoritarian structure that it can attain its greatest potential.

Marc Blitzstein's Cradle characters employ a vernacular idiom Blitzstein intended to be easily understood by a "common" audience. He was committed to the dramatic equivalent of his colleague Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man." Pushing for new forms, Blitzstein mixed traditionally disparate modes in his music and staged in Cradle a pastiche of high and low culture forms that blurred the boundaries between them. Eric Gordon writes that Blitzstein "saw his country musically . . . like a stew of popular tunes made tasty by the dissident spice of protest" (103). Musically, Gordon notes, The Cradle Will Rock is a based on "popular rhythms and song structure, [but] does not pander to these forms" (132). Blitzstein "wrote and set to music the speech patterns of a wide gamut of social classes." In Cradle Blitzstein's characters speak in a streetwise patois that to a 21st century ear may sound like Damon Runyon. This "idiomatic authenticity" was intrinsic in both music and speech. Gordon underlines Blitzstein's contribution to American musical theatre:

Never before in an American musical work had a composer rendered such attentive portraits of workingmen and women, cops, drunks, immigrants, and the middle-class petty bourgeoisie. There are no exotic locales, no flamboyant costumes. Gone are the standard heiresses and counts, the love-struck ingénues
and the romantic student princes . . . Blitzstein's prosody . . . broke all the rules by its idiomatic authenticity. (133)

Compare this insight with the verdict of Sherman's character Howard Da Silva (the actor who originated the part of Larry Foreman in Cradle) on Blitzstein in It's All True:

DA SILVA. . . . You are a genius. You have written – a – a whole new kind of theatre, for a whole new kind of audience. It's exactly what we need today. No more exalted kings and queens and – all that bullshit. You have written for the voice of the average Joe – hookers and cops and – my god – workers. Nobody's written that. (25, italics in original)

Da Silva, who had appeared in the original production of Clifford Odets's Waiting for Lefty (and who would be blacklisted as a fellow traveler in the McCarthy era) is in Sherman's play the conscience of the working-class theatre artist.¹⁵ He pronounces Odets a "sell-out" for abandoning the theatre for Hollywood money ("how can a man write a play about the worker, spread the socialist gospel, and the go write that soulless crap – for money?") and presses Welles for a "bare stage" production of Blitzstein's play, in the manner of Waiting for Lefty (25-27).

Gordon and Sherman's Da Silva are describing Blitzstein's aesthetic ideal, as expressed in Cradle: music and theatre made and presented on a level playing field – the middle ground of the middle class audience Cradle was speaking to (located "between the top crowd pressin down and the bottom crowd comin up!" in Larry Foreman's words), with no exalted kings on either side of the curtain line (Blitzstein 140). The dream was to be realized by an erosion of boundaries between the audience and the artists, who were in reality inseparable, a previously

¹⁵ Da Silva was called before the committee in 1947 (he was named by Robert Taylor), and refused to testify. He "would not appear in a feature film for nearly a decade" (Hannsberry 183).
unacknowledged collective. Crucial to achieving this goal was the adoption of a common language, both in speech and in musical idioms, that could be spoken and understood both by theatre artists and audiences.

Jason Sherman, like Marc Blitzstein before him, is a dramatist with a keen ear for dialogue and an eye on the tendency of artists to become whores in the marketplace. Sherman left the theatre to write for television in 2007, not so much selling out as simply surviving. In his earlier plays, he creates characters who speak in a staccato dialogue rhythm, using stylized colloquial speech. Just as Blitzstein's chosen idiom reflected the popular patter of his time, Sherman's reflects the influence of Chicago playwright David Mamet (a comparison between the two positioning Sherman as the "Canadian" Mamet has often been made, to Sherman's chagrin). Jeffrey Sweet lamented Sherman's apparent debt to Mamet in a 1996 Backstage essay, referring to Sherman's play Three in the Back, Two in the Head (first produced in 1994):

The opening of Mr. Sherman's play has so much the trademark fragmented phrases, the overlapping, the mock-formal language shredding of observation into paper-thin slices, the semantic quibbling, the convoluted logic of the self-justifyingly corrupt, the reiteration of phrases with minor amendments that offer different shades of nonmeaning – so much of these elements that Mr. M.


17 Mamet's influence in It's All True can be heard viscerally in the cadence (and profanity) of Da Silva's line, "Listen, one of those guards, those Cossacks, took from my head, from my head my fucking wig." (12)
immediately comes to mind.

"Fragmented phrases," "overlapping," and "semantic quibbling": all of these descriptors apply to the opening scene of *It's All True*. (The characters are talking about the revelation, previously withheld from Blitzstein, that *The Cradle Will Rock* is going to be censored by its own producing organization.)

BLITZSTEIN. Why didn't you tell me?

WELLES. Marc.

BLITZSTEIN. Why didn't you say?

HOUSEMAN. It –

BLITZSTEIN. Yes?

HOUSEMAN. It wasn't.

BLITZSTEIN. Look.

WELLES. Marc, we didn't –

BLITZSTEIN. What?

WELLES. Didn't mean to –

BLITZSTEIN. Harm m – hurt me?

WELLES. No.

BLITZSTEIN. You did, you did. (3)¹⁸

This is quite a bit like a passage from *Speed-the-Plow, American Buffalo*, or many another germinal Mamet play, but as Stephen Nunns has observed, "the comparison only goes so far. Unlike Mamet . . . Sherman has a distance, an ironic quality that is both distinctly Canadian and, more often than not, very funny. . ." (Nunns 31). Likely Sherman intends that "Mr. M." ¹⁸ This passage is cited by Nunns, p. 31, to reference Sherman's indebtedness to Mamet.
should come to his audience's minds; he is not imitating but citing. Sweet writes that Mamet "opened a door," marrying "Pinter to Second City," but condemns Sherman's use of the style as mimicry. If Sherman were beautifying his work with Mamet's feathers, his imitation of the older playwright's style might render his work derivative, a show of forms. But in It's All True he adopts this mode only occasionally – a single part in a pastiche of styles, reminiscent of Blitzstein's approach to Cradle – and this makes the choice to adopt vernacular speech meaningful. The play begins this way not to pay homage to Mamet, but rather to introduce Blitzstein, Welles and Houseman as familiar types expressing themselves in a characterizing vernacular. Just as Blitzstein's Moll, Gent or Larry Foreman could be types stepping off the pages of a Damon Runyon story (if Runyon had been reading Marx), Sherman's writer, director and producer can be understood in the play's first scene as types from a David Mamet play. Blitzstein is the mark or rube, Welles is the huckster/con man, and Houseman is the shrewd business operator. The types are invoked only to be undermined by subsequent scenes expressed in different modes, but the work of exposition, framing and recognition has been done. This has its analog in Blitzstein's Cradle, which also complicates first impressions of the Moll with stylistic variations on the theme of prostitution that problematize simplistic readings of her figure. The point is that the language used by the characters is recognizable and colloquial. Mamet's language is for Sherman's 1998 audience a close approximation of the street poetry Blitzstein sought, the language of a theatre about and for a "common" audience.

All of these elements – Blitzstein's Judaism, concern for subsidy of the arts, eclecticism of style, and his use of vernacular idioms to address a common audience – are present in It's All True. Like a Welles film protagonist, Sherman's Blitzstein is a puppeted figure whose presence evokes his operator/author. The identification between Sherman and Blitzstein, signposted by
these similarities, works to create what Dudley Andrew has called "the doubleness and distance that . . . define the world of Orson Welles" (172). Sherman uses a Wellesian approach to his subject, but focuses his attention on Blitzstein, resulting in one of the few surrogations of Welles that attempt to depict him from an external perspective. We are not asked to identify with Welles (though the play sometimes invites sympathy for him, which is also a Wellesian move – Welles preferred attractive villains to inexplicable monsters). Our potential identification with Blitzstein allows us to see Welles subjectively and critically. By defining Blitzstein antithetically to Welles, Sherman effectively others Welles. The Welles of It's All True is decidedly not Jewish (his wife Virginia is depicted as anti-Semitic) (58), his heart is not really in the Federal Theatre (or communal/collaborative art), he is monolithic and monomaniacal (a magic-worker who wants to hide all seams, not expose them), and he is elitist ("You want to give people the truth? Fine. Just don't let them know you're giving it to them, it'll go down a lot better.") (29) From Blitzstein's vantage point, Welles is a seductive figure of authority, offering to bring the magnificent vision that fueled Faustus (the ur-play about selling out) to his staging of The Cradle. Welles once remarked that directors have to make love to their actors (Estrin 190). In Sherman's play the magician Welles seduces the artist Blitzstein (and by extension, the audience). This seduction comes to stand for the false security offered to an artist by a

19 Welles's villains are often sympathetic – Kane, Macbeth and Hank Quinlan in Touch of Evil, for example. Defending his portrayal of monstrous men as credible human beings, Welles said, "Well, you know what Renoir said? he said, 'Everyone has his reasons.' And that really sums it up, you know. There's no villain who doesn't have his reasons. And the bigger the villain, the more interesting it becomes. . . the more human you make the monster, the more interesting the story must be, it seems to me." (Welles interviewed by Leslie Megahey, quoted in Estrin, 199).
marketplace ethic. Welles is for Blitzstein at once a lover, a magician, a sell-out, and a dictator (or exalted king); for himself, he is a fake. These aspects of Welles, seen from Blitzstein's point of view, are the tropic bits that assemble in his stage figure. The portrait of Welles in the play is rather like that of Kane in Citizen Kane, in that it remains mercurial, always shifting as we shift emphasis in considering it, finally troubling us with a nagging sense of incompletion.

JASON SHERMAN'S ORSON WELLES: WHAT A LITTLE MOONLIGHT CAN DO

Like many of Orson Welles's films, Sherman's It's All True begins at the end of the story. The opening scene (the first thirteen lines, quoted above) establishes the play's central troika of Blitzstein, Welles and Houseman in the relationships they will share at the end of the play. This queasy and combustible partnership, apparently fabricated from lies, greed, and unrequited desire, is the frame through which the action of the play that follows will be understood. The play's beginning "distorts chronological structure" (to adapt Joseph McBride's words about Welles's cinema), narrating the events that lead up to the opening scene in flashback, "beginning with scenes which depict or imply the hero's destruction, thus placing his subsequent actions in an ironic parenthesis" (McBride 1996, 32). McBride's analysis of Welles's narrative technique applies well to It's All True:

His [Welles's] opening scenes often contain a poetic or literal "synopsis" of the story which is to follow. . . These overviews serve a function similar in some ways to that of the chorus in a Greek tragedy: acquainting us with the broad outlines of the myth so that we will be aware of the consequences inherent in the hero's actions as he carries them out . . . [enabling] us to maintain a concurrent emotional sympathy and ideological detachment. (32, italics in original)
The first scene of *It's All True* presents a disenchanted Blitzstein, a discombobulated Welles, and a dispassionate Houseman. The unhappy partners argue about their next course of action while relaying a good deal of exposition: we quickly learn that the theatre doors have been padlocked, that the play these three are putting on is about "a steel strike," that Houseman runs the store (while Welles takes the credit), and that there is something deeper than professionalism between Welles and Blitzstein. Blitzstein wonders if Welles has been "bluffing all along," reminding him of his promise to "make magic" (17). The subsequent flashback scenes are given tension by our curiosity regarding Welles's "promise" and our uncertainty as to whether he will indeed make magic and save the show. We are acquainted with the "broad outlines of the myth" (references to Harry Hopkins, the WPA and Project 891 evoke the 1930s and the Federal Theatre) "so that we will be aware of the consequences inherent in the hero's actions as he carries them out" (Blitzstein equates the WPA's censorship of his play with "Josef Goebbels burning books," underscoring his political commitment and idealism as at stake dramatically) (10). The framing established by the opening scene of the play encourages both "emotional sympathy and ideological detachment" towards Blitzstein, less so towards Welles.

This opening scene is a remarkable move by Sherman, who likely knows not only that a flashback narrative structure was often employed by Welles but that Welles may have learned the trick from Blitzstein, who uses it in *The Cradle Will Rock*.20 Sherman epically frames his

20 Flashbacks were also a frequently used technique in Welles's radio productions, usually arranged within a framing structure voiced by a remembering narrator (for example, Welles's highly successful adaptation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, roughly contemporaneous with *The Cradle*’s original staging). As Stephen Heyer notes (in *The Medium and the Magician*, a
play about a writer whose work is entrusted to and endangered by an auteur director via a technique that was a signature of both. The technique of flashback, furthermore, was one that the latter may have cribbed from the former, so there is a great deal of irony built into the tissue of *It's All True* from the very beginning. We are witnessing in this first scene the shadows of artists dancing around ownership and authorship of a work (Blitzstein's *Cradle*) within a work (Sherman's *It's All True*) that is a shadow of the one they're ambling over. Within the context of the first scene it is clear that Blitzstein's significance as a writer-protagonist in relationship to Welles's as an auteur-antagonist is crucially important for the play. These characters will loom large and meaningfully as types (writer and auteur) throughout the play, owing to their "haunted" status as legendary figures of theatre history. Since they are defined oppositionally, and since Blitzstein is positioned as a kind of Wellesian epic narrator, the nature and resolution of their conflict have relevance to the way in which Sherman's audience will come to understand the figure of Orson Welles.

Even before this first scene, Sherman's title raises associations that aim sententiously towards audience reception of Welles. Catherine Benamou (the premiere scholar on the subject of Welles's 1942 "Pan-American Odyssey," the unfinished essay-travelogue film *It's All True*) notes that the Blitzstein-Welles collaboration on *Cradle* echoes Welles's ill-fated documentary inasmuch as both are "bold [acts] of social critique and artistic experimentation by Welles and collaborators while working under the auspices of the U. S. state" (Benamou 2007, 2). Benamou thinks it "not entirely clear" why Sherman chose this title, but the playwright may have his own "bold act of social critique" in mind. The title – with its disingenuous claim to veracity – comprehensive study of Welles's radio work), the "first person singular" approach Welles professed himself to have pioneered was actually borrowed from earlier radio shows (Heyer 35).
antithetically evokes Welles's later film *F for Fake*. In that film, Welles appears as a magician and labels himself a "charlatan." In *F for Fake* Welles retold (with purposeful inaccuracy) the story of the 1938 *War of the Worlds* broadcast. The character of "Orson Welles" in *F for Fake* appears to embrace his role as an unreliable narrator, trickster, and deceiver of large masses of people, but (as Welles later explained) this was an intentional distortion, a role he willingly played so as not to seem like "a superior moral judge of tricksters" (Estrin 206). *F for Fake* is about fakers, forgers, and frauds, chiefly the art forger Elmyr de Hory and the writer Clifford Irving (and Welles). De Hory was among the most infamous and successful art forgers of the 20th century. Irving perpetrated a fantastic hoax when he claimed to have written an authorized biography of Howard Hughes. Welles's self-identification as a member of this crew, though meant to soften the moralizing tone of *F for Fake*, has been taken literally. Combined with his still prevalent reputation as a hoaxter (the *War of the Worlds* broadcast) and Pauline Kael's calumnious judgment (in *Raising Kane*) that he had lied about writing *Kane* (see footnote 12), Welles's performative deceit in *F for Fake* contributed to his reception as an unapologetic charlatan. Sherman deploys this trope in his play: Welles comments on his own performance of Faustus with the single word, "Fake." (19) Near the end of the play, he repeats the word, in response to Blitzstein's charge that he is an artistic fraud: "Fake! That's me. We can't all live our lives as honestly as you do, Marc." (113) Sherman's "Playwright's Notes," a prefatory acknowledgment of his source material, begin with an admission that "*It's All True* is not all true." He asserted in an interview (speaking specifically about *It's All True*) that "historical accuracy has to go out the window when it comes to telling your story," but the play deals so skillfully with questions of veracity and artifice in presenting its historical subject matter that it
seems clear Sherman intends to foreground "historical accuracy" as one of his primary themes (Contey 4).

Sherman's presentation of Welles as caught between the poles of "all true" and profoundly "fake" is linked to a motif of magic in the play. Welles seduces Blitzstein partly with sexual charisma, partly with a promise to "make magic" in his staging of Cradle (17). Magic and sex are linked in the play by the keyword "moonlight," which, Blitzstein reveals to Welles, was "what we called it when we made love" (referring to his late wife, Eva) (37). After the play's opening scene, Welles is first encountered performing Marlowe, speaking the line, "Ah Faustus, / Now hast thou but one bare hour to live, / And then thou must be damned perpetually!" (He immediately adds, to himself, the judgment "Fake...") (19) John Houseman in Run-Through remarked on the aptness of the part of the damned magician for Welles (235). The historical detail of Faustus immediately preceding Cradle on Project 891's production schedule has been exploited for dramatic effect by Tim Robbins in Cradle Will Rock as well as by Sherman, and before either of them by Welles in his unproduced screenplay. Presenting Welles as Faustus before we experience him as the director of Cradle reminds us that both plays are cautionary tales warning against selling that which must not be sold. This move heightens our sense of dramatic irony, not only within the context of the play – i.e., the consequences for Blitzstein of selling out to Welles – but beyond the play's confines, to our awareness of Welles's destiny as a vagabond artist who was ultimately reduced to shilling for Paul Masson.21 Sherman's Blitzstein

21 The association of Faustus with Cradle also allows Robbins in Cradle Will Rock to reference Hallie Flanagan's adaptation of Marlowe to the political moment when she wrote, "Need it always be Lenin's blood streaming from the firmament? Can't we sometimes be made immortal with a kiss?" The line came back to haunt her when she appeared before a congressional
witnesses Welles's performance (ending as Welles "disappears in a cloud of smoke," which Sherman borrows directly from Welles's screenplay) (Sherman 20, Welles 20). Immediately following, the men meet in Welles's dressing room. As Blitzstein enters, Welles "removes his putty nose," and the two discuss collaboration on The Cradle Will Rock. Magic is linked with artifice – or the lack thereof (Welles drops his disguise to meet Blitzstein) – and both are further associated with Welles's dramatic powers and his persona. Welles's "putty nose" approach to committee and was famously asked to identify Marlowe as a potential communist. Setting Marlowe and Blitzstein together on an FTP production schedule turned out to be a volatile move; classic texts like Faustus were all right when staged without teeth, but when framed with American politics in mind, they could be dangerous. (Flanagan 204)

The two actually met after a performance of Welles's adaptation of Eugene Labiche's The Italian Straw Hat, Horse Eats Hat, and Blitzstein wanted Welles to direct Cradle for the Actor's Repertory Company (Leaming 114). According to Barbara Leaming, "Orson found Blitzstein irresistible," and there appears to have been a strong sexual chemistry between the two men (131). The A. R. C. production never materialized (due to lack of funds), but Blitzstein and Welles continued their dialogue, and after the artistic "triumph" of Faustus, they both agreed the time was right for Cradle. Thematically linking Faustus with Cradle as the moment of their meeting proved too dramatically effective for Welles (in his screenplay), and Sherman borrows it. Horse Eats Hat, which was by all accounts an amazing, high-octane and highly-improvised chaotic miracle, though it surely would have convinced Blitzstein of Welles's directorial talent and chutzpah, offers a less compelling analogy with Cradle and popular associations with Welles's persona. Really, though, there is as much of Orson Welles – perhaps more – in the mass culture appeal of Horse Eats Hat as there is in Doctor Faustus.
acting – he famously appeared without a false nose in only one film, Carol Reed's *The Third Man* – will be criticized by Da Silva in a later scene ("let's step out from behind the smoke and mirrors, okay?") (27). Sherman adroitly presents Welles's oft-critiqued theatricality as rather more than face-painting, the stage simulacrum of Macbeth's "fiend that lies like truth." In *It's All True* both Welles's theatre magic and his outsized persona are complicated constructions that resist reductive interpretation; Sherman certainly associates the character of Welles with the figure of the magician. Into that silhouette he channels a corrosive negotiation between the true and the fake and between art that deceives and art that awakens.23

