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The Guise of Friendship: Orson Welles and the Soliloquy on Film*

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This essay discusses how Orson Welles uses the soliloquy to explore modes of social isolation in Shakespeare's plays. In Welles's Shakespeare films, the soliloquizer does not withdraw from the scene of social interaction. Other characters can, and often do, overhear the speech, though they do not respond to it. The Wellesian soliloquy is neither a monologue nor a conversation, and its performers run the risk of being ignored even when they wish to be heard. Through readings of Welles's *Othello* and *Chimes at Midnight*, the essay shows how Welles uses the filmed soliloquy to represent the sovereign and the black man as socially isolated figures. The essay also examines how Welles translates the language of the soliloquy into a film's visual style. Like a soliloquy, the expressionist distortions of the film world reflect the interiority of the characters, but these shifts in scale, color, and time go unacknowledged by other characters in the film and are only noticed by the viewer. This soliloquized style, the essay goes on to suggest, is a general feature of Welles's films, which offers the viewer a temporary intimacy with the film world.

Keywords: Soliloquy, Social isolation, Sovereignty, Blackness

Rarely would Orson Welles begin at the beginning. By the time the viewer enters the world of his films, its central figures are already on their way out. A maudlin Falstaff (Orson Welles) opens *Chimes at Midnight* (1965). This Falstaff is old, seeking warmth by the hearth, and he smiles with borrowed mirth as his worn face reflects

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the light of the fire[1]. From here the film looks back on the times when he and Hal were still together at the Boar's Head Tavern, and coronation day seemed further away than death. The film is extravagant, and even when we witness war, we are given no impression of the end. But in the final shot of the film, Falstaff is wheeled out of the tavern in a comically large coffin and pushed towards the foggy bend in the road. As the gulf widens between us and Falstaff, we are bereft of a character we believed would never leave us. This final scene is a common motif in Welles's films, the sudden disavowal. A wired fence shuts out the viewer at the end of *Citizen Kane* (1941), and Tanya (Marlene Dietrich) closes *Touch of Evil* (1958) with affected nonchalance: "He was some kind of a man. What does it matter what you say about people?" (Welles 1958). In *Chimes at Midnight*, it is Hal (Keith Baxter) who declares, "I know thee not, old man" (Welles 1965), and gives this motif a reflexive turn. Before he takes leave of the viewers at the end of the film, Welles shows himself abandoned by a friend, and he seems to have found in this story of betrayal the license to expose himself to the intimacy that his films had previously expressed with pretense. As Pauline Kael wrote in her review of *Chimes at Midnight*, "[Welles's voice] was just an instrument that he played, and it seemed to be the key to something shallow and unfelt even in his best