Sherman mixes "magic" with "moonlight" further by associating the latter word with the ghostly presence of Blitzstein's dead wife, Eva Goldbeck, and by paralleling Blitzstein's loss with Welles's loss of his mother, Beatrice ("We both have ghosts, then," Welles observes) (37). The two artists' shared grief is presented by Sherman as a kind of common well from which they derive collaborative inspiration (and from which the "magic" of *The Cradle* is drawn). Sherman begins the fourth scene of the play – a meeting between Welles and Blitzstein at the 21 Club –

23 Welles's preoccupation with theatricality, associated with magic and the potential for deceit in art in Sherman's play, was throughout his life a much-abused target for the anti-theatrically prejudiced. He preferred heavy make-ups and baroque effects, and to the end of his life felt the need of a false nose to mask himself (McBride 1996, 17). His early theatre productions showed the influence of German expressionism, and his early training at Dublin's Gate Theatre, under the direction of Hilton Edwards and Micheál MacLiammóir, was strongly influenced by what Edwards referred to as the "Theatre Theatrical" (Leaming 44). Welles persisted in adopting non-realistic make-ups in his American film performances through the late 50s (when Method realism was the rage).
with Welles's reminiscence about the death of his mother, based on a brief memoir Welles published in French Vogue in 1982 (reprinted in Simon Callow's The Road to Xanadu, Sherman's acknowledged source). Welles was nine years old when his mother died, and he recalls his summons to her deathbed on his birthday, where she quoted Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream (Welles writes that this was her "choice of primer when she was first teaching me to read"): 'A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king, / Whoever had so sweet a changeling . . ." (29) Welles was the changeling child. His mother wants him to make a wish over the "fairy ring" made by the nine candles of his birthday cake. Sherman's Welles speaks the 1982 words to Blitzstein in 1937:

    WELLES. . . . I puffed hard. Suddenly the room was dark and my mother had vanished forever. Sometimes in the dead watches of the night, it strikes me that of all my mistakes, the greatest was on that birthday, just before my mother died, when I forgot to make a wish. (24)24

This is sentiment that, because it is offered by the self-condemned "Fake" with the putty nose, cannot be taken sentimentally. He is allowing Blitzstein behind his strictly drawn curtain. The scene is intimate, a revelation. With Sherman's Welles, however, there are only more curtains, veiling the self-doubting shadow hiding somewhere behind. Because we have only Welles's (literal) words for his own grief, and in contrast experience Eva Goldbeck as a physical presence

24 RKO 281 begins with a similar scene inspired by Welles's memoir. In the film, the scene is clearly designed to paint Welles as foredoomed, which is to take him rather too literally at his word in the remembrance. Sherman's invocation of the memory as magic is poetically more apt, and frames the illusive memory as a deliberate (but not inauthentic) piece of personal theatre on Welles's part.
on stage (she has a tendency to appear at moments when Blitzstein's commitment to his artistic or political ideals are in crisis), Blitzstein's grief is palpable and Welles's is performed. This enhances the sense of identification we may feel with Blitzstein. It also presents Welles subjectively (from Blitzstein's point of view) as a magician, deeply sympathetic and sexually appealing, but quite possibly an act, a sad story made out of Faustian smoke, grief reflected in a trickster's funhouse mirror.

In Scene 6, Welles and Blitzstein share a walk in Central Park ("Two men in Central Park. I wonder what Hedda Hopper would say?" jokes Welles, and "They laugh uncomfortably") (36). Here, Welles's memory of his mother's "fairy ring" is echoed by Eva's ghost, who appears to haunt her husband's moonlight romance with his "magician" with the words, "Who's this fairy coming?" (37) (Eva's lack of subtlety about Marc's homosexuality is taken directly from Eric Gordon's Mark the Music, 56.) As the men walk, Blitzstein remembers Eva. Her ghost, who appeared first when Da Silva, at the 21 Club, had speculated on Blitzstein's artistic "immortality" relative to the "sell-out" Clifford Odets, becomes a player in a remembered scene shared with Welles. It is a memory play-within-a-memory play: Eva, a ghost within the play, is recalled by Blitzstein for Welles – and they, personified by actors playing legendary figures of theatre history, are ghosts for the audience.25 One level of ghosting amplifies another as the process of memory is staged. Blitzstein remembers Eva's taunting him about his artistic hypocrisy: "Poor darling, grew up middle class, wants to be so tough, a real worker. Wants to get dirty, but not down in the muck;" Welles listens, sympathetically. (39) Interestingly, the first version of It's All True (staged in 1998, before being "substantially" revised), included a part for Beatrice Welles (Hallie Flanagan also appeared as a character). Though this script has not

25 This technique is used by Sherman in other plays, notably An Acre of Time.
been published, it seems likely that given an actor's body and her own voice, Beatrice would in that version have participated in the shaping of the "fairy ring" remembrance. Perhaps Sherman preferred to have Welles narrate this story and ghost his mother directly, underlining both his powers as a "magician" and as a seducer who indulges his audiences with beguiling sentiment.

Sherman's Welles is Mephistophelian, a tempter of Sherman's Blitzstein. In It's All True, Welles tempts Blitzstein with sex, with the promise of theatrical genius (the "magic" of borrowed "moonlight"), and with the prospect of selling out. In the play, Welles is a gifted sell-out who is the cause of selling-out in others. For Blitzstein, Welles represents simultaneously both the artist in the service of capital – with whose plight Blitzstein is pledged to sympathize – and the corruptive obstacle to the transmission of an uncorrupted vision of the composer's Marxist critique. Sherman does not stage Welles as a deliberate or acknowledged betrayer of his own promise (as the American Sell-Out writ large), but he does present Welles as a man so entranced by his ability to make "magic" and please his audience that he would sacrifice nearly anything to accomplish coups de theatre. For Sherman's Welles, the process of selling out begins as a few careful steps on a slippery slope and ends beyond the play's frame of reference, when Welles will be entirely subsumed by commercial culture. This Welles's theatrical ethic is flatly stated in Scene 4, when he challenges Da Silva's hope that Blitzstein's Cradle will be played on a "bare stage," in the manner of Odets's Waiting for Lefty: "Howard, the audience expects a little more than a bare stage. They expect magic" (27). Da Silva is Blitzstein's theatrical "good angel" – Blitzstein is "all for simplicity" – and Welles is the playwright's "bad angel." Alone with Da Silva when Blitzstein fetches a round of drinks, Welles warns his actor to "keep your station" (28). After Da Silva is gone, Welles persuades Blitzstein to "forget about all that bare stage nonsense" and sums up his assessment of the artist-audience relationship:
WELLES. You want to give people the truth? Fine. Just don't let them know you're giving it to them, it'll go down a lot better.

EVA appears [. . .] (29, italics in original)

As the ghost of Blitzstein's dead wife and muse appears, Welles narrates his vision of the climax of The Cradle for the playwright (as Welles speaks, Da Silva and a "Chorus of Workers" appear to act out his vision):

WELLES. The stage is rocking, blinding lights shoot up from below, there's smoke and – fifes and drums! Yes, blaring from speakers all over the theatre, it's deafening now, and the stage is tilting and rocking, the whole damn theatre is rocking, the audience is knocked out of their seats, they're standing... and they, they've heard you, your message, only they don't realize they've been given a message, because they're so damned entertained by it all, and now, now they're ready to rush out there and tear down those fucking walls, baby, and there's your revolution, there is your revolution. [...] What do you think? (31)

The devil's bargain Welles offers is an exchange of a revolutionary "message" for "damned" entertainment. Though his promise to the writer is to hide the message inside the entertainment, Welles's staging of Cradle becomes a cluttered mess that completely obscures the play, glitzy complexity where the playwright hoped for "simplicity." Welles's desire to stage Blitzstein's play on a "rocking" stage (in reality, he wanted glass wagons that rolled on and off stage as scenes shifted) is the result (in Sherman's play and probably in life) of his muddled understanding of the play's political message. Ultimately, only the WPA's intervention and the forced march to the Venice Theatre allow Blitzstein's play to escape Welles's "smoke and mirrors" conception. Yet if Sherman presents his Welles as a force that tempts Blitzstein to sell
out his own ideals, he does not (as Tim Robbins does, in *Cradle Will Rock*) present Blitzstein as wholly uncorrupted. Both Blitzstein and Welles are presented as containing contradictions: Blitzstein is idealistic, but is nonetheless willing to compromise his principles by exploiting Olive Stanton; Welles is presented as autocratic and deceitful, but finally acknowledges his own fakery and willingly releases Blitzstein from the magic of his fairy ring. Though Sherman raises the ghosted image of the Sell-Out in his staging of Welles, he finally undercuts it by rendering Welles as a man who "has his reasons" for making deals with devils (see footnote 19). It is a sympathetic portrait, and Sherman does not render Welles's figure as inevitably doomed.

Sherman does, however, render Welles as an archetypal theatrical Dictator. Welles's interactions with Da Silva – whose previous association with the Group Theatre and Odets's *Waiting for Lefty* allows Sherman to contrast the collectivity of the Group with Welles's autocratic approach – are heavy-handed. In the scene mentioned above, Welles reminds Da Silva (while Blitzstein is absent) of Da Silva's "station" (in order to suppress the "bare stage" concept of *Cradle* Da Silva advocates and Blitzstein obviously prefers). When Blitzstein returns with drinks, a short discussion of Spain (evocative, in 1937, of Franco-style dictatorship) follows:

**BLITZSTEIN.** The bartender will send over an "otra ronda." I picked that up in Spain. Howard, have you been to Spain?

**DA SILVA.** Hm?

**BLITZSTEIN.** Spain.

**DA SILVA.** Ah, no. No I ain't. Don't like getting that close to dictators. Well, Marc, it's been a pleasure. (28)
This connection of Welles with fascist-style dictatorship evokes for Sherman's audience an awareness of Welles's reputation as a 20th century actor-manager and a directorial tyrant. The trope of Welles-as-Dictator also turns up in Me and Orson Welles and RKO 281, but in Sherman's play it is rendered more subtly than in either film. Sherman's evocation of Welles's autocratic tendencies is balanced by Da Silva's hypocrisy. All of Sherman's characters in It's All True are prostitutes (as are all of Blitzstein's characters in The Cradle), in that each is willing to sacrifice something vital for the commercial transaction of making art (Blitzstein sacrifices his vision, Welles his illusion, Olive her security, and so on). Da Silva, who valorizes the collective ethic of the Group (as evidenced by Waiting for Lefty) betrays his dedication to this ethic when he agrees to reject Olive for the sake of the play. Da Silva's complicity with Welles's and Blitzstein's strategy – to teach Olive how to act heartbroken by deliberately breaking her heart – undercuts his role as an "oppressed" actor under Welles's dictatorial director.

Jason Sherman's presentation of Orson Welles in It's All True is a skillful admixture of key tropic elements: Welles as the writer's antagonist (the autocratic auteur), and as Magician, Fake, Sell-Out and Dictator. Sherman's careful assemblage of these disparate Wellesian dimensions results in a credible figure. Sherman's play remembers and reinvents an Orson Welles who – although he remains a "mythical and ideological figure" in Jonathan Rosenbaum's phrase – does not serve merely to act out "ideological fantasies" or to inspire an audience's "kinesthetic imagination" with a rehearsal of vituperative stereotypes. Sherman's Welles, like Austin Pendleton's Orson (considered in the next chapter), is deeply sympathetic. Sherman does not allow us to forget that the man who was a theatrical dictator capable of egregious fakery was also a magician capable of creating beautiful works of art. If Sherman shows us a Welles who tempted others (and was tempted himself) to sell out and make Faustian bargains, he also shows
us a Welles who could, when the situation demanded it, dispel his own illusions. He does this in a play that is a haunting homage to Welles, to Blitzstein, to Houseman, and the theatrical legacy they shared and passed on. Sherman's Welles is less a "posthumous puppeting" of the real man than an honest ghost, honestly portrayed. It's All True stages an Orson Welles whose memory is worthy of preservation and whose legacy benefits from the "moonlight magic" of Sherman's creative reinvention.
HAMLET. He that plays the king shall be welcome, his majesty shall have tribute of me. (Hamlet, Act 2, scene 2, 208-209)

What is inevitable in the tragedy of the bull-ring is the death of the bull. (Orson Welles, from his "Introductory Letter to the Author" in Kenneth Tynan's He That Plays the King, 15)

Austin Pendleton, in a book review published some twenty-seven years before the debut of his play Orson's Shadow (2000), wrote of Robert Cohen's Acting Professionally that the "urge to act is at least in part the urge to escape this "real world"; the great actors are simply those who take the most of it along with them" (149). The 1973 review is a mere four pages long, but its concision, in situ insight, and deeply-felt articulation of the pain of a life in the theatre forecast the recognizable figure of Pendleton forward across the decades. New categories and definitional approaches seem necessary to grapple with Pendleton's multidisciplinary virtuosity. Jerry Tallmer calls him a "Triple Threat Chameleon" (though Tallmer's piece counts Pendleton up to a Quintuple Threat) and he won a 2007 Drama Desk Award for being a "Renaissance Man of the American Theatre." He has acted to critical acclaim on the stage and he is an omnipresent character actor on television and in films. He is a highly successful stage director (he won a Tony Award for his 1981 production of Hellman's The Little Foxes) and was Artistic Director of the Circle Repertory Company in New York (presiding over its last days). He is an accomplished writer, having served as both critic and scholar (witness the book review). As a playwright Pendleton has contributed Booth (1994, adapted from a musical titled Booth is Back
that dates back to his Yale years), *Uncle Bob* (1995) and *Orson's Shadow* (Tallmer). He is also a teacher of acting (at HB Studios in New York starting in 2008). If, like his subject, Pendleton is a "One-Man Band" (having, like Welles, cast his own long shadow across a range of disciplines), he has in common with Welles also that all of his professional interests appear to center meaningfully on the art and craft of the actor.

Like Welles, Pendleton brings to all his projects a certain brand persona. In Pendleton's case it is one that implies stage veteranhood, time spent and laurels earned in the presence of the great names of the theatre. He may specialize in playing little men (the stuttering lawyer in 1992's *My Cousin Vinny* or the Chaplain in George C. Wolfe's 2006 *Mother Courage* for the Public) but his own shadow on American theatre is very great indeed. As an artist and as a star persona, Pendleton is both witness and practitioner. As a scholar-artist, he evokes Shakespeare's Horatio, who sees and remembers Kings and the ghosts of Kings and survives to tell, enact, and take up the bodies. Many times and in many ways throughout his career, Pendleton has experienced the kind of exploitation Marvin Carlson describes when he writes of the "recycled body of the actor, already a complex bearer of semiotic messages, [who] will almost inevitably in a new role evoke the ghost or ghosts of previous roles" (8). Like Welles's, Pendleton's brand persona has become evocative of his theatrical virtuosity: his audiences know (and the knowing imbricates Pendleton's performances) that he is a storied and legendary presence, a gifted and respected actor and teacher of acting, and also a survivor-witness of the last decades of 20th century American theatre.

His work is in a sense pedagogic, an inheritance from Brecht and Brecht's American colleague, Orson Welles. With Pendleton, the teacher's role is always linked with the craft of acting, which he knows well from experience and firsthand observance. In his review of the
Cohen book, he writes that "Self-mistrust is the ultimate buried nightmare for anybody in the business, as it is for bullfighters and tightrope-walkers," and goes on to describe self-mistrust as an earned quality among actors ("something that builds up over years") (148). This perception about acting and the inward engine of the precarious, threatened ego that can drive an actor's inspiration, informs Pendleton's staging of actors in his plays Booth and Orson's Shadow, and it affects the way he understands the figure of Orson Welles. As a career theatre artist and as an actor who worked literally in Welles's shadow (as mentioned in Chapter One, the two shared scenes in Mike Nichol's film of Joseph Heller's Catch-22), Pendleton frames Welles via the figure of the actor. In Orson's Shadow we cannot escape an awareness that we are experiencing a performance about actors written by an actor; we might say a performance about "great" actors written by (at the least) a very good one who has spent much of his life among the "greats," and much of it also teaching and sharing what he has learned and witnessed.

In Orson's Shadow Pendleton channels the great figures he stages and his medium is memory, both his and his audience's.¹ To do it he calls on the theatre's unique memorial magic, 

¹ The "shadow" of Pendleton's title resonates in many ways. It implies Welles's failures and unfulfilled potential, and the anxiety his example may provoke in those who feel his influence. It neatly couples references to high and low culture Wellesian productions, twinning Welles's role as the 30s pulp-radio hero, the Shadow, with a nod to Shakespeare – there are many shadows in Shakespeare (the word is sometimes analogous with "player"), but probably the most applicable shadow is from King Lear, specifically, the Fool's reply to the King's proud request, "Who is it who can tell me who I am?" with the sobering: "Lear's shadow." (1.4.189-190) Finally, the title anticipates (or suggests?) the title of Chris Welles Feder's memoir about her relationship with her famous father, In My Father's Shadow (2009).
remarked by Carlson, Roach, Herbert Blau, Freddie Rokem, and others. The play's figures are made great by a trick of perspective, if by nothing else – we look variously up and across and a little bit down at them through Pendleton's eyes. He recuperates them with the help of actors who are charged by his script with the task of embodying memory. It is an eidetic mode of memory that Orson's Shadow invokes: we are engaged in the reception of his play with a vivid recall that concentrates on the telling details that close the sale of authenticity. At once we are sold testimony and fabulation – the playwright has a living memory of Welles and perhaps beseeches our trust in his staging of the figure (a tactic he could not employ in his Booth). In the same staging we are told that the play's events are fabricated, a free form extrapolation on a footnote of theatre history. The play is a version of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction": it is a "self-conscious" narrative that demands of audiences "both detachment and involvement" (Hutcheon 1988, x). We both know and must willingly forget that the play is a fiction. We are invited to consider the play's figures as shadows of things that have been and the

Eidetic memory is "marked by detailed and vivid recall of visual images" (American Heritage College Dictionary, 448). Attilio Favorini characterizes the tactics of "remembering narrators" in plays like Tennessee Williams's Glass Menagerie as relying on eidetic features of memory ("search and display, encapsulation and expansion, etc."), referencing Edward Casey's Remembering: A Phenomenological Study (1987) (7). All of the characters in Pendleton's play (except perhaps Sean) are "remembering narrators," staging their shared memory scenes collaboratively. The play works precisely because it renders Welles and the rest as true to life by relishing little details – Welles's weight, Tynan's stammer, etc. It excites our kinesthetic imagination by inspiring a "vivid recall of images" of these figures, whose images (in Stephen Heath's sense – see chapter one) are already familiar to us.
play itself as somehow true, though its events did not actually happen. This bifurcated sense of the true and the unreal, so necessary to Orson’s Shadow, recalls an aesthetic Welles himself described when he said of his film Touch of Evil that it is “unreal but true [. . .] the highest kind of theatricality, the best kind” (Estrin 198). Despite or perhaps because of its haunting unreality, Orson’s Shadow works well when staged eidetically. Its earliest staging in an intimate theatre setting (at Chicago’s Steppenwolf Theatre – itself an actor's theatre, started by actors) allowed the audience to feel the palpable presence of the legendary bodies whose buried nightmares of self-mistrust explosively intermixed before them (Machray 1).

There is a lovely compact disc recording of an LA Theatre Works production of the play (released in 2003) in which the actors powerfully evoke their characters – they do not mimic, but are simultaneously recognizable and distinct, so that, in a quasi-Brechtian fashion, we are at once aware of the actors’ roles and their interpretations of their roles. Being "detached and involved" through the trick of historiographic metafiction Orson’s Shadow deploys feels strangely similar to being haunted. We know these ghosts, but Hamlet-like, do not quite trust them. Pendleton’s play is a deliberate recuperation of crucial stage figures – Welles, Laurence Olivier, Vivian Leigh, Joan Plowright, and Kenneth Tynan – all of them deeply concerned and symbolically resonant with the figure of the (stage) actor writ large.³ His ghosting of these figures – a poetic meeting of actorly self-mistrust and audience mistrust of potentially offending shadows – is always and everywhere charged with capital-A Acting. Orson’s Shadow is a play by an actor about actors (and a critic, and a stagehand) that asks, in the true performing of it, to of course be

³ Throughout this chapter, to avoid confusion, I have adopted Pendleton's names for his characters to refer to their stage incarnations – "Orson" and "Larry," for example. When I am talking about real people, I use their surnames or full names ("Welles" or "Orson Welles").
played by excellent actors indeed. The play stages a post-show discussion, an audition, and a rehearsal, and its conflict is pedagogically and prescriptively engaged with Acting as synecdochal for capital-L Living. All of the play's designs on its audiences have directly to do with how said audiences collectively remember, with what associations they will admit regarding the staged figures, and with the pleasure they may feel in participating in the recuperation process. All of Pendleton's designs in this play have potential consequences for his audience's collective understanding of the figure of Orson Welles.

In this chapter I want to consider Austin Pendleton's evocation of Orson Welles in his ghostly play. Pendleton's Welles is inflected with a personal association – he knew the man he stages, and speaks in an interview both lovingly and critically of him (Rabin 2009, 1). Yet the portrait he builds is made of quick, almost subliminal references that may signal authenticity for his audiences – for example, the real-life Welles's Falstaffian gourmandizing is realized, as is his sometimes whiny pleading and cavernous insecurity, or his irreverent humor – so that the play's Welles is also inflected with a collective audience's associations of the living man's memory. There is some confusion here, and though as a play Orson's Shadow may invoke the poetic license that has protected dramatists from Shakespeare to Welles himself, it nevertheless recuperates its memory of Welles by means of small distortions interlaced with larger truths.

Pendleton's Welles is a beautiful part, by turns anxious and boisterous, self-flagellating and self-aggrandizing, big-hearted and small-hearted, selfish and selfless, at once Falstaff betrayed and Falstaff resigned to betrayal. The play's Welles is more than a portrait. Like Pendleton's Booth, this character is too delicately rendered to be portraiture alone.4 Pendleton's

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4 Frank Langella, who originated the role of Junius in Booth, writes in a "Foreword" to the published script that it possesses the quality of "timelessness,"
Welles is not merely a surrogate but is also a figure like Ibsen's Brand or Chekhov's Vanya: we see in him not what has happened but what can happen. Still, the ironic mix of true and false in Pendleton's portrait, though a necessary price dramatists pay for staging figures borrowed from life, has consequences for his audience's understanding of Welles's legacy. In Pendleton's play, Welles stands as a figure of failure, a backward abysm of greatness misunderstood or misapplied, and a man who is strangely in love with the process of his own self-destruction. This is highly debatable as a judgment on Orson Welles. We must therefore proceed with caution in crediting the portrait of Welles in Pendleton's play (which renders judgments no less peremptory and portraits no less satisfying in its figures of Olivier, Leigh, and Tynan) because as Joseph Roach warns (with applications Roach intends for quite different texts and contexts), "the most persistent mode of forgetting is memory imperfectly deferred" (4). Pendleton's play is a kind of imperfect deferral in the ongoing process of collectively remembering and recuperating Orson Welles. It is, to borrow Jack Jorgen's phrase (applied to Welles's film of Othello), a species of "flawed masterpiece" (175). Its thematic significance and charm outpace its biographical verdicts in many ways, but this doesn't imply that there is wisdom in failing to attend to Pendleton's very particular adaptations of the figures he is staging.

A sense that what's happening to these people up there is not dependent on their era or their profession – but on their humanity; that we are watching human beings grapple with eternal and universal themes – passion, hatred, fear, love – the basics. (8)

Booth stages the Oedipal conflict of Junius and Edwin (with future presidential assassin Johnny in the background). As with Orson's Shadow, Pendleton in Booth is using the figures of iconic actors to render "timeless" human characters.
The chapter that follows will consider *Orson's Shadow* with this caveat firmly in mind. I read the play critically for its rendering of Orson Welles and through the window with which Pendleton frames him – the perspective, particularly, of the actor. In this chapter I emphasize, after Carlson, the ghostly or haunting aspects of *Orson's Shadow* with a further emphasis, after Roach, on the ways in which the play offers a surrogate for the departed Welles. I also place the play in a context of memory, borrowing some definitional strategies toward that end from Attilio Favorini, whose *Memory in Play* helpfully provides a lineage for Pendleton's work (back to Williams's *Glass Menagerie*). Lastly, referencing my chapter's title, I raise Welles's status as a "bad" King actor who enacted a real and imagined competition with Laurence Olivier, who also played kings (often to greater critical acclaim). Both of these figures can be read in context with Pendleton's choice of Ken Tynan as a pivotal remembering narrator in the play.

Tynan's first published book of dramatic criticism, titled *He That Plays the King* (1950), features an introduction by Welles, Tynan's hero. Welles assented to provide it only after a prolonged course of wooing. Tynan famously valorized Laurence Olivier's "heroic acting" during and after the Second World War and infamously excoriated Vivian Leigh's unworthiness as the second half of the double-bill of "the Oliviers" (Tynan 1950, 32; 42-43). As a stage character he has a vital, resonating connection with the play's central figures. Pendleton uses Tynan as a critic-remembrancer and perhaps as his own surrogate. Both Austin Pendleton and Kenneth Tynan served with less glory in the shadow of greater figures whose work and careers they championed (i.e., they are suitable Horatios). Both Pendleton and Tynan approach the theatre from many vectors including acting, directing/producing, and writing. Both men suffer from the speech disorder commonly known as stuttering. The question of whether or not, as Hamlet suggests, "he that plays the King shall be welcome" is posed critically by Tynan, who
may be Pendleton's surrogate; the question applies directly to Welles and Olivier, the respective protagonist and antagonist of Orson's Shadow. Throughout the play, Shakespearean negotiations and invocations are never far from implicit and are often meaningfully explicit. In this chapter I additionally emphasize Welles's role as a specifically Shakespearean King, and analyze the way in which Pendleton's image of Welles's King reflects the mirror-portraiture of Olivier's and informs the significance of Pendleton's effigy of Welles in the play.

CASTING SHADOWS

Orson's Shadow stages Welles at a crisis point. The play is set in 1960 when Welles (aged 45) had successfully relaunched his acting career in Hollywood, rebranding his screen persona as a noirish heavy in films like Man in the Shadow (1957) and the Faulkner adaptation The Long Hot Summer (1958). During this period, Welles had also successfully channeled Clarence Darrow in the Leopold and Loeb-inspired Compulsion (1959). He had spent a decade of self-imposed exile in Europe, in part to evade American back taxes. During the 1950s he had adapted Shakespeare's Othello into a film (shot sporadically over several countries), made the film Mr. Arkadin (1955, a kind of Wellesian parody of Citizen Kane), played bit or character parts in other directors' films, and done quite a bit of radio and television work in England.

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5 For example, Welles appeared in Gregory Ratoff's Black Magic (1949, also known as Cagliostro), as Cesare Borgia in Henry King's Prince of Foxes (1949), and as Harry Lime in Carol Reed's The Third Man (1949).

6 For example, the six episodes of "Orson Welles's Sketchbook" he made for BBC-TV (airing in 1955. See Welles and Bogdanovich, 417).
The new film work in Hollywood, mostly done to put money in the U. S. Treasury's purse, led inadvertently to Welles's job as the director of *Touch of Evil* (1958).

In an early version of Pendleton's play, *Touch of Evil* represents Welles's chance to remake his image as a bankable director, an opportunity the play's Welles squanders by impulsively hopping continents to direct his pet project *Chimes at Midnight* for Dublin's Gaiety Theatre. In his absence, the film – misunderstood by Universal studio executives who lack Welles's vision – is taken out of his hands and butchered in the editing room. Welles's inability to focus on a single project – an iteration of Charles Higham's notion of Welles's "fear of

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7 Orson's Shadow was first produced in 2000 in a version that differs from the published script (dated 2005). The L. A. Theatre Works audio recording of the play referenced in this chapter diverges in many ways from the 2005 text, possibly reflecting inheritances from the original version. A key difference between the two is that in the recording, the second Act is divided into two scenes. Between them Orson leaves the production of *Rhinoceros* at Ken's insistence to fly to Hollywood so that he can try to rescue the editing of *Touch of Evil* from Universal's butchery. When he returns (in the second scene), Larry has re-blocked the play in his absence. There are also more details in the 2005 script that acknowledge Welles's accomplishments after 1960 and that clarify nuances of his biography overall. It appears that the script may have been reworked by Pendleton partially in response to criticism of the original play's presentation of Welles's biography (the earlier version leaves audiences with the impression that Welles never made a film after *Chimes*). In his Author's Note, Pendleton credits the play's many readings and productions after its opening with helping his "process of continual revision immeasurably," but even after revision, there is a sense of ennui in the play's retrospection on Welles (7). The ennui is mixed with a celebratory joy, but it is ennui nonetheless.
completion" – is presented by Pendleton as an explanation for Welles's downfall. Welles never made a Hollywood film after *Touch of Evil* and *Rhinoceros* was his swan song in the theatre, so this moment in his biography is rife with dramatic potential as the crux of a tragicomic decline. Pendleton's play mines that potential, rendering Welles as a figure of failure writ large, a "giant in chains" whose massive shadow looms over all who (like the play's Olivier) take inspiration from him (54). Though the mythic substrate of Pendleton's play is flawed (Welles's "downfall" cannot be understood simply as the logical outcome of self-destructive behavior) it nevertheless informs a remarkably sophisticated portrait of the artist Welles at a midpoint in his life and career. Pendleton affects through his play a haunting and beautiful effigy of the living man.

First produced in January of 2000 at the Steppenwolf Theatre of Chicago, *Orson's Shadow* was revised by its author for its 2005 New York premiere at the Barrow Street Theatre (the published text cited in this chapter is the later version, unless otherwise noted) (Pendleton 2005, 8-9). It has received several awards and some positive critical attention, and has been staged frequently.8 According to Pendleton's "Author's Note," the play's germinal idea – a troubled collaboration between Orson Welles and Laurence Olivier – was conceived by Pendleton's friend, the actress Judith Auberjonois (wife of actor René Auberjonois). Auberjonois shared her idea with Pendleton over breakfast in 1996, inviting him to consider writing a play about it (7). She told Pendleton that "in 1960, in London, Orson Welles had directed Laurence Olivier and that by the time the play opened Orson no longer felt welcome in the project." Pendleton's previous experience with Welles may have piqued his interest in this subject (Rabin 1). In *Booth* Pendleton had pitted the 19th century actor-manager Junius Brutus

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8 At Williamstown Theatre Festival, the Westport Playhouse, the Old Globe Theatre, the Black Dahlia Theatre, and the Chicago Center of the Performing Arts (Pendleton 8).
Booth against his rising star son Edwin in a tragicomic Oedipal conflict, and shown a talent for dramatizing actors' "self-mistrust" and outsized egos. *Orson's Shadow* stages a similar engagement between mighty opposites (Welles and Olivier).

The play shows some traces of Tennessee Williams's influence. It lightly evokes *The Glass Menagerie* ("the play is memory") and *Streetcar* (the character of Vivien has something of Blanche's diaphanous madness and at times evokes Leigh's own portrayal of the character in Elia Kazan's 1950 film – another Carlsonian ghosting in Pendleton's play). Orson's Shadow is structured in part as a series of narrated remembrances in which a primary narrator – drama critic Ken Tynan – gives exposition, conducts transitions, and passes judgments. There is throughout, and particularly at the end of the play, a sense of poignance; we feel the sad distance of a shared backward glance. To a certain extent, however, all of the characters in *Orson's Shadow* are remembering narrators. Though only Ken and Joan (Plowright) speak directly to the audience, Orson acknowledges their presence ("Don't talk to them anymore, Ken," he pleads at the end of the first act), and even Larry (Olivier) participates in a metatheatrical final scene ("We have run out of time for stories," he says). (Pendleton 2005, 25; 73) The play is consciously theatrical, even actorly. At all times we are meant to relish the performances as performances, and the craft of acting itself is staged.

*Orson's Shadow* has a three-act structure. The first act, set on the stage of the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin, introduces Ken, who visits Orson backstage after witnessing his poorly-

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9 Pendleton had played the part of Tennessee Williams in the 1982 Williamstown Theatre Festival production of *Tennessee Williams – A Celebration* (1989 WTF Henry IV Program).
attended production of *Chimes at Midnight*. "There is a ghost light (this will change)," reads the stage direction (11). Orson's assistant, Sean (who serves as stagehand, comic foil and supernumerary throughout the play), stalls Ken while plying him for juicy gossip about Orson's married life with Rita Hayworth. Eventually Orson, who is at first heard "Off," makes his entrance from the shadows, surprising Ken at the end of an expositional speech. But at first, and for several minutes, we have only the voice of the actor playing Orson to suggest his presence. The thrust of Act One is that Ken, Orson's friend and critical disciple (Ken refers to Orson as "the man I wish had been my father"), wants him to direct Laurence Olivier in Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (a play neither man likes very much) (14; 22). Orson, maintaining that "Olivier destroyed me in Hollywood in 1948" (a reference to the mostly negative critical reception of his Republic *Macbeth* that year, which was unfavorably compared with Olivier's *Hamlet*), is at first hesitant to accede (or prefers to play hard to get). Finally, Orson is convinced to the extent that the job may help him secure a London production of *Chimes* which would help to raise money for a film version. Act One closes with a short dual-narration that links Orson and Ken, who Orson jokes is an ambivalent "emissary" at best:

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10 *Chimes* had been a labor of love for Welles in some form or other since his childhood days at the Todd School for Boys (frequently referenced in Pendleton's play), and he would eventually film it in 1965. Bridget Gellert Lyons points out the ironic consequences of Welles's obsession with this material: an earlier version of his Falstaff-centered adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henriad, Five Kings*, staged by the Mercury Theatre for the Theatre Guild, was "so ambitious that, ironically, the need to finance it took Welles to Hollywood" (Lyons 4). The film of *Chimes* was for many years poorly distributed in the United States, and its original release print had many sound defects, delaying an eventual positive critical assessment.
KEN. (To us.) But I am his emissary. I have been his emissary since that afternoon I was sixteen, since I saw Citizen Kane at a cinema in Birmingham one afternoon –

ORSON. Please don't tell them about Citizen Kane. Am I to be remembered for one movie, which I directed from my high chair? (25, italics in original)

Ken as narrator-emissary has the smell of mortality about him. His difficulty breathing and stage cough, a foreshadowing of Tynan's fatal emphysema, are established in this first act as well – he quite literally draws "his breath in pain to tell [his] story." His stammering is also significant – he pauses in the "damp air" before meeting Orson at the play's beginning, but doesn't stammer in Welles's presence. In contrast, he worries about auditioning for Larry ("I'll stammer like a fool!") (24).

The second act, set on the stage of the Royal Court Theatre in London, introduces Larry and Joan. Larry, though still married to Vivian Leigh, is inching tenuously towards a stronger commitment to Joan. The two have been a couple since working together on John Osborne's The Entertainer in 1958 (Spoto 279). Ken is meeting with Larry to campaign for a job as literary advisor for the National Theatre of Great Britain (not to be founded until 1963). It is at first a difficult meeting. Ken's fears are realized as he stammers under Larry's browbeating. Ken tries to sell Larry on the Ionesco play without mentioning Welles, but spends most of the act attempting to get words in edgewise as Larry dances verbal circles around him. Larry consistently hammers Ken with oblique references to the latter's devastating reviews of Vivien, implying that these do not incline Larry favorably toward any proposal of Ken's. Joan helps ease Ken's access to Larry. She is a linking figure to Orson: Welles directed her in his adaptation of Moby Dick in 1955 (she played the cabin boy), and in fact Moby Dick was an important early
opportunity for Plowright (Spoto 278). The act ends with Larry's agonized phone call to Vivien (who enters with "ringing phone in hand, at Notley. There is no set for Notley; there are lights, though.") (38). Vivien, who is manic, echoes Orson's self-destruction for Larry, who is a paragon of self-control. Ultimately he is persuaded to work with Orson by Ken's and Joan's dual manipulation and his own association of Vivien with Orson's predilection for failure:

LARRY. He's a gift. Yes. And we must treasure these people, encourage them, really, even if, particularly if, they flail about. And even though I do think I've helped Vivien these past few years – I like to think that – I just don't trust myself as much as I would like about this sort of thing. So what I suppose I want to know is, do you trust me? Do you trust me with your friend? (44-45)

Throughout these first two acts, Pendleton sketches a great deal besides outlines of plot. A good bit of anecdote, biography and history are related via the bantering and bickering of these characters. Pendleton's success at depicting such famous figures in his play owes much to the way he renders them as self-conscious, self-mistrusting living legends. They are characterized by their neurotic verbal wrangling with their own legendary baggage. We come to know Larry, Orson and Vivien by their own witty interactions with their outsized egos, and we trust the dramatist's portraiture because he is careful to keep the star personas distinct from the characters locked inside them. We may further trust Pendleton's voicing of these characters because we sense he knows firsthand "how a dramatic person in a dramatic profession might conduct normal conversation" (Robert Simonson's observation in his Introduction to the play, 6).

The third act (set at the Royal Court) stages a rehearsal of Rhinoceros with Larry as the "little man" protagonist Berenger and Joan as Daisy. Orson is the titular director, but he and Ken begin the act together before the actors arrive. They are "tense" and "silent," anticipating
difficulty (46). Larry has been directing Joan in Orson's absence towards an interpretation of her character highly divergent from Orson's, one that fits neatly with his own vain conception of himself (something Olivier was infamous for – he'd done it to John Gielgud in a 1955 Twelfth Night at Stratford-upon-Avon and was notorious for cowing directors into abdicating control of their productions) (Spoto 257; Whaley 344). Sean is on book (though why a Dublin stagehand has been brought along to London is not explained – he is young, attractive, and not too bright, a cool breath of reality among larger-than-life figures). Later in the act, Vivien shows up to force a confrontation with her wayward husband. The tension of Act Three arises from Larry's unwillingness to play Berenger as Orson sees him, as a "helpless and pathetic idiot," a man who "disappears" (61-62). Larry, who sees a reflection of Vivien's manic chaos and self-destructive mad descent in Orson, is critical of Orson's autocratic approach to directing (he is not like Orson's "faithful servants from [his] radio days," an actor who never gives "any thought to any possibility but those to which you've led them") (58). In response, Orson challenges Larry with a fairly devastating analysis of the latter's shortcomings (is "Larry Olivier, who has been fucking audiences for twenty years now with his new-found confidence from World War Two, is he really going to play this man who no one notices"?) while self-servingly pitching Chimes for the National (62). Ken tries to mediate; Joan is caught between the mighty opposites. Finally Olivier dismisses Welles as in Judith Auberjonois's anecdote, and the play closes with an exchange between Larry and Orson that reflects the Falstaff-Hal betrayal leitmotif of Chimes ("I know thee not, old man"):

ORSON. Larry? (Silence.) Larry?

LARRY. I'm afraid I'm going to have to let you go, old man.

ORSON. Oh, Larry.
LARRY. Don't plead, Orson. It frightens me to hear you plead. Don't plead.

Ever again. *(Orson is silent. Silence between them.)* (71)

The play closes with Joan's speech ("I'm the only person in this play who's still alive") and a haunting scene in which the character's fates are narrated: Vivien will die of tuberculosis, Ken of emphysema, and Larry will contract "a wasting muscular disease" (71). Orson will make *Chimes at Midnight* and a documentary that is "remarkable" and "ahead of its time" (*F for Fake*), and lives for "Twenty-five more years." (72) They "run out of time for stories," and the play ends on a juxtaposition of backward-looking ghosts with present-day remembrance:

LARRY. We have heard the chimes at midnight. That we have. *(Pause.)*

JOAN. *(To us.)* Good night. (73)

Pendleton conflates a great deal of legendary material and tangential detail into his three acts. Though his history is often (deliberately) wrong, there is a sense of rightness about the arrangements of these characters vis-a-vis one another. In reality, Kenneth Tynan had nothing to do with bringing Welles and Olivier together on Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (though Welles and Tynan were both participants in the "London Controversy" occasioned by Tynan's essay, "Ionesco: Man of Destiny?" which critiqued absurdist theatre in 1958).11 As a linking figure, Tynan connects

11 In the L. A. Theatre Works recording of *Orson's Shadow*, Ken is given a bridging speech between Acts One and Two which directs our attention to the unreality of the memories he is presenting. The text is as follows (transcribed from the recording):

KEN. I have two confessions, actually. The first is that while I'm doing this for Orson I'm also doing it for myself. But all that shall become clear, quite soon. The second is this: Laurence Olivier and Orson Welles did work together. I had nothing to do with it. I wish I had. Because I think obsessively about how to
all of the characters (excepting of course Sean, who is Pendleton's invention). Tynan rose to prominence as a drama critic praising Olivier's "heroic acting" and vehemently attacked Leigh's acting on several occasions (once describing her as "an adolescent Katherine Hepburn slightly bemused by drugs" (Tynan 1950, 43). Welles's _Kane_ was inspirational for Tynan – a passionate, highly positive review of the film was one of his earliest published critical pieces (Gottesman 8). Tynan also acted for Welles in a short essay film on bullfighting (they were both aficionados) and remained a staunch Welles defender even through Welles's post-Raising _Kane_/Run-Through days. He had reviewed Plowright in Ionesco, but would go on to know her better as the second Lady Olivier during his service as advisor/dramaturg for the National Theatre (Tynan 1961, 178). As his impassioned writing in the London Controversy shows, Tynan "swung over to another viewpoint" regarding Olivier and heroic acting in the late 50s and early 60s (Ionesco 1964, 87; Tynan 1961, x). He "became aware that art, ethics, politics, and economics were inseparable from each other" and realized "that theatre was a branch of sociology as well as a means of self-expression" (x). Tynan's shift in focus, from great acting in the actor-manager tradition to "small" acting in the absurd or angry young man senses emergent in the 1950s, contribute to the aptness of his critical perspective on the figures of Welles and Olivier. As a chronicler of the doings of great figures on a transitional stage of history where smaller figures predominate, Ken's human-sized figure renders all else proportionate. And as a breathless, resurrect my friend, and how better than at the hands of Laurence Olivier, a man who will get Orson to stop his thrashing engagement with his past. Laurence Olivier – a man who, as I say, will never think about the past, will never even speak about the past, who lives exhilaratingly and solely in the present, who is in fact, waiting for me even now, to keep the appointment that I have made.
stammering narrator who is alternately intimidated by the artists he admires and brazed to stand up to them on points of principle, the character of Ken may in some ways surrogate Pendleton.

Though Pendleton and Tynan are not overtly identified, they are similar enough to suggest association. The surrogation is reminiscent of Tom Williams's reinvention of himself as "Tennessee," a fiction that is traced over a fiction in Glass Menagerie when another "T. W.," Tom Wingfield, stands in to narrate Williams's memories. The figure of Tynan, who wishes that Orson had been his father, allows Pendleton to express both characters as loving but critical of one another. Ken decries Orson's "relentless, whimsical, revolting self-abnegation," Wellesian qualities Pendleton may have experienced during Welles's two weeks' work on Catch-22 (24). Orson for his part asserts that Ken has "a brilliant mind but it contains no actual information" and that the critic "lacks all tragic sense" because Ken is unwilling to concede that Shakespeare's Henry IV plays are not "exhilarating" but "tragic," or that Falstaff is their pivotal figure (17). The Orson-Ken relationship may be evocative of the Pendleton-Welles relationship – not necessarily based on Pendleton's real-life interaction with Welles ("He was a pill. But he was also, of course, irresistible") but on the way Pendleton sees Welles retrospectively, through the medium of his play (Rabin 1). Ken, like all of the characters in the play (especially Orson), like Pendleton and like the play's audiences, stands under the threat of Orson's shadow, which as Robert Simonson notes in the play's Introduction means "the potential chasm of failure" (4). Ken, who has trouble breathing and who stammers to speak in the presence of his god-heroes (but who is possessed of a "dazzling prose style" on the page), tries in vain to rescue Orson from himself. He is like Salinger's Holden Caulfield, trying to catch those children in the rye (as Larry observes, Ken seems "to be a little sentimental about rescuing lost souls") (37). We are meant to feel that there is something beautiful but impossible in Ken's looking after Orson. He is like
Pendleton, who recuperates Welles for posterity by incarnating him as a lovable Falstaffian Vice, saving him impossibly from oblivion but rendering him meaningfully as an avatar of failure. The anxiety of Welles's influence for Pendleton is hidden by the mask of Kenneth Tynan – the capital-C Critic – behind whom the playwright may safely love and judge Welles and translate his meaning for us. Yet this is memory "imperfectly deferred" (Roach 4). Though Pendleton does not offer a "single formula" approach to understanding Welles, his play is not globally "inquisitive," either: there are some questions he does not ask and some answers he appears not to want. A brief consideration of some tropic elements of Pendleton's portrait, and a comparison of these tropes with material drawn from other sources, may help to illuminate Pendleton's effigy of Welles. Perhaps the shape and import of Orson's shadow depend critically on exactly how (and from what vantage point) Welles's figure is illuminated.

AUSTIN PENDLETON'S HAUNTED STAGE

In the first act of Orson's Shadow, Ken and Orson debate the fine points of the latter's career. It is a self-consciously artificial method of exposition. Ken calls attention to the tricky art of verisimilar exposition in his opening speech. Rather than having Ken discuss Welles's biography with Sean (Ken notes that "this could have turned into one of those dreadful scenes in which he asks me questions and I answer them, until, with clumsy spontaneity, we have told the audience the entire forty-five years of Orson's life to date"), Pendleton saves the controversial subject of Welles's life story for a bickering bout between critic and artist (13). Ken closes his opening speech with a statement of purpose ("I am not using Orson, I am trying to help him") and pronounces an ambivalent judgment on Orson's career predicament: "it was his own fucking fault. Or much of it. Or not much of it at all, really. I don't know." (14) His ensuing badinage
with Orson charts the course of the latter's downfall, post-Citizen Kane: Welles walked out on
the editing of The Magnificent Ambersons, flying to Brazil (to make It's All True); Olivier
destroyed Orson in 1948, says Orson; Orson destroyed Orson in 1948, says Ken; and now,
Welles's adaptation of Chimes at Midnight makes Ken concerned about Orson's "state of mind"
(16). Orson brags of a "five-picture deal" in the offing at Universal – the studio's exuberant
reaction to the brilliance of his Touch of Evil (but it will later be made clear that he "walked out"
on this picture to make Chimes – Pendleton's Orson is lying here) (15). At one point, Ken makes
the sine qua non of truisms about Welles: "You could have had anything you wanted after
Citizen Kane –" to which Orson responds, "This is the Classic Comics version of my life." (17)
Pendleton is poking fun at the way clichés attach themselves to famous figures (and particularly
to mythomaniacal fabulators like Welles) but there is some truth in the "Classic Comics"
judgment as applied to Pendleton's understanding of Welles's life. Pendleton appears to accept
Larry's assessment in Act Two (at any rate he does not challenge it) on the question of Welles's
caracter:

LARRY. [...] Orson reminds me just a bit of Vivien, if you must know.

KEN. I beg your pardon?

LARRY. [...] Orson's more deliberate than Vivien, I mean Orson goes
swimming and develops a cramp, having already summoned his supporters to
the shore!

JOAN. Larry –

LARRY. I mean Orson fails, doesn't he. He fails. (37)
Larry's insight calls to mind one of Marvin Carlson's. In the second chapter of *The Haunted Stage* ("The Haunted Text"), Carlson describes the phenomenon of "character recycling":

In the case of recycled characters the audience is expected to bring to its experience not a knowledge so much of [...] a specific narrative line but, rather, of the character traits of one or more familiar figures, who continue to demonstrate those already known traits within changing situations. (44)

Larry's ontological judgment of Orson – "He fails" – derives its dramatic power from Pendleton's deployment of a particular brand of Carlsonian character recycling. Larry is effectively constituting the character of Orson for us (the collective audience) in a simple speech that hails any and all associations with Welles that we may bring to our reception of this moment. Welles's "character" is recycled by playwright, by actor, and by audience in a single two-word phrase that is powerful because it is concise and because of the circumstances of its expression: Pendleton puppets Larry puppeting Orson, one layer of judgment stacking on another to establish a creditable figure. The delineation of Orson's figure, as evidenced by Pendleton's staging of it in *Orson's Shadow*, is not unlike the codification of *commedia dell'arte* characters Carlson describes, particularly in its dependence on "ongoing relationships" (45). Orson's figure is defined by, and dependent upon, Larry's. We are offered a verdict on Orson – "He fails" – by a man thus defined as the antithesis of failure. Though Pendleton's play presents an arguably balanced portrait of both Welles and Olivier (Larry is actually terrified of failure and Orson, in acknowledging it as a presence in his life, often comes across as a courageous figure), it depends for its impact on exactly this process of character recycling, which is necessarily reductive. It is in the audience's recognition and implied assent to Larry's perception on Orson's nature that the
play's "hauntedness" and machinery of affect are most clearly exposed. Pendleton practices what Carlson prescribes, especially regard to the latter's notion of theatrical "ghosting":

To this phenomenon I have given the name ghosting. Unlike the reception operations of genre [. . .], in which audience members encounter a new but distinctly different example of a type of artistic product they have encountered before, ghosting presents the identical thing they have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context. Thus, a recognition not of similarity [. . .] but of identity becomes a part of the reception process, with results that can complicate this process considerably. (7)

Pendleton's choice to link Welles and Olivier as opposing figures in his play recalls Michael Anderegg's fifth chapter in Orson Welles, Shakespeare, and Popular Culture. In that chapter ("Shakespeare Rides Again: The Republic Macbeth"), Anderegg describes the "relative receptions of Olivier's and Welles's" films (Hamlet and Macbeth, both released in 1948) (74). The grand Shakespearean competition of these two films yielded a clear victor: Olivier's film was warmly received while Welles's was (at least in the American press) roundly panned. Anderegg references the coverage of Life magazine, which featured Olivier as the Danish Prince on its cover and described his film as "a beautiful and uplifting work of art" (75). In contrast, Welles's adaptation of Macbeth, as Anderegg describes,

was headlined "MURDER!" in large capital letters, and then, in a smaller headline underneath, "Orson Welles doth foully slaughter Shakespeare in a dialect version of his 'Tragedy of Macbeth.'" (76)

It is to this contest that Pendleton's Welles refers when he claims that Olivier "destroyed me in Hollywood in 1948" (12). The contest between these two men (between them, Welles and
Olivier arguably did more than any other 20th century director, actor or critic to popularize Shakespeare's plays) casts light on another significant ghosting at work in Orson's Shadow – that of Welles's figure as an interpreter of Shakespeare. Pendleton brilliantly exploits both Welles's and Olivier's associations with the Henry IV plays to ghost their relationship with that of Shakespeare's Falstaff and Prince Hal. Welles's foregrounding of Falstaff in his adaptation of the Henriad (Chimes at Midnight) is contrasted with Olivier's strong identification with the mature Hal in his film of Henry V. These two Shakespearean giants – both of whom "played the King" in different respects (Olivier literally, as Tynan's ideal heroic actor, and Welles figuratively, as master director of Shakespearean texts) – are both linked and contrasted by their incompatible interpretations of the Hal-Falstaff relationship. The conflict is witnessed by Ken, who as the play's chief remembering narrator ghosts the "little man" critic Tynan, who at different times championed both Welles and Olivier as Shakespearean Player-Kings. Ultimately, Larry's rejection of Orson ("I'm afraid I'm going to have to let you go, old man") echoes Falstaff's rejection of Hal ("I know thee not, old man") and signals Larry's (hollow) victory in the play.

AUSTIN'S SHADOW

Questions of character and broadly construed "human nature" idiosyncratically concerned Welles in his films. Mr. Arkadin (1955) – which in many ways can be read as Welles's own parody of Citizen Kane – is often referenced for an enlightening parable spoken by Arkadin (a Kane-like figure of mystery, played by Welles) to Van Stratten (a Thompson-like investigator, played by Robert Arden). The parable is about a frog who agrees to let a scorpion ride his back across a pond. Though the scorpion promises not to sting the frog, he does so when they're halfway across. The betrayed frog asks the scorpion why, and the scorpion says, "It's my
nature." In The Lady From Shanghai (1947), Rita Hayworth's character (Elsa) gives vent to the tautological platitude that "He who follows his nature, returns to his original nature in the end." These lines may be read as self-justifications on Welles's part. In giving Larry this judgment, Pendleton is following Welles's lead in that he is agreeing that character (at least what we see of it in plays) is a thing definable and relatively constant, and that people have natures, which can be divined or ascertained, and then articulated and possibly understood. Larry's judgment in Orson's Shadow supports the old arguments from critics like Charles Higham of Welles's purposive inability to finish projects (his "fear of completion"). This may not be Pendleton's judgment (it is hard to forget his 1973 statement on actors – "the great actors are ... those who take the most of [the real world] along with them" in their performances – which seems to valorize theatrical escapism), but the play's title clearly points to a fear of failure to some degree. Larry – as Orson's antagonist – defines his protagonist with a bit of objective truth amidst a great mass of subjectivity (just as Orson defines Olivier with his Act One remark that Larry "always has a triumph. It is his strategy for absolutely everything," which sounds like a compliment but is actually a judgment on Larry's almost pathological avoidance of risk) (22). In Pendleton's play, the shadow of Welles is the specter of unfulfilled potential, of not living up to one's greatness, and worse, of making a way of life out of evading the responsibilities of one's talent.

Pendleton's assessment of Welles's nature, realized in the figure of Orson in his play, is possibly colored by the author's lived experience. As previously noted, Pendleton first encountered Welles on the set of Mike Nichol's Catch-22 in 1969, when they shared two weeks' shooting time in Guaymas, Mexico (Welles & Bogdanovich xv). According to Pendleton, Welles "did everything he could to sabotage those two weeks" because he "wished he were directing" the film.
[He] really didn't like that it was Mike Nichols' [sic] movie. And we would rehearse a scene and be about to shoot it, and Orson would say – in front of everybody – "Mike, we can't shoot it this way." And you could see in Mike's face, Orson's not going to let the scene be shot unless he re-directs it and makes it worse. [...] Orson would turn it all into clichés. (Rabin 1-2)

Peter Bogdanovich (Welles's friend and disciple) responded in This Is Orson Welles to reports that Welles had caused "delays in the shoot."

I myself had seen just the opposite: Orson suggesting a practical solution to a difficult running shot; offering an easy "textbook" cut to facilitate an exit for himself; asking Nichols to give him line-readings – a rare thing for an actor to request – to speed up his acting process. None of this caused any delay, only comment. And comment quickly becomes destructive as people embellish to dramatize themselves or their lives. But the resulting publicized legends always ended up causing Welles to lose production financing. (Welles & Bogdanovich, xv).

These accounts are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They are rather like two accounts of Charles Foster Kane rendered from disparate, subjective points of view, with Pendleton taking the part of Leland, Bogdanovich playing Bernstein (the critical view vs. the hagiographic perspective). Nichols's experience of Welles was not unique: Richard Fleischer, director of Compulsion (shot nine years before Catch-22), said that Welles "was jealous of my directing the picture [...] because why shouldn't he be directing Compulsion?" (Leaming 440) Welles's obstreperousness on other directors' sets (particularly later in his life) is well-documented, and my point in raising the contrasting accounts of Pendleton and Bogdanovich is not to dispute the
former's judgment but rather to agree with the latter that "comment quickly becomes destructive as people embellish to dramatize themselves or their lives." Bogdanovich here echoes Jonathan Rosenbaum, whose idea of Welles as a "mythical and ideological" creature is the departure point for this study (239).

Some dimensions of Welles's figure remain in shadow. There is, as Rosenbaum maintains in another essay, an "Invisible Orson Welles:"

The legend embraced the boy wonder in power, but fell aground as soon as it had to cope with him as deposed royalty – which is what he remained for the next forty-five years [after Kane]. For the most part, critics and public alike remained loftily indifferent to this second Welles, at least until it was too late to make any difference: if it wasn't another Citizen Kane, made with the virtually limitless resources of a major studio and released by a major distributor, they weren't interested [. . .] (72)

Pendleton's portrait of Welles is rendered with little awareness of Rosenbaum's "Invisible Orson Welles." In the play, Orson judges himself: "I'm a sick man, maddened by decades of failure, who says things" (he is apologizing for his earlier claim that Olivier "ruined him in Hollywood in 1948") (48). Though lines like this humanize Orson and give his character some depth of self-understanding when contrasted with his bursts of self-pity and bombast, they also credit a portrait of Orson Welles as a man who was "maddened by decades of failure" (a portrait unrecognizable to many who knew him well) and reinforce the unspoken notion that Welles's failure was entirely and deservedly his own. The truth, as Welles suggested with Citizen Kane and in many other projects, is more complicated and multilayered: impossible to see in its entirety. If we must foreshorten our perspective when staging Orson Welles (as Pendleton does
in his play with great poignance and sentimental affect), we must be more self-conscious about
the details we choose to include. The Invisible Orson Welles – an artist who chose destitution
when it was the only alternative to prostitution and a man for whom courage was the one
essential virtue in life – remains obscure in Pendleton's play. We find instead a garrulous
Falstaff who spent a lifetime questing after failure, a figure whose "shadow" is an anxious
expanse, a viral, inescapable gulf of influence – portentous of hubris, vainglory, and self-
mistrust. In life, Welles was a man whose dedication to his art outlasted his fame. If he was
finally trapped by an outsized mythology he himself had helped to create, there is nevertheless a
real human figure to be found inside that mythology – a man with a real human voice, an artist
with important things to say.

Much of the obscured Welles remains unseen precisely because our collective memories
of his figure are "imperfectly deferred." We may prefer a version of Welles like Pendleton's
because it is entertaining and meaningful. An unexpurgated, undiluted depiction of Welles
might be far more entertaining. A version rendered less reductively and less myopically would
be more meaningful still. Pendleton's Orson, as an eidetic rendering of a living man – a
verisimilar effigy – satisfies a collective need for embodied memory and a desire to defy the
mortality that robs us of essential voices and presences. The playwright mimics Shakespeare's
Prospero, who "waked" the "sleepers" in their "graves" and "let 'em forth," by a very potent art
indeed. What Pendleton does not do – despite his deployment of Hutcheon's "historiographic
metafiction" (with its power to engage and detach an audience's emotional faculties) and his
admirable ability to stage these figures in a moving and meaningful drama – is allow us to see his
subjects in a broad context.
We are told (to take one example from the play) that Welles abandoned *The Magnificent Ambersons* (a claim supported by Robert Carringer and countered by Rosenbaum and many other scholars), leading to a lifelong pattern of chaos and irresponsibility (the "Crazy Welles" myth).\(^{12}\) Ken asks Orson, in Act One, "Have you or have you not walked out on the editing of two films since *Kane*?" (17). Orson's excuse – that "My president ordered me to Brazil to make a documentary" is not credited – but rather comes off as a lame justification for bad behavior. Welles's oft-remarked bad behavior notwithstanding, RKO's editing of *Ambersons* cannot be understood solely as a logical response to a director's erratic conduct. A studio regime change with Welles's advocate (studio head George Schaefer) under threat of removal was happening in the background. The war-time context, which made RKO's controlling interests all the more anxious when *Ambersons* previewed poorly, affected the decision to drastically change Welles's version of the film. And the backlash against Welles's "genius" in the Hearst press – a reaction to *Kane*, which immediately preceded *Ambersons* – likely colored the perceptions of many (including close friends) towards him. All of these factors inform this critical moment in Welles's early career. Pendleton omits the details that would present Welles's interaction with RKO, *Ambersons* and *It's All True* in anything like deep focus.\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\) Carringer's *The Magnificent Ambersons: A Reconstruction* is deeply unsympathetic to Welles, and his conclusions have been challenged by Jonathan Rosenbaum (*Discovering Orson Welles* 7; 180).

\(^{13}\) Similarly, Pendleton's presentation of Welles's difficulties with *Touch of Evil* – particularly as evidenced in the L. A. Theatre Works audio recording (which is likely based on the first version of the script) – is unsophisticated. Welles's cavalier behavior - his abandoning of the film during the editing process – comes off merely as a rehashing of the *Ambersons* episode. The
He does so for good reasons; his emphasis is on character study and not social context. Yet it is precisely this lack of understanding of Welles's social and economic contexts that nourishes and sustains the figure of "Crazy Welles." Remove the big picture from the big figure's backdrop, and you have an outsized character, an eccentric who does not appear to belong anywhere. Pendleton's Orson is a wonderful role for an actor. The character appears to have dimension, expressing modes of self-pity, aesthetic acumen, megalomania, and love. His effectiveness as a stage figure, however – as a surrogation for the real Orson Welles, a longed-for absent presence since 1985 – depends for its power on the collective (willful?) ignorance of Pendleton's audience. We trust Pendleton to remember Welles for us. The figure he stages is beautiful and convincingly human, but unreal. Pendleton's Orson is a "stand-in" in that doomed process Joseph Roach describes, and in order to credit this figure we must "crucially" forget that the real man was even larger, more complicated, more nuanced than it is. Pendleton is content to let the Invisible Orson Welles remain obscure, possibly because he does not wish to commit to maintaining a critical distance towards his subject, or to engage the broad contexts in which Welles operated; possibly because he is simply interested in telling a good story – an impulse Welles might have approved – and cares less for legacies. Nevertheless his recuperation of evidence suggests that Touch of Evil did suffer from Welles's mismanagement. Some accounts suggest that his cut of the film was difficult to follow, and that he was unresponsive to Universal's requests to reshape existing material or create new bridging shots or sequences. But by offering Touch of Evil in context with Ambersons, Pendleton (following Higham) enhances a sense of Welles as irresponsible over the course of his entire career. The Magnificent Ambersons involved a much younger Welles, not yet "maddened by decades of failure," and should be read separately from later events.
Welles's figure on a stage that is, however beautifully, haunted by ghosts beyond his power to forbid (summoned by audience members like myself, who recall a different Welles), must remain marred by the silhouette of Pendleton's shadow.
CHAPTER FOUR: A THING OF NOTHING

ROSENCRANTZ. My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.

HAMLET. The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing –

GUILDENSTERN. A thing my lord?

HAMLET. Of nothing. Bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after! (Hamlet, Act IV, scene ii, 22-27)

In this famous exchange from Shakespeare's play, Hamlet redirects the interrogation of his former friends, the sycophantic Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, with a quibble. They seek the body of Polonius, former counselor to the king, casually slaughtered by Hamlet. Hamlet interprets the word "body" to refer to what the historian Ernst Kantorowicz described as the "body politick" (7). The body politick is only one of the "King's Two Bodies," the other being his natural body. Hamlet implies that as a regicide and usurper, Claudius is not "with" the body politick. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whose raison d'être is to achieve the thrift that follows fawning, cannot conceive Hamlet's meaning. Readers and audiences do, however, get the point: a "king" is "simultaneously a person and an embodiment of the realm" (Kantorowicz x). Claudius is the latter because he has stolen the name of king by murdering Hamlet's father, yet he is – relative, at least, to his predecessor – "a thing [. . .] of nothing." Hamlet lampoons the gaudy trickery and performativity of kingship: Claudius, at best a "king of shreds and patches," places his faith in the "divinity" that hedges kings (the theological investiture of kingship, whereby the king is synecdochal for the King of kings). The prince, who is always an actor on a
stage – a trickster playing a trickster – calls our collective attention simultaneously to two things: first to the fact that we are watching actors play kings and prince; second to the awareness that "real" kings and princes are parts played by actors on different kinds of stages. Rulers, figureheads and player kings, whether called Elizabeth or Claudius or Orson Welles, are "things of nothing" – diversions and illusions, emperors clothed by nothing more substantial than popular assent.

In Cities of the Dead, Joseph Roach relates Kantorowicz's description of "the king's two bodies" to the "symbolic immutability" of the king in effigy (38). Representations of kings may symbolically assert "the divinely authorized continuity of human institutions." Taken in juxtaposition with a display of a dead king's natural body, as in a state funeral, such effigies may mock the hollow crown (to borrow a phrase from another Shakespearean meditation on kingship, Richard II) with recognition of the "inherent fragility" of the human condition. Roach links the bifurcated body of the king with his own concern, the "principle of surrogation." In "the disposition of royal remains,"

a mysterious but powerful sense of affiliation pervades the community on the occasion of its most consequential single loss. That sense of affiliation holds open a place into which tradition injects the rituals of ultimate reincorporation, the crowning of a successor. But in the place that is being held open there also exists an invisible network of allegiances, interests, and resistances that constitutes the imagined community. [. . .] Death, as it is culturally constructed by surrogacy, cannot be understood as a moment, a point in time: it is a process. (38-39)
The "resistances" in the "invisible network" include, meaningfully for Roach, "violence" as "the performance of waste" (41). Roach recalls "the common usages of effigy as the surrogate for violence perpetrated on an absent victim," writing that a "burning in effigy" is a performance of waste, the elimination of a monstrous double, but one fashioned by artifice as a stand-in, an 'unproductive expenditure' that both sustains the community with the comforting fiction that real borders exist and troubles it with the spectacle of their immolation. (41)

Roach's delineation of what he calls "the circum-Atlantic world" insists "on the centrality of the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity" (4). Taking the title of his second chapter ("An Echo in the Bone") from a play by Dennis Scott (in which a widow invokes the spirit of her dead husband to possess the bodies of the living, who becoming animated effigies), Roach illustrates the double-bodied kingship of surrogation with reference to Elvis Presley. Presley, a player king of another kind, "inverted the doubling pattern of minstrelsy – black music pours from a white face – and this surrogation has begotten others" (69). Roach traces the haunting power of Presley's effigy – "the degree to which it promotes obsessive attempts at simulation and impersonation" – to its "ghostly power to insinuate memory between the lines, in the spaces between the words." Such effigies are elegiac, a means by which "the dead remain among the living." Connecting Presley's perceived immortality in popular culture effigies (and on United States postage stamps) to the "staggering erasures required by the invention of whiteness," Roach notes that "his voice still echoes in the bone" (71). Roach shifts his emphasis from surrogated bodies to surrogated voices: in the staging of Presley's effigy, "the King is dead; long live the King" may be the prevailing sentiment, but this is a kind of "reversed ventriloquism" (69). In this reading, Presley's mortal
body is a "thing of nothing" when seen contextually with what Roach calls "the voice of African-American rhythm and blues" (69). The surrogated, collective voice of oppressed cultures and peoples are channeled when Presley is staged in effigy, and in that channeling they are rendered invisible. Indeed, Roach sees such stagings as integral to the ongoing "invention of whiteness" (71).

The staging of Orson Welles in effigy, as we have seen, is, like Presley's, often elegiac, but the erasures it enacts render Welles and his legacy (and the significance of both to the imagined American communities that heed them) invisible. Playwrights who choose to surrogate Welles's figure have staged him either at the peak of his youthful powers (as Jason Sherman does) or on the verge of decline and obsessed with his own past (as Austin Pendleton does). The tendency is to perceive Welles as either foredoomed (the young Wonder Boy oblivious to what lies ahead) or as haunted by failure (the aging has-been). The sense of elegy in the former is enhanced by the audience's sense of irony. The "balance of superior knowledge and detached sympathy," as Carlson notes in The Haunted Stage (restating G. G. Sedgwick), results in the essential condition of the theatre. It is a state that relies "to an important extent upon the audience having an understanding, that the characters do not have, of the future turns of the dramatic action," what Bertrand Evans calls "discrepant awareness" (29).1 The sense of elegy in the latter scenario is somewhat more complicated. Pendleton, albeit with a comic sensibility, presents Welles as if Welles were a character in one of his own films – for example, The Magnificent Ambersons or Chimes at Midnight – in which the burdens of memory enact

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1 Carlson is referencing G. G. Sedgwick's Of Irony, Especially in Drama (1948, 32-33), and Shakespeare's Comedies (1960, 337).
terrible costs on those who cannot escape their pasts. Orson's "shadow" is cast forward, in this scenario, by the figure of Welles himself.

Welles is, like Elvis Presley, a player king with two bodies. As a character always perceived as either destined for failure or haunted by his past, Welles's stage figure is a double exposure. He is collectively recalled in either his youthful incarnation, as yet un eclipsed by the massive profile of his future failures, or he is remembered as the older, Falstaffian Welles, a sacrificial Vice figure or effigy fit for burning. Each incarnation implies the other. He is young, doomed to a wasteful middle-age; or he is middle-aged, unable to escape the promise of his youth. His surrogation is a "performance of waste" in which the "invisible resistances" allow only these two meaningful iterations. Like Presley, Welles's "two bodies" imply not political power and mortality but rather an opposition of promise to waste.

Roach notes that given a "choice between the King's [Presley's] two bodies" in the selection of which likeness of the rock legend would appear on a commemorative postage stamp – the young 50s-era crooner or the bloated, middle-aged Las Vegas performer – "the American electorate" preferred the younger version by a "landslide of 75 percent of the ballots," choosing "to remember Elvis in the immortality of his youth" (70). Similarly, stage and film renderings of Welles have favored depictions of his younger days (Cradle Will Rock, RKO 281, Me and Orson Welles, and It's All True feature a young Welles, whereas only Orson's Shadow and Ed Wood have featured a middle-aged Welles). He has never been staged (so far as I am aware) as he

2 There is also Oliver Parker's 2006 film Fade to Black, in which Danny Huston plays Welles as a film noir protagonist in Rome in 1948. I have not seen this film, but it appears to be a fictionalized potboiler (though it is, inevitably, "based on a true story") in which Welles figures as the hapless fall-guy figure in a murder story (not unlike his role in The Lady From Shanghai).
was in the last two decades of his life. Like Presley, Welles's voice "echoes in the bone," but with a different kind of resonance. Where Presley is surrogated (as Roach argues) to define and redefine – via erasure and re-erasure – a social/cultural construction of whiteness, Welles (I argue) is surrogated to define and redefine an American concept of failure writ large. Presley's youthful incarnation may have been preferred by Americans to reconstruct "whiteness" – perhaps this imagined community prefers to remain innocent (or willfully ignorant) of the great human cost of such an erasure.

Yet there is no foreshadowing of a deserved, ultimate doom in this figure; we do not prefer young Elvis because we know that, one day, he will be dead on a toilet. There is a nostalgia for the young Elvis Presley that allows us to collectively recall him in a time of

The film's trailer is accessible online at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RDGEGAbVdk. In the trailer, Huston can be seen dressed as Welles on what looks like the set of Gregory Ratoff's film Cagliostro (1949, also known as Black Magic) in which Welles played the legendary villain-hypnotist. In the promotional material accompanying the trailer, Welles is described as traveling to Italy to make a "come-back film" and to "recover from his failed marriage to Rita Hayworth." A sultry Italian femme fatale (Paz Vega, playing Lea Padovani, Welles's first Desdemona) purrs, "I always felt there was another side to him – a kind of shadow." The movie thus appears to be another narrative of young Welles before the fall. Danny Huston is an interesting casting choice. The son of Welles's friend and fellow film "maverick" John Huston may have known Welles in his youth. The character of Cagliostro, it should be noted in passing, is an early instance of Welles's deliberate choosing of roles that comment on his own screen persona – a dark and morally bankrupt charlatan who deceives on a grand scale (and who plummets dramatically to his death in the film's denouement).
imagined innocence (e.g., an idealized 1950s, a Golden Age of rock and roll, before long hair and bell bottoms) without a concomitant remembrance of the King's destined end. With Welles it is different. In Tim Robbins's Cradle Will Rock, Benjamin Ross's RKO 281, and Richard Linklater's Me and Orson Welles, Welles is recalled as a young man through a shrewdly ironic lens. Like Sophocles's Oedipus, the figure of Welles carries with it its own peculiarly haunted text warning of bad days ahead. Just as Oedipus the King foreshadows Oedipus at Colonus, so does Welles the Wonder Boy foreshadow Welles the Would-Be Genius. This difference between the player-kings (Presley and Welles) points beyond them to a richer cultural significance. Their haunted texts are shaped by forces beyond their (and perhaps our) control. In the theatre, where we gather to remember, these forces are most palpable. Before the haunted stage we feel surrounded by a contextual weave or milieux de memoire that continues to shape the ways we remember and reinvent such resonant figures.

Welles's youthful incarnation – to judge by the evidence of the plays that are the focus of this study – thrives on our "discrepant awareness." We know that Welles, like his character George Amberson Minafer, has his "comeuppance" coming. We know that Welles, like his character Charles Foster Kane, is "going to need more than one lesson" and that he's "going to get more than one lesson." There is a pedagogical dimension to the staging of Welles's youthful body; the presentation of this figure is always forward-looking. He is a harbinger of warning and a ghost of instruction, speaking to the imagined community for whom his figure is recuperated. This figure begs at once to be remembered and also warns against its own example. Welles's effigy is burned in a continuously rehearsed American morality play which relies for its power on the double-bodied configuration of its lead character, who stands for the polarized (but invisibly linked) extremes of promise and waste. The older, fat Welles who sells fish sticks and
wine and who lampoons himself to survive is always implied in the figure of the younger
dynamo for whom the sky was "the only limit of his ambition." The younger Welles who
innovates in radio, theatre and film provokes our discrepant awareness because – as in Citizen
Kane – we cannot see him without recalling his story's ending. Welles himself noted that "if you
want a happy ending, it depends on where you stop your story," but we do not have that power.
We cannot stop the story to remember Welles in the immortality of his youth, because the frame
through which we see him – the way in which he is staged – will not allow us to forget his
inevitable telos from promise to waste.

In the ongoing rehearsal of this morality play – to return to Hamlet's formulation –
Welles is continually staged as a "thing of nothing." This staging divorces him from a once
fecund political body, and the performance of his waste makes that body invisible. The analogy
to kingship for Welles is not mere wordplay. It means more to call him a "player king" than to
imply that he (in his words) was "one of the ones who played the Kings," because he was "bigger
than life" (Estrin 51). Welles championed antifascism, the New Deal, civil rights, and a belief
that speech in America should be unfettered by imperatives of capital. In his early career he used
his energies and his voice on very large platforms to act as a figurehead for these causes. His
decline was not mere self-sabotage, but had also to do with the changing stage of history, and the
preference of its collective audience for stories in which he played a less meaningful role.
Welles's pretensions to American kingship (he was once seriously considered a presidential
hopeful) and even "player-kingship" are mocked by a juxtaposition of his youthful promise with
the reality of his wasted potential in the plays that stage his figure in our collective memory-
theatre. Nevertheless – and in a very different way from the process involving Elvis Presley,
described by Roach – Welles's own voice, despite the erasures enacted by each new rehearsal of this morality play, "still echoes in the bone."

WORLDS AT WAR

A joint creation of director Anne Bogart, playwright Naomi Iizuka and The Saratoga International Theatre Institute (SITI) Company, War of the Worlds opened as part of the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville in March of 2000. It premiered in New York at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (as part of The Next Wave festival) in October of that year (Humana Festival 2000 116).

Iizuka's play was commissioned by Bogart, who conceived the project. It is structured as a series of vignettes – the scenes are numbered (there are thirty in the published script) and the movement from one scene to the next does not always reflect simple causal continuity. The play loosely follows both the chronology of Welles's life and the form of Citizen Kane. Iizuka and Bogart may have been inspired by David Thomson, whose metafictional biography Rosebud (1996) reads Welles's life imaginatively through the snow globe of Kane. Iizuka and Bogart

3 The play's structure is reminiscent of Brecht's The Private Life of the Master Race in this way; the vignettes are like detritus on the heap of Benjamin's "ruins of history" and must be assembled in performance before an audience.

4 Rosebud is "intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also [lays] claim to historical events and personages" (Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, 4). Thomson alternates chapters of traditional (albeit sloppily researched) biographical writing with imagined dialogues between himself and an unnamed counterpart who challenges his assessments of Welles's life and career. Thomson calls deliberate attention to the mix of fact and fiction in his work. Jonathan
also incorporate material from Howard Koch's adaptation of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* and Welles's panic-inducing 1938 Halloween production, and there are additional references to Welles films that cast reflective light on their maker. One of the characters is named "Stratten," for example, after Robert Arden's character Guy Van Stratten (in *Mr. Arkadin*). Welles's character speaks lines adapted from *F for Fake*. The script is a richly-detailed mosaic of Wellesiana; one reviewer wrote that "familiarity with [Kane] is more or less Rosenbaum calls this "a kind of spurious and [. . .] irresponsible word-spinning about Welles's inner life normally associated with fiction" (240). Thomson refers to *Rosebud* (on the book's dustjacket) as his "best response to a lifelong awe of Orson Welles," and in his final chapter he imagines the following dialogue with his shadowy correspondent:

I hope my Welles may be more compelling than a hero – grander, sadder, tougher. After all, it's one thing to be a magnificent piece of work but quite another to be magnificent and a poor bastard at the same time. He was very brave, I think. And sometimes it takes great courage to be imperfect.

You don't think you've been hard on him? I mean, people like to feel good about their heroes.

I've done my best by him. I'd like the readers to go away as muddled in their feelings as everyone left behind after Kane's death. [. . .] In the end, if this Welles is not likable enough, not sweet or amiable, I'll take the responsibility. I feel too close to him to shrug him off. (422)

So there is, for Thomson, an acknowledgment of his identification with the figure he has portrayed (which Bogart follows by identifying with *her* Welles). Thomson's "posthumous puppeting" of Welles does not entirely try to conceal its strings.
an audience requirement" (Weber 3). *War of the Worlds* is so densely constructed from the shreds and patches of Welles's long life and massive *oeuvre* that it might be difficult to interpret by audiences lacking more than a layman's knowledge of the source material. Furthermore, a signature Bogart-SITI Company emphasis on the physical life of the production gave *War of the Worlds* a depth that is not reflected in its published script.\(^5\)

In *War of the Worlds* Welles is presented as a magician. The actor playing Welles (Stephen Webber in the original production) is called upon to perform several magic tricks ("*Welles pulls a tiny box out of thin air. Inside the box is a room.*") (119). The character is also an impresario of theatrical magic, conducting and witnessing a series of cascading stage effects (Iizuka's script calls for "lap dissolves" between scenes) beautifully realized by Bogart and the SITI actors, designers, and technical crew.\(^6\) Welles appears alone at the start of the play to directly address the audience in a speech that recalls his first person singular style from radio days: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Orson Welles." He is joined by six additional cast members with named roles (all of the actors but Thompson, an iteration of the reporter from *Kane*, play several parts – even the actor playing Welles doubles, appearing as the "Third Man," a nod to Welles's part as Harry Lime in Carol Reed's 1949 film) and an "Entourage" of company members. The ensemble alternately enacts Welles's biography and comments on it. Key moments from his life are staged as scenes from *Kane*. These scenes

\(^5\) I attended this production during its original run at Actors' Theatre of Louisville in 2000.

\(^6\) The scenic design was by Neil Patel, with costumes by James Schuette, lighting design by Mimi Jordan Sherin, and sound design by Darron L. West (*Humana Festival 2000*, 116). This team was successful in creating a Wellesian *mise en scene* with the frame provided by Bogart's conception.
alternate with commentary from a "Film Scholar," choric voices who judge, condemn, or praise Welles, and dreamlike sequences that stage Welles's imagined inner life. The second scene is set in a "projection room," in which "the producers of a documentary on the late Orson Welles" – led by Stratten (Tom Nelis) – conduct a journalistic post-mortem that sets Thompson (J. Ed Araiza) on a quest to divine the meaning of "the last words Welles said on earth" (121). Welles is present as "Third Man" in the scene (he speaks Welles's last word, "Thorne"). This scene ghosts the shadowy projection room sequence from Welles's movie, in which several of the actors who play important roles in Kane's story (Joseph Cotten, Everett Sloane, Ray Collins) appear as vaguely-recognizable figures in darkness. The action of War of the Worlds follows Thompson's quest to solve the mystery of "Thorne."

**War of the Worlds** is a sophisticated rehearsal of the Wellesian morality play, replete with a double-bodied protagonist. Welles appears as a young man, but the stage directions call for film clips that show him "at the end of his life" (120). The play begins, like so many of Orson Welles's films, with the "consequential single loss" of Welles's death. He enters as a ghostly narrator to direct a post-mortem staging of his own life:

*Orson Welles enters the frame. He is larger than life. He smokes a cigar. He is droll and dapper and, almost imperceptibly, unwell. He speaks to an audience, seen and unseen.*

**WELLES:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Orson Welles. I'd like to take a moment, before we begin, to tell you a little bit about what we're going to do here tonight. What you're about to see is a modern American story. It's the story of one man's life, his life's work. It's my story. On the face of it, it's a simple yarn. I was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a long time ago, a long
That audience "seen and unseen" includes those Welles haunts and those whose recurrent recycling of his haunted text(s) summon him to the haunting place of Bogart's stage. He has come from "a long time ago" and "a long way from here," dislocating himself from his origins across time and space. How is an actor to convey that Welles is "imperceptibly, unwell"? What is it that ails this "larger than life" figure, who offers to spin a yarn that is somehow both "simple" and "modern?" The play engages postmodern anxieties about the fallibility of memory, presenting (to adapt Jeanette Malkin's words from Memory-Theatre and Postmodern Drama) Welles's "past as multiformed, as intersecting and coexistent with [his] present" (27). However, amidst the postmodern angst (ironically anticipated by Welles in Kane), the "simple yarn" of War of the Worlds is a pedestrian restatement of the Welles-as-failure story.7

The play's recuperation of Welles's memory for its collective audience is limited by a myopic vision of Welles's life and career, but perhaps the narrowness of memory's "frame" is to the point. As noted, the play's narrative is similar to David Thomson's in Rosebud – both

7 The authorship of this piece was richly collaborative (a hallmark of Anne Bogart's aesthetic). On the title page of the published script, it is written in this way:

War of the Worlds
Conceived by Anne Bogart
Written by Naomi Iizuka
Created by The SITI Company

Bogart directed the project she had conceived. Iizuka created the text, and the SITI actors (Akiko Aizawa, J. Ed Araiza, Will Bond, Tom Nelis, Ellen Lauren, Barry O'Hanlon, Stephen Webber, Phil Bolin, Carey Calebs, Cabe McCarty and Mark Watson) gave it life (115-116).
Thomson's book and Iizuka's play read Welles's life through *Citizen Kane*. This is a clever, structurally superficial move. The device is wearying, but the provocation of a sense of exhaustion in their audience may be part of the Bogart-Iizuka project. Their Welles is a figure in many ways trapped by his own biography. Attempting to narrate and stage manage his life, the Iizuka-Bogart Welles is doomed to failure under the relentless narrative logic of *Citizen Kane*. Though he may try to escape it with smoke and mirrors – by mixing "fiction with a little fact thrown in" – this Welles cannot escape the bric-a-brac mythology that has come to encumber him (140). The Iizuka-Bogart Welles is a postmodern protagonist, not unlike Heiner Müller's Hamlet in *Hamletmachine*, in that he is trapped between worlds at war, worlds made of language – the language-worlds of cinema, drama, magic – that he sought to master, but which have crushed him in their conflict. Iizuka's Welles, like Müller's Hamlet, stands with ruins behind him, but in the former's case the wreckage is not post-Holocaust Europe but the remnants of his life's massive works. These works, for Iizuka and Bogart (following Thomson) are evasions, tricks, deceptions and escapes. Their Welles, hoist on his own poststructural petard, is an escape artist finally caught in the webwork traces of a lifetime of escapes. The play leaves one feeling that Welles's fate is deserved (i.e., he gets his comeuppance).

The superficiality of the *Kane* grammalogue traced over Welles's biography in *War of the Worlds* is a deliberate and effective choice. It is, to return to Roach, "memory imperfectly deferred," in that it "forgets" salient details of Welles's life and career that might complicate its frame and picture (4). If Iizuka and Bogart use Welles's figure as "a site for the acting out of various fantasies," however, those fantasies are not dreams of escapism but poems on the unreliability of memory. Iizuka and Bogart, in staging the ultimate auteur director as a man incapable of narrating/staging his own story, are attempting to say something about the
(postmodern) human condition – or rather, they are attempting to stage the futility of speech by revealing a man trapped and ultimately crushed by his own obsession with logos. Indeed, the figure of Welles as Director writ large is possibly more interesting to Bogart and Iizuka than any final judgment on his legacy or reputation. The figure of Welles staged in War of the Worlds may have a more direct and personal meaning for Anne Bogart.

ANNE BOGART'S ORSON WELLES: THE FIGURE OF THE DIRECTOR

In a program note for the Louisville production (the show was likely revised for its Brooklyn Academy of Music remounting in the fall of 2000), Bogart wrote that she discovered, when living in Europe that Orson Welles was much admired there (Weber 3). She added that in the United States, Welles "is mostly remembered as a fat man on talk shows who also appeared in advertisements for wine." As Bruce Weber (who reviewed the BAM staging and who had seen both versions) notes, Bogart's "discovery" of Welles "seems not only wrong but disingenuous, a contrivance by a storyteller unsure of her story" (3). According to the program note, Bogart's driving motivation for the project came to be about answering the question, "How can you ever know a man?" This is obviously the thematic central question of Kane, Iizuka's template for War of the Worlds. However, there was likely more going on in War of the World's inception than either a simple satisfaction of her own historical curiosity or a rather simplistic (and gendered) meditation on the impossibility of assessing human character. Bogart writes in the first chapter of A Director Prepares (2001) – titled "Memory" – that

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8 Weber writes that (as of the BAM staging), the "script has taken on bulk [...] (If memory serves, the show, now 90 minutes, has taken on 15 minutes or so, and if memory doesn't serve, the work just seems longer.)"
Memory plays a huge role in the artistic process. Every time you stage a play, you are embodying a memory. Human beings are stimulated to tell stories from the experience of remembering an incident or a person. The act of expressing what is remembered is actually, according to the philosopher Richard Rorty, an act of re-description. In re-describing something, new truths are created. [...] Our task, and the task of every artist and scientist, is to re-describe our inherited assumptions and invented fictions in order to create new paradigms for the future.

(28)

In the same chapter, Bogart professes a desire to channel "previous generations" (24). She hails Welles (along with Hallie Flanagan, Elia Kazan, Clifford Odets and others) as a 20th century American artist whose "political engagement and aesthetic breakthroughs" she admires. War of the Worlds can be read as Bogart's "re-description" of Welles based on her acknowledged "inherited assumptions" (which in some measure she challenges). War of the Worlds can further be read as Bogart's personal channeling of Welles. In the play, Welles's figure is a reflection of Bogart. He is visionary director obsessed with the "frame" or context through which his subjects are presented. Via this text and its staging, Bogart is creating "new paradigms for the future" as she also remembers and re-describes. If Bogart re-inscribes several "invented fictions" that rehearse the mythology of Welles as self-destructive failure – there is a great deal of Rosenbaum's "posthumous puppeting" at work in War of the Worlds – her interest in a Wellesian "frame" leads her to acknowledge the Bogartian frame through which she presents her subject. The worlds at war in this play may be the respective frames, contexts, or viewpoints of Bogart and Welles.
Bogart and Welles, both visionary directors, appear otherwise as quite divergent figures. She is famously collaborative and interested in "theatrical engagement" (the acknowledgment and exploration of difference, as in her work with playwright Charles Mee on Another Person is a Foreign Country) (Hodge 289). He was famously autocratic, a 20th century actor-manager who labored to create the impression that his productions (including his own persona) were entirely self-authored. Yet in Iizuka's play there are moments of convergence, in which the surface of a mirror can be discerned between director Bogart and director Welles. The first is the image of the frame (or box), which serves throughout the play both as a visual placeholder for the process of memory and for a director's desire to work magic with reality by carefully delimiting a cinematic mise en scene. The frame is introduced in Welles's first magic trick, in which he produces a "tiny box out of thin air." Iizuka's stage direction is evocative of magical realism:

> Inside the box is a room. Inside the room is a woman from another place and time. Her name is Beatrice Nelson. She listens to piano music on a radio. In the background is a window. The month is May. Almost a century ago. Outside the window is a cherry blossom tree. White blossoms. As they fall, they look like snow. (119)\(^9\)

The falling white blossoms, seen through a window found in a box, evoke the crashing snow globe and the window to a snowy wonderland seen in Kane's reconstructed childhood in Citizen Kane. It is a beautiful image, a challenge to Bogart's SITI ensemble, but it is not an isolated act of theatrical magic. It comes with Welles's pleading:

> WELLES. [...] With the sympathetic support of yourselves, ladies and gentlemen,

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\(^9\) Iizuka's "Beatrice Nelson" is a version of Welles's mother, Beatrice Ives. It's not clear whether the change of name has particular significance for Bogart or Iizuka.
this just might work. Imagine this, if you will: It is night, but not a real night – a
night of the mind and of the soundstage. We have no curtain, real or imaginary.

There's only the illusion I'd like to create –

(Orson Welles disappears in the middle of speaking. The glass shatters.) (120)

The frame-within-a-frame is staged by Welles who is staged by Bogart; the latter engages
the former in a "theatrical engagement" that links their disparate worlds. The famous audacity of
Welles, who tricked America into believing a Martian invasion, is matched by the audacity of
Bogart, who transcends the boundaries between the worlds of present and past in her quest to
dialogue with history. This "war" is dialogic: both Welles and Bogart have a voice, though
neither is allowed perfect clarity. The effect is a statement of determination in the face of the
ultimate futility of memory: though we cannot hope to accurately know the past, we can "re-
describe inherited assumptions and invented fictions in order to create new paradigms for the
future."

In the play's seventh scene, Welles responds to criticism of his Martian broadcast (offered
by his employer, CBS Studios executive George Taylor) as a reflection of Kane's rebuttal to his
guardian, Walter P. Thatcher:

WELLES. Look here, Taylor, it's my duty – and I'll let you in on a little secret,
it's also my pleasure – to see to it that decent, hard-working Americans aren't
taken in by what the powers-that-be have to say. I scared the American public
tonight – some of them, at least. And they should be scared. Not of Martians,
but of people like yourself and the interests you represent. They should be very
scared. (126-127)
This sentiment echoes a common theme of Bogart's: the valorization of a collective aesthetic over the panoptic commercialism of American culture. In *A Director Prepares*, Bogart wrote that "collective action is suspect. We have been discouraged to think that innovation can be a collaborative act. There has to be a star. Group effort is a sign of weakness" (29). Here Welles and Bogart seem to diverge, but they actually come very close to one another. Though an autocrat and a "star" of the kind Bogart decries, Welles is championing "collective action" against "the powers-that-be." Bogart is no less a star director than Welles, and the political content of *A Director Prepares* and *And Then, You Act* (for example) place her in a direct line of succession to Welles's Popular Front advocacy. In the former she identifies the McCarthy era as a disruption in recent American history which resulted in a disconnect for contemporary artists from traditions that might otherwise nourish them (29). In the latter she decries the anesthetized, uncritical patriotism that dominated American discourse after September 11, 2001 (3). In both cases, her rhetoric is haunted by Welles's role in the history she hails: Welles lamented his own failure to oppose McCarthy (had he run for the Senate in Wisconsin, his home state, he would have challenged McCarthy), and as a lifelong liberal, Welles consistently challenged the dumbing-down of discourse that accompanies fascism's rise. By staging Welles as, to some degree, her reflection, Bogart acknowledges both complicity with and critique of Welles's legacy. What she critiques in Welles, then, she critiques in herself; as she gladly learns from his example, she seeks to learn from his mistakes.

**NAOMI IIZUKA'S ORSON WELLES: ADAPTING ALIEN WORLDS**

Playwright Naomi Iizuka brings to *War of the Worlds* a postmodern preoccupation with language as landscape that is evocative of the work and aesthetic of Gertrude Stein (as Alan
Macvey observes in his Introduction to her play 36 Views (5). What Macvey writes of 36 Views (a play about authenticity, truth, and art) is applicable to War: "The ideas at the play's center are not just discussed by the characters [...] They are also embodied by its theatrical elements" (Iizuka 2002, 6). Iizuka, who has a B. A. in Classics from Yale University, has shown a preference for adapting classic works into new forms as a way of dialoguing with them. 36 Views was inspired by "a series of woodblock prints" by the 19th century artist Hokusai ("36 Views of Mount Fuji"), and Iizuka's first success at Actors Theatre of Louisville was her adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, Polaroid Stories (Wren 32). In a 2002 American Theatre interview, Iizuka described her adaptive impulse:

I think that with both Ovid and Kabuki theatre, I'm working with cultures that are, in different ways, foreign to me. [...] It's ancient. It's in a different language. It's an alien lifeform, in a way. I think the question becomes: How do you take these artifacts and find a connection to them? How do you create a new life for them?"

(32)

The woodblock prints that inspired Iizuka in 36 Views depict a mountain from various perspectives. "You see the mountain and the world around it, but in some of the prints the mountain is actually very difficult to make out," observed Iizuka. "As I was writing the play, the question of authenticity – What is authentic? What is true or real? – became as mysterious and somehow omnipresent as the mountain in Hokusai's study. That question, in some sense, became the mountain" (32).

36 Views was first produced in 2002 and so postdates War of the Worlds. Yet Iizuka's words about Hokusai's multivalent approach to Mount Fuji seem applicable to her own approach to Orson Welles. Her language about "foreign" or "ancient" cultures speaks directly to her
collaboration with Anne Bogart on War, in that it is evocative of Bogart's preference for "theatrical engagement" with cultures of difference. For Iizuka (and Bogart), Orson Welles is a foreign country. Orson Welles is a mountain that is – because he exists now only as a proliferation of mediated texts, the 20th century evolution of Hokusai's prints – "very difficult to make out." The word "ancient" is in fact repeated several times in War of the Worlds, in Iizuka's beautiful, evocative stage directions: "A fragment from an ancient radio broadcast of The War of the Worlds" (119), "An ancient movie already in progress" (122), "A fictive fragment from an ancient movie" (126), "A movie version of an ancient play" (147), and "Welles moves across the soundstage, trapped with an ancient movie" (151). The effect is to emphasize Welles's biography as constituted by artifacts, as if he were a mysterious figure only seen in portions, the fact of his existence only theorized by the careful reasoning of archaeologists. This of course recalls Kane, whose ponderous collection of art objects and failed relationships form a biographical maze so complex that Thompson fails to pluck out the heart of his mystery.

Iizuka's attempts to translate cinematic language into theatrically realizable stage directions – "Lap dissolve" (x), "A flawed print, incomplete" (133), "A close-up" (135), "The memory begins to fade. Bits and Pieces" (138), "Leni Zadrov is out of frame, laughing. Her laughter fills the space" (139), "Dissolve to: one lone man applauding in the dark, cavernous space. The camera pans across time and space" (142), "They watch the movie. They are the movie" (153) – are evidence to support Macvey's observation that her ideas are not just discussed by the characters, but are "embodied" by her theatrical elements. The directions – imaginatively realized by Bogart and SITI – are a successful attempt to translate Welles's "foreign" or "alien" languages of cinema and magic into a theatrical idiom.
Iizuka's meditation on an "essentialist" approach to the truth in 36 Views may also illuminate War of the Worlds and her Orson Welles. In her interview with Celia Wren, she described Darius Wheeler and Claire Tsong (the "antagonists" of the play) in this way:

They believe a thing is what it is, that there's this essential, definitive, unchanging truth. And the play really challenges that notion. Whether it's your relationship to a cultural tradition or to an art object, or to another person, I don't know that you can speak in absolutes. And that may be difficult or confusing or painful. I think ultimately it's a more truthful way of moving through the world. (32)

In his opening speech in War of the Worlds, Iizuka's Welles says, "I'm here now before you to plead my case, to set the record straight. I have to, you see. It's very important to me. The truth is very important to me" (119). This speech, which he somewhat undercuts by immediately promising that "for the next hour, everything you hear will be absolutely true and based on solid fact" – a citation from F for Fake and a clue that he is lying – is the key to Iizuka's conception of Welles's figure.\(^\text{10}\) Throughout War of the Worlds the antithetical opposition of truth to falsehood is played like a leitmotif: a "Caller," responding to the panic induced by Welles's Martian radio

\(^{10}\text{In F for Fake, Welles (playing himself) makes an identical promise: "Ladies and gentleman, by way of introduction: this is a film about trickery, and fraud. About lies. Tell it by the fireside, or in a marketplace, or in a movie, almost any story is almost certainly some kind of lie. But not this time. No, this is a promise: during the next hour, everything you hear from us is really true, and based on solid fact." After the hour expires, the film dives (without acknowledgment) into pure fantasy, spinning a yarn about actress Oja Kodar's (fabricated) encounter with Pablo Picasso. Only at the film's end does Welles admit that "for the last hour, we've been lying our heads off."}
broadcast, says "I want to know the truth. I mean what's real and what's bunk. I just want to be clear –" (125). The play frequently resorts to a chorus of company voices – "Callers," "Voices," "Hollywood Reporters," etc. – who bombard the figure of Welles with a cacophony of verdicts about his actions and his character, calling him a "genius" in one scene and a "disappointment" in the next (132-133). Iizuka's Welles dances between these judgments, attempting to escape a final verdict.

If *Citizen Kane* can be taken as Welles's verdict on what Iizuka calls an "essentialist" or unchanging view of truth, and if James Naremore is correct in his assertion that *Kane* is not about the relativity but the complexity of truth, then Welles's position vis-a-vis objective truth may be a modernist one (i.e., we may not have world enough or time to account for all of the bric-a-brac in Xanadu, but amongst the ruins of history there does exist a coherent shape or definitive truth). At his most extreme apogee towards postmodern thought, Welles's worldview might have approached what Elinor Fuchs described in *The Death of Character* (1996) as the "Modern Mysterium" (36). Fuchs defines the modern mysterium as

> a metaphysical play whose subject is salvation. The event it seeks is not the recognition of tragedy, the reconciliation of comedy, or the victory of melodrama, but a mysterious transubstantiation: characters shed, or want to shed, the dross of individuality and sometimes corporeality – whatever stands as their particular, painful separation from a larger plan. [...] What distinguishes the mysterium [...] and makes it a distinctively modern genre is its ironic self-undermining, sometimes experienced by characters as radical doubt or ambivalence, and often expressed as a structural subversion by the dramaturgy of its own cosmic pretensions (48-49).
For Fuchs the mysterium is "a modern dramatic form" evolving from symbolism in the late 19th century to absurdist theatre in the mid-20th century. The mysterium incorporates allegorical structures in the manner of "medieval epics and morality plays" (38). At the extreme, Beckettian end of the scale, a view of objective reality under the modern mysterium would allow allegorical or symbolic meaning to take the place of an absent God. If this was Welles's view (he expressed different attitudes towards religion throughout his life), he might well have believed in an essentialist view of truth. This would qualify him as an Iizuka protagonist *par excellence*, because few 20th century figures are caught between the poles of unchanging truth and spectacular fraudulence as Orson Welles. In *War of the Worlds*, Bogart and Iizuka stage Welles as engaged in the process of interrogating and challenging a mysterium that is uniquely his, an enveloping *lieux de memoire* or convergence of haunted texts that threaten to trap or define him.

Welles's radio "hoax," which inspires Iizuka's title, was for many years the first association in the popular mind with his name. Yet as Catherine Benamou has pointed out, Welles was throughout his life vehemently critical of the notion of authenticity (Juhasz 143). Though it is unlikely he intended mass deception on the scale he actually achieved with his Martian broadcast, Welles certainly learned a lesson about the willingness of the public to swallow whole whatever is offered through the popular media as authentic. In *F for Fake* he critiqued the values of the art world (and by extension, the values of the surrounding culture in which it functions) by foregrounding successful fakers: Elmyr de Hory, Clifford Irving, and himself. His point in that film was to expose our pretensions about the value of truth: we pay

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11 See "The Artifice of Realism and the Lure of the "Real" in Orson Welles's *F for Fake* and Other T(r)eas(u)er(e)s" in *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing* (pp. 143-170).
dearly for what we deem authentic, and the problem lies in the commercialization and commodification of the artistic process. "It's pretty, but is it art?" Welles asks in the film, quoting Rudyard Kipling, and the question is all-encompassing – it applies to the forgeries in the film, to the film itself, and to our cultural confusion about the proper function and value of art.¹²

Iizuka's nod to F for Fake and her choice of title (directly acknowledging Welles's famous deception) suggest a sophisticated awareness of Welles's ambivalent relationship to truth. Catherine Benamou notes that Welles began mixing "realism, fabrication, and narrative discontinuity" as early as Citizen Kane (Juhasz 153). He learned from The War of the Worlds broadcast that the public was collectively far more gullible than was good for it, and he applied this knowledge to later projects, juxtaposing truth and fiction, particularly in essay films (like It's All True and F for Fake), to undermine the disparity of either. Marguerite Rippy accurately points out that Welles anticipated Stephen Colbert's use of "truthiness" – a deliberate, parodic mockery of journalistic objectivity – with The War of the Worlds and Citizen Kane (4).¹³

¹² The line is from Kipling's "The Conundrum in the Workshops," and Welles quotes the first stanza:

  When the flush of a newborn sun fell first on Eden's green and gold,
  Our father Adam sat under the Tree and scratched with a stick in the mold;
  And the first rude sketch that the world had seen was joy to his mighty heart,
  Till the Devil whispered behind the leaves: "It's pretty, but is it Art?"

¹³ The War of the Worlds eroded the "real" by mimicking the style of recognizable news personalities and public figures. The actor playing journalist Carl Phillips (the fictional reporter on the spot at the Martian landing) imitated the famous recordings of the Hindenburg disaster ("oh the humanity!"). A Franklin Roosevelt imitator read lines attributed to the Secretary of
Iizuka's title evokes Welles's early broadcast, in which he accidentally pioneered "truthiness." Rippy writes that Welles "helped originate stylistic erosions of the 'real' in mass media broadcast." The play's title presents the ambivalent Wellesian worlds of "true" and "fake" as at war as it recalls the infamous Halloween hoax (5).

Iizuka's Welles is paradoxically an essentialist – like Darius and Claire in 36 Views – and a hoaxter-magician, a spinner of yarns that are largely "fiction with a little fact thrown in" (140). Iizuka's Welles may profess a desire to "speak in absolutes," but his failure to fully realize the futility of an essentialist approach to truth results in a life that is "difficult" and "confusing" and "painful." Caught in a war between the worlds of "truth" and fakery, her Welles is a casualty of history, a body lost among the ruins of an empire he hoped to master.

CLOSING THE FRAME / EXIT THE KING

Bogart's staging of Iizuka's War of the Worlds made effective use of the play's "framing" imagery. Possibly one or both of the collaborators had seen Vassili Silovic and Oja Kodar's 1995 documentary-essay film, Orson Welles: The One-Man Band. In that film, a piece of Welles's cinematic magic is exposed. Movable stage window frames, which Welles used to create the illusion of a view from interiority to exteriority (i.e., a perspective on a landscape), are seen in the film. One-Man Band reveals an unmasked, extremely likable Orson Welles and shows a theretofore largely invisible side of his art and character. The movable frame is Defense. Citizen Kane juxtaposed a "March of Time" documentary ("News on the March") with traditional film scenes pretending to verisimilitude (the newsreel reporters in the projection room). In each case, Welles and his collaborators were exposing the seams between fiction and the "real" in revolutionary ways.
referenced in Iizuka's play – "a frame within a frame" – and realized in Bogart's production, which employed many different scenic, lighting and staging effects to evoke the imagery. The very concept of the play – a reading of the life of Orson Welles through the frame of his most famous film – is an iteration of this theme, and the intended statement of War of the Worlds may be that in the "war" of "worlds" of perspective, the crucial casualty is the comforting assurance of an unchanging truth. Framing anything is a choice that forestalls or forbids other contingent choices. Like the artistic "violence" Anne Bogart sees as requisite to the creative process, the choice to engage a subject inevitably changes both it and the artist involved (Bogart 2001, 45).

As a statement on the ineffability of human memory, the reliance on a framing metaphor in War of the Worlds creates a mysterium of remembered signs as a backdrop to its staging of history. The play is saying that wars of historical interpretation – the arbitration of legacies, memories, reputations, and mythologies – are inevitable, and that the only sure mistake is to believe that there is truth to be found. There is, according to the play, no such truth – no one perfect vantage point from which to view Mount Fuji or Orson Welles, no satisfying answer to the mystery of Rosebud or Thorne.

The play's revelation of the meaning of "Thorne" is given by Stratten near the end; Stratten, of course, was the man who set Thompson on the quest to solve Welles's secret in the first place. "Thorne" is "a room somewhere," the Thorne Room at the Art Institute of Chicago.

STRATTEN. I went there once when I was a kid. Picture frames all along the walls, and you'd go up close and look through the frame, and inside the frame, there'd be a whole entire world – a room in a house, say, or a woman at the window from a long time ago, tiny and perfect, everything just like it was, the smallest thing, and I remember thinking how strange it was – What do I know?
Sometimes I think I don't know anything. Keep asking questions, Thompson.

Who knows what you'll find. (155)

There is "a whole entire world" inside Stratten's "Thorne room." Like the snowy world of time-lost innocence that slips Charles Foster Kane's grasp as he dies (a world Kane also connects to "Rosebud"), Welles's mysterious "last word" in Iizuka's play conjures frames and miniaturized worlds ("a long time ago, a long way from here"). The real Welles died at his typewriter, working on the script of The Magic Show. Iizuka's version exits like Citizen Kane, leaving just enough material for a mystery that the journalist Stratten (an echo of Van Stratten in Mr. Arkadin, a parody of Thompson in Kane) weaves into the mysterium of War of the Worlds. For the Welles caught between Bogart and Iizuka's worlds, any search for truth (like the hope that the meaning of a single word can "explain a man's life") leads to a dead end. He is surrounded by characters whose names erode the real: Stratten and Thompson are shadowy journalists out of Welles's films; Bernstein is an echo of the sycophantic follower of Kane (and Dr. Maurice Bernstein, Welles's adopted father and the man on whom Everett Sloane's character Bernstein was based); Leni Zadrov is a fictionalized composite of women from Welles's life (Marlene Dietrich, Oja Kodar, and others); and "Stephen Webber" (the name of the actor who first played the part of Welles in War of the Worlds) appears as Welles's confidant and friend (the character

14 From the website of the Art Institute of Chicago: "The 68 Thorne Miniature Rooms enable one to glimpse elements of European interiors from the late 13th century to the 1930s and American furnishings from the 17th century to the 1930s. Painstakingly constructed on a scale of one inch to one foot, these fascinating models were conceived by Mrs. James Ward Thorne of Chicago and constructed between 1932 and 1940 by master craftsmen according to her specifications." (http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/thorne)
evokes both Leland in *Kane* and Joseph Cotten, the actor who played him). By the end of the play, Welles's mystery remains unsolved. Peering through the frame of "Thorne" reveals only more frames, more worlds, and more mystery.

I began this chapter by positing Orson Welles's stage figure as a double-bodied "player-king," the simultaneous embodiment of promise and waste. The Welles of *War of the Worlds* resembles Hamlet's image of Claudius, a player-king who is to be found neither in his mortal body nor in his body politick (his "true" and "false" bodies) but is lost in the space between them. For Bogart and Iizuka, Welles is a magician who plays tricks with frames. Those frames are windows on past worlds (whether real or only imagined we can never finally know). The Welles of *War of the Worlds* is a postmodern protagonist. His figure suggests that people (like Welles, with his preference for elegiac remembrance and framing the past) can contain "whole entire worlds," but that there is no end to the potential infinity loop of the frame within the frame. Looking inside Welles through the frame of *Kane*, they find only more frames and worlds. For Bogart and Iizuka, Welles is finally a magic trick attempting to conceal its secret emptiness. He is a thing of nothing.
CHAPTER FIVE: A DESTITUTE KING

To me, Orson is so much like a destitute king. A destitute king, not because he was thrown away from the kingdom, but on this Earth, the way the world is, there's no kingdom that is good enough for Orson Welles. That's the way I feel. (Jeanne Moreau in The Orson Welles Story, 1982)

Our works — in stone, in paint, in print, are spared — some of them for a few decades, or a millennium or two, but everything must finally fall in war, or wear away into the ultimate and universal ash. The triumphs and the frauds, the treasures and the fakes. A fact of life: we're going to die. "Be of good heart," cry the dead artists out of the living past. Our songs will all be silenced. But what of it? Go on singing. Maybe a man's name doesn't matter all that much. (Orson Welles, meditating on Chartres Cathedral, in F for Fake, 1973)

In the preceding chapters I have considered the ways in which we stage Orson Welles in the theatre of memory, as evidenced by the plays of Jason Sherman, Austin Pendleton, Anne Bogart and Naomi Iizuka. I have sought to show that no one who writes about Welles is really like Thompson in Kane. No one, that is, is an uninflected, shadowy silhouette, free of motive and subjectivity. This judgment applies not only to the playwrights whose works I have considered, but also to me. This final chapter is a step out of the shadow of my subject, and a look back at the road I have traveled with him.¹

¹ Welles said to Barbara Leaming, "I think there's no biography so interesting as the one in which the biographer is present" (3). Though this study has focused on how and why we remember
In what follows, I hope also to summarize my answers to the questions I have asked throughout this study. I hope to tie the two threads of my opening chapter into a knot of closure. How do we remember and stage Orson Welles? How and why do we puppet his "mythical and ideological" figure in acting out our fantasies, and with what consequences? Is it useful to remember and reinvent him as the playwrights I have considered have done? Have these stagings reinscribed inapt Wellesian myths? Do these myths prosper because they allay our anxiety regarding unacknowledged truths? Do we resort to the "unconscious ego defense mechanism" of "acting out" the myth that Welles was solely responsible for his failures because in some sense, we failed him?²

In this study I have attempted to grapple with these questions. My answers can be briefly summarized. We tend to stage Welles as a figure of instruction, explicable by the "single formula" approach decried by Jonathan Rosenbaum. When and where we remember him on the haunted stage of memory, we tend also to re-invent him as a tragically flawed figure who sowed all the seeds of his undoing. When we remember the young Welles, it is with a discrepant awareness of his future downfall, and on the comparatively rare occasions when we recall the older Welles, we tend to recall a man obsessed with his past ("maddened by decades of failure," as in Pendleton's play) (48). We puppet Welles as a figure of capital-F Failure, as a faker or charlatan, as a diabolic magician, as a credit-stealing directorial dictator, and as a mythomaniac whose raison d'être was the self-flattering lie told to inflate his reputation for a credulous, Welles (rather than on the details of his biography), I hope that in the places where I have rendered biographical assessments, my presence can be felt.

² When I use the word "we" in this chapter I mean primarily Welles's contemporaries, his fellow Americans, and the audiences for whom his figure is staged in the theatre of memory.
sycophantic audience. We remember, on balance, the worst of him and – aside from his hollow crown of "genius," a big brass ring he never aimed to grasp – we forget the best of him.

In Cities of the Dead, Joseph Roach writes that in "dramas of sacrificial substitution, the derivation of the word personality from mask eerily doubles that of tragedy from goat" (3). Roach elaborates with a definition of "performance" that informs my understanding of the process of surrogation I perceive as central to the memory-stagings of Orson Welles I have considered:

I believe that the process of trying out various candidates in different situations – the doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins – is the most important of the many meanings that users intend when they say the word performance. (3, italics in original)

In the plays I have analyzed in this study, Welles is a "sacrificial substitute." The figure of Welles stands not only for the living memory of the man but also for mythic significations hidden behind the Wellesian mask, and when we exorcise this figure in tragic stagings, we exorcise the anxieties attendant on those sublimated mythic traces.

Somehow we sense that we have lost a rare, original persona with the "consequential single loss" of Orson Welles. We call for plays and masks, and set actors to the memory-stage to excite our kinesthetic imaginations. As we enact "the doomed search for originals by continually auditioning stand-ins," we resort to an "unconscious ego defense mechanism" to allay not only the anxieties of Welles's influence, but the guilt of our own failure to make a kingdom "good enough" for this player-king. It is a tragedy (or "goat song"), and the figure of Welles is the goat, or "sacrificial substitution" in a rite that remembers by forgetting. We do indeed "act out" fantasies with Welles. We tend to prefer a carefully delineated persona for our staged
recuperation of Welles's memory. It is a mask etched with failure, fakery, devilry and tyranny, a
cavalcade of sins that hide the real man. Welles's actual face (Renoir described him as "a giant
with the face of a child"), if not concealed by this mask, might remind us that *hamartia* cannot
alone account for his tragedy. We in the audience, who gather to witness the Wellesian tragedy,
collectively demand a ritual sacrifice.

I conclude this chapter, and this study, by advocating for a different kind of staging of the
figure of Orson Welles. Jeanne Moreau's notion of Welles as a king without a kingdom holds a
deep resonance for me. Welles was an American artist who faced the vicissitudes of the
marketplace – the inescapable context in which he persisted in creating his texts against long
odds – with profound courage. To stage Welles as an archetypal sell-out is to present him as the
exact opposite of what he was. The story of Orson Welles is the story of his stubborn, lifelong
refusal to compromise his artistic principles. It was this refusal that forced Welles to accept ever
more meager means of production for his films. It was this stubbornness that forced Welles to
take acting jobs in mediocre movies, so that he could fund his own projects. Welles's dedication
to his principles made him the anti-Kane (Charles Foster Kane tears up his "Declaration of
Principles" when they prove inconvenient). Welles's figure (to judge by the testimony of his
close friends) should stand for compassion, good humor, and bravery. He was above all a gifted
storyteller whose real genius lay not in invention, but in adaptation and improvisation. He was
devoted to experimentation, to the finding and shaping of new forms in which to tell stories. Yet
we continue to remember and re-invent him as a figure of fakery, failure, and hubris.

In place of a king of shreds and patches, an exalted king-auteur, a bombastic player-king
or a thing of nothing, I find Moreau's portrait of Welles as "a destitute king" a more useful and
accurate rendering of Orson Welles, because it captures not only the man but his *milieux*. It is
Welles's *milieux de memoire* with which I am concerned in this study. When we remember the man but forget his context (or when we deliberately erase the context for the purpose of remembering and reinventing the man in our own preferred image) we deny the causes and implications of his downfall. His destitution was not his alone, but a fact for which we are collectively responsible.

Welles's own summary of the significance of Chartres Cathedral (the second block quote at the beginning of this chapter) directs our attention away from the good or ill associations we may apply to "a man's name" after he is dead. Welles speaks for the "dead artists" who made Chartres and left it "without signature." This speech is both a *memento mori* and a spirited affirmation of the imaginative power of art over human mortality, perhaps the profoundest magic trick we can collectively perform. Welles's brief essay on Chartres may stand as his best epitaph:

> You know, it might be just this one *anonymous* glory, of all things – this rich stone forest, this epic chant, this gaiety, this grand, choiring shout of affirmation, which we choose, when all our cities are dust, to stand intact. To mark where we have been. To testify to what we had it in us to accomplish.

Anonymity is key to Chartres' greatness, for Welles. The ghosts who lie beneath its cenotaph are nameless and numberless. The "dead artists" whose voices cry "out of the living past" can do so because their works outlived their memories. Their personas do not touch the featureless scenery of our *milieux de memoire* even as the monumental evidence of their existence pervades it. Welles's meditation on Chartres may cry out to us, expressing his own personal hope that his accomplishments and influence will outlive his troubled memory. Welles's figure can seem as monumental as Chartres's silhouette on the horizon of our recall, seizing us as the figure of Don Quixote seized him, carrying us forever, ghostly without end.
(Estrin 207). Perhaps so long as Welles's figure (that part of him that will inevitably precede his *oeuvre* "into the ultimate and universal ash") survives as a ghost in the machinery of his surviving works, no "epic chant," no "gaiety," no "grand, choiring shout of affirmation" can be offered on his behalf. Yet I would suggest that as we remember and reinvent his figure on the stage of our shared memory, we should recall at the very least Welles's voice – I mean not its enchanting, inimitable sound, but what he had to say. We should hear him speaking so clearly in *F for Fake* about the message artists transmit forward to their posterity. This voice is courageous and kingly, defying destitution and death itself, and all that we must do to hear it is illuminate the shadowy *milieux de memoire* that surrounds us. The traces of that voice are obscured and hard to read, but they are there. We need simply to understand that Orson Welles was not a "mythical and ideological figure," separable from his historical context, but a real man who was in constant dialogue with his times. If we listen closely to his voice, we may hear a good story about artists and the marketplace. Further, we may better understand how the charming storyteller with the beautiful voice fits into the tale.

**ME AND ORSON WELLES**

I have been fascinated by Orson Welles – fascinated both by the man and by his body of work – since my father introduced me to *Citizen Kane* at a very young age. From *Kane* I graduated to *The Magnificent Ambersons, The Lady from Shanghai,* and *Touch of Evil.* I became fascinated with his early career and accomplishments, and intrigued with his seeming omnipresence. He was everywhere. He narrated movies, showed up as a guest on talk shows, and introduced other performers (I particularly recall his appearance as the introducing host of *The Wacky World of Jonathan Winters*). I read biographies (Frank Brady's and Barbara
Learning's were my favorites) and works of film criticism, like Pauline Kael's *Raising Kane*. I listened to *The War of the Worlds* with rapt attention, and searched (in vain) for more of Welles's early radio work. Over the years, I collected as much as I could of what Welles jokingly called, after auteur criticism had made it a term of art, his "oeuvre" (Estrin 180). "Collected" is the proper word, because Welles's less well-known works were hard to find in those pre-Internet, pre-digital video days. A few of his films were available in VHS format (though *Chimes at Midnight* was annoyingly elusive).

In about 1985 (my memory is not exact, but I believe it was after his death), the local PBS station in my home town broadcast a documentary film about Welles's life. This was the BBC's *The Orson Welles Story*, a documentary with interviews by Leslie Megahey.3 I recall being deeply engaged by Welles as an interview subject.4 *The Orson Welles Story*, like the later *Orson Welles: the One-Man Band*, captures something of Welles's infectious charm. Leslie Megahey seemed to have a genuine respect and love for his subject, and Welles responded to Megahey's questions with an uncharacteristic openness and honesty.

Three contingencies of my biography combined to make Orson Welles a particularly compelling figure for me. First, I wanted to be a theatre director – I particularly wanted to stage Shakespeare – and I was inspired by Welles's 1930s "concept" productions of *Macbeth* and

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3 *The Orson Welles Story* was originally telecast on *Arena* in the United Kingdom in 1982. It was later reedited and broadcast stateside as *Orson Welles: Stories From a Life on Film* (the version I saw).

4 The interview portion of the broadcast has been transcribed in Mark Estrin's *Orson Welles Interviews*, 177-209.
Julius Caesar. The auteur Welles, who oversaw and arbitrated every detail of his productions, was an early model for me, as he has been for many.

Second, my father was a magician. This fact has no direct relevance to my study, except that because of my father's profession, I grew up around magicians and in magic shops. In those environments I learned words like "patter" and "misdirection." These are deceptively simple concepts, and if one doesn't grasp them (as Bart Whaley notes) it is difficult to understand Orson Welles as he might have understood himself (Whaley 1-2). Such an understanding –

5 A magician's patter is his or her verbal technique (the term is also used by hypnotists). Good patter is quick and apparently improvised. It is a mix of hypnotic charm, anecdote, and statements of the obvious that can lull a magician's audience into suggestibility. Misdirection is the technique of carefully controlling an audience's focus of attention so that they do not see what the magician wishes to conceal. For masterful examples of both patter and misdirection, I recommend a YouTube search for anything by Johnny Ace Palmer. It is significant that these concepts cannot fully be explained with words. They should be experienced in presence, because magic, like theatre, depends for its power on an audience's kinesthetic imagination.

6 Whaley describes Welles as a practitioner of "magical thinking," writing that magic wasn't just some casual hobby for [Welles], an excuse for moments of R&R away from his demanding artistic creations. He'd early on learned that magic wasn't just kid tricks, it was a whole way of life, a way to manipulate people, a way to get them to do things his way and without their quite knowing why... [Consequently,] he applied his magical thinking to all of his artistic projects – stage, radio, movies, TV. He did this throughout his life. It was the very source [of] all those astonishing moments reported by his many biographers
compatible with what Jonathan Rosenbaum described as the "inquisitive" approach to Orson Welles – should, I believe, be one of the guiding aims of biography (Rosenbaum 236). Robert Houdin's remark, quoted by Welles in *F for Fake*, that "a magician is just an actor playing the part of a magician" may be true. Nevertheless, it is a very special part – there is a sense in which no magician is ever completely out of character. To expect a magician to surrender his illusions under the threat of intrusive reality is rather to miss the point. Growing up around magicians, I suppose I evolved a powerful sympathy for professional deceivers and particularly for performers who make a life's work of simple pleasures that distract our attention from pain.

I do regard Orson Welles sentimentally at times, mostly because his mediated image, a portrait largely free of the defects of personality one finds in his biographies, was inspirational, influential, and comforting to me. At a far extreme from indulging in sentiment, however (the world being what it is), I believe that we harshly condemn artists like Welles who "tease out the moment of pleasure in the political" (Ilka Saal's phrase), skillfully combining instruction with aesthetic gratification, at our own risk (Saal 4).7

Sentimentally, I acknowledge Welles's inspirational presence in my life. His is a figure I have tried (consciously and unconsciously, and with limited success) to imitate. Imitation may

and the critics – all those creative solutions to problems arose again and again during his many productions. All resulted from magical thinking... [which is] the rare ability to almost always find a third way out of those many either-or dilemmas we face in life and work. I came to call them Orson's Third Option. (1-2, italics in original)

7 Saal uses this phrase to describe the American Popular Front vernacular approach to theatre, strongly influential of Welles in his formative New Deal days, in her *New Deal Theatre*.
not be sincere, may not be flattery, but it is, as Plato observed, something we do.8 We imitate the things in our experience that fascinate us or that reflect us, or that we cannot fully grasp in a single take. I wonder if that is what memory is – imitation, incorporation, a strange loop that defies death, humankind’s evolved response to mortality – the invention of continuity, where no continuity exists.9 This leads me to the third contingency of my life that led me to study Orson Welles, and the ways in which we remember him – my own personal "consequential single loss."

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8 See particularly the cutting from Book III of Plato's Republic in Dukore, Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 14-18.

9 Douglas Hofstadter’s I Am a Strange Loop is appropriate in this connection to the study of Welles. Hofstadter suggests that we humans are “strange loops”: walking aggregates of the “unpredictable bouncing-back of choices” we make, choices that are immediately followed by “the incorporation of their repercussions into [our] self-model[s]” (24). Put another way, our apparent subjectivity is really a consequence of our continual interactivity with the world around us, a process which is inseparably bound up with the creation of memory. I Am a Strange Loop is a book about “what an ‘I’ is” that also asks “what is its audience?” Hofstadter is preoccupied, as Welles often was, with human subjectivity. Welles’s first proposed film project for RKO was a “First Person Singular” take on Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, in which he intended to cast the audience in the lead part of Marlowe. A chart Welles devised to explain the proposed film’s methodology included the equation “I = Eye,” a formula eerily evocative of Hofstadter’s idea that the construction of a self may have something to do with that self’s imagined construction of its audience. I wonder if Hofstadter’s “strange loop” as it applies to the process of human memory might partly explain the recurrence of Welles as a stage figure. Perhaps there is a collective anxiety regarding Welles that demands his recuperation as a crucial reflection of
In my life I was prompted to reevaluate the human proclivity to imitate when I became aware that, in the wake of my father’s death, I bent my life to keep him present. I intervened to create continuity by imitating him. I unconsciously kept him alive by copying his face, his dress, his gesture, because he was essential to me. I could not, then – and cannot now, some ten years later – imagine a sensible continuity without him. The whole narrative of my life changed shape in my mind, when it became clear to me that in some part, I now lived to preserve his memory. Reflecting back on the things my father had shared with me, and that had the power to vividly recall our connection (that were, thus, totems of continuity), I found Orson Welles. Welles had been a "man who was magic." My father had had a song written about him, titled "Magic Man." I feverishly, if irrationally, connected the dots. Compounding my fascination was my growing awareness of Welles's own fascination with elegy and remembrance, with the backward glance, with mementos mori, and with the "dead artists" who call to us "out of the living past." "Go on singing," said Welles, and I could hear my father's ghostly assent.

We create a sense of continuity by imitating what we have lost. We remember by forgetting. We surrogate the dead by replacing lost bodies with stand-ins. The stand-ins disappoint, failing to live up to their originals. We go on searching, desperate for even the illusion of continuity. We embody memory.

In It's All True, Jason Sherman stages the function of memory itself. Blitzstein recalls his dead wife for Welles, and her ghost is staged, embodying the memory; Welles borrows Blitzstein's "moonlight" to "make magic" with Cradle, an aesthetic magic trick that is both shared selfhood, but which remains troubled by what his image tells us. It seems to me that there is a “strange loop” to be found in the interaction between Welles's stage figure and its audience.
remembrance and reinvention. What Blitzstein recalls of Eva informs Welles's production. Sherman's audience is tasked to remember the history staged by the play.

Austin Pendleton hints at this process of embodied memory in Orson’s Shadow. The characters of his play are presented in the eidetic mode of memory, i.e., by replicating nuances of detail the audience will recognize. Part of the pleasure of Orson's Shadow arises from its verisimilar surrogation of the eidetically recalled characters. The feeling is even more palpable in Pendleton's Booth. In that play, Junius dreads but can’t avoid passing his legacy to Edwin, and Edwin’s ambition to be an actor is insufficient to explain his need to receive that legacy. Continuity is key.

Naomi Iizuka and Anne Bogart, in contrast with Sherman and Pendleton, stage the failure of memory and the ways in which it can trap and doom a remembered subject. The Welles of War of the Worlds becomes lost in his own "doomed search" for his "lost original" self. Iizuka and Bogart confront the impossibility of continuity, exposing our desire to perpetually recuperate the dead as a futile preoccupation with empty illusion.

By animating and reinventing the dead in dramatic metafictions, we deliberately haunt our stages, populating them with the ghosts of those consequential, essential figures we have lost. Faced with contingency, mortality, the ephemerality of meaning, we defy death by asking that absurd question from Hamlet that Carlson repeats: “What, has this thing appeared again tonight?” (Haunted Stage 7). The question is absurd because we know the answer in advance – yes of course it has – and because we mutually consent to the fiction and assent mutually in advance to the necessity of its creation. We are making choices. We choose what to remember, and what to forget – we are choosing the people we want to keep with us, because we can imagine no sensible continuity without them.
Like Jason Sherman, Austin Pendleton, Anne Bogart and Naomi Iizuka – and (I suspect) like other writers, artists and actors who have worked to trace Welles’s figure into our collective and cultural memory – I believe Orson Welles is one of those figures without whom we can imagine no sensible continuity. Welles was an artist with an international career and legacy. His is an important figure, postmodernist ennui aside, for a sensible American continuity. In the United States, Welles's figure provoked a national anxiety. He never capitulated to our pervasive capitalist ethic, preferring destitution, a shabby reputation, and an unfinished, partly invisible body of work to a betrayal of his principles. His life and legacy are a deeply unsatisfying answer to the question: What is – or what can be – the fate of the American artist in the marketplace? The answer to this unspoken question may be what Welles's ghost returns to tell us. Perhaps this is his sublimated meaning, ineradicable by surrogation. Perhaps his ghostly figure tells us that the American marketplace is anathema to American artists, and that our devotion to capital cannot abide artists who live in defiance of it.

Welles was a man who might have had everything, but failed to realize his promise. Did he sabotage himself? If he did, does that explain his failure? What is wrong with our landscape, if it tends to become littered with destitute kings? Do we err in wanting kings, great figures to look up to and onto whose backs we can unburden heavy loads of responsibility? Or do we err in allowing them to be brought low, in making scapegoats of them when their burdens bring them down? Do we at some level want Orson Welles to fail because we need him to fail? Is that what we are imitating/remembering when we reflect his ghostly body on our stages? I am reminded of Shakespeare’s Dream: “The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst / are no worse, if imagination amend them.” The power to amend or to offend lies in the shared (kinesthetic) imagination. At some point, we intervene; we choose what and how to remember.
We choose the moral of the story, or it evolves by “natural” selection. And we are uncomfortable with, or unaccustomed to, ambiguity. Where does that leave the figure of Orson Welles?

TOWARDS A "USEFUL" STAGING OF ORSON WELLES: AMBIGUITY, THE STORYTELLER AND THE MARKETPLACE

In closing, I would like to offer some possibilities for future stagings of Orson Welles that are more useful (a priority I asserted in chapter one). How can we remember and re-invent him "inquisitively" (as opposed to a reliance on the "single formula" approach)?

Whether as cause or as emblem, Welles has become, like the Giant Robot Planet he voiced in Transformers: The Movie, a world unto himself, a world that occasions wars, an inventor, colonizer, destroyer, dreamer of worlds. His is one of a very few figures that seems capable of bearing the weight of history; Welles stood for things, whether movements or art forms or poetical modes, performance styles or philosophies of living. His is a figure in extremis – an outsized shape that casts a long shadow. As humans we crave meanings, and inscribe them where they do not exist. Inevitably, the figure of Welles will come to stand for something. I would like to suggest new approaches to finding meaning in Welles's memory.

Important to interpreting Welles's figure will be maintaining an "inquisitive" approach to it while avoiding the "single formula." To do that, we must preserve in our renderings of Welles a sense of his personal ambiguity, i.e., his ability to "mean" different things simultaneously. To illustrate the Wellesian propensity for ambiguity, I turn to Welles's assessment of Shakespeare's Falstaff; it is highly revealing when applied to his own figure:

Falstaff [...] is the most unusual figure in fiction in that he is almost entirely a
good man. He is a gloriously life-affirming good man, and there are very few gigantic silhouettes on the horizon of fiction who are good. They're always flawed, they're always interesting because of what is wrong with them [. . .] And innocence is what Falstaff is. He is a kind of refugee from that world [Merrie England]. And he has to live by his wits, he has to be funny. He hasn't got a place to sleep if he doesn't get a laugh out of his patron. (201-202)

Welles shares with Harold Bloom a conviction that "the tutor and the feeder" of Prince Hal's "riots" is a "gloriously life-affirming good man" (Bloom calls Falstaff the "mortal god of my imaginings"). This is a controversial interpretation. Falstaff is more often read as a Vice figure (the same species of stage type as Richard III and Iago), a misleader of Hal's youth. Falstaff is the "bad" father competing with Henry IV's "good" father for Hal's love and loyalty. Perhaps Welles insisted on Falstaff's goodness because he understood Shakespearean ambiguity. As an actor, he surely knew that exploring the contradictory extremes of a character could yield dramatic tension. What might be judged a willful misreading of Falstaff by some could be a purposeful strategy to bolster the character's ambiguity. Perhaps Welles seized on Falstaff's ambiguity because he personified it. Perhaps Welles was unafraid to acknowledge that we are all ambiguous. Future stagings of Welles may benefit from embracing the contradictory extremes of his character and foregrounding his ambiguity. In this way, Welles's figure can be presented as at once "flawed" and as the "gloriously life-affirming good man" he actually was.

If Welles was an ambiguous figure, he also preferred stories that could be read ambiguously or that contained contradictory extremes. "I'm bored with stories that don't seem to be balanced dangerously," he said (in his interview with Leslie Megahey). "When you walk

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10 Bloom's quote is in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. 
down a highway instead of on a tightrope . . . I'm bored with it, you know" (Estrin 192). I would suggest, then, that future interpreters of Welles remember his preference for ambiguity (or "tightrope" stories) and also that they reinvent him as a narrative tightrope-walker – that is, as a brilliant storyteller.

"Less and less frequently," wrote Walter Benjamin (in an essay titled "The Storyteller," published in Illuminations), "do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly" (83). The art of storytelling, according to Benjamin, demands "an orientation toward practical interests" (86). Defining "the nature of every real story," Benjamin asserts that

> It contains, openly or covertly, something useful. The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers... the communicability of experience is decreasing. In consequence we have no counsel either for ourselves or for others. After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding. To seek this counsel one would first have to be able to tell the story. (86)

Benjamin's essay is about the writer Nikolai Leskov, but his insights on the ideal storyteller are keenly suitable to Welles. Welles was most famously a theatrical and cinematic storyteller, but he was also a practitioner of what Joseph Roach calls "orature" (a blend of oral history and cultural narrative transmitted verbally, conceptually opposed to "literature) (Roach 24). He told stories within stories, and he certainly had "counsel" for his listeners (though sometimes it was "covert")). Benjamin's description of counsel – "less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding" – evokes a typical
Wellesian film narrative. A definition of storytelling as "counsel" also applies to Welles's lesser known uses of "orature." During his brief career as a public intellectual in the late 1940s or his performances in the essay films he made for television in the 1950s ("Orson Welles's Sketchbook" and "Around the World With Orson Welles"), Welles played the role of a counseling griot, a wise traveler who had been many places, and seen and experienced many things, returning to share them with his audience. In his 1940s radio program, "Hello Americans," Welles delivered regular monologues and shared stories in the style of his 1930s "First Person Singular" program. Welles embodied the First Person Singular.  

In these performances, he problematized his own status as a truth-teller, walking the ambiguous tightrope line between truth and fiction. Future interpreters would do well to recall this key role Welles played for his audiences. He worked to increase the "communicability of experience" when, as Benjamin discerned, the tendency of communication of "useful" experience was in decline. Welles's narrative strategy usually involved epic narration; he liked to put himself into the story. This strategy fostered a pseudo-Brechtian critical distance in his audience, and it enhanced their awareness of Welles's status as not only a character in a fiction but also as – simultaneously – Orson Welles, the storyteller (always "obediently" ours). This is a quality of Welles's that, I think, we particularly miss. We miss it because, as Benjamin noted, we encounter few "people with the ability to tell a tale properly." We should remember this quality of Welles's when we stage him.

[11] It was during a "Hello Americans" broadcast that Welles delivered his assault on "Officer X" (referenced in Chapter One, footnote 18), a classic example of his mastery of the art of orature. In that performance, Welles was narrating America's telos of progress towards civil liberty.
Finally, a useful staging of Orson Welles would not omit to portray his *milieux* as he reckoned it: Welles spoke and wrote on several occasions of the role of the limitations imposed on an artist by the marketplace. His rhetoric on this subject is critical to understanding his own negotiations with his context, and should be considered by interpreters who would remember and reinvent him. Two examples, separated by a decade (1975 and 1985), should serve to illustrate Welles's ongoing concern with the role of the American artist in a pervasive marketplace.

The American Film Institute gave Welles a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1975. On this occasion, Welles presented clips of his unfinished films. He expressed his gratitude to the audience and added:

> This honor I can only accept in the name of all the mavericks. A maverick may go his own way but he doesn't think that it's the only way or ever claim that it's the best one—except maybe for himself. And don't imagine that this raggle-taggle gypsy-o is claiming to be free. It's just that some of the necessities to which I am a slave are different from yours. As a director, for instance, I pay myself out of my acting jobs. I use my own work to subsidize my work. In other words, I'm crazy. (*Audience laughter.*) But not crazy enough to pretend to be free. [. . .] Good night— from one who will remember tonight not as a sort of gala visit but as a very happy homecoming, and who remains not only your obedient servant, but also, in this age of supermarkets, your friendly neighborhood grocery store.¹²

He remained critical of the form and pressure of his time (an "age of supermarkets") throughout his life. In a televised interview Welles gave eight days before his death, he affirmed

¹² This speech is transcribed from *Orson Welles: The One-Man Band* (1994).
that "the marketplace is always the enemy of the artist." After asserting his own constitutional
inability to compromise his principles, he said:

You know, I am a romantic. And I was a romantic in the early nineteenth century
way. I wanted every experience, every kind of thing, and so I went to Hollywood
in that spirit, and I should have left in that spirit. Because I have wasted my life
trying to prove... you know, what I want to be – you know the black hats and the
white hats, you know what I mean? And I always wanted to be a white hat. I'd
rather be remembered as a good guy, than as a difficult genius.13

In the interview he appeared gaunt, haggard, and (as in Naomi Iizuka's stage direction for
War of the Worlds) "almost imperceptibly, unwell." Yet he was not defeated. His tone was not
complaining or self-pitying. He sounded hopeful.

It is on this note that I want to end this study, remembering the "good guy," not the
"difficult genius." I want to recall Orson Welles's words from F for Fake and invoke his ghost
to inspire us with them:

"Be of good heart," cry the dead artists out of the living past. Our songs will all
be silenced. But what of it? Go on singing.

13 This interview was transcribed from a YouTube clip ("Orson Welles 8 days before his death
1985"), available at:
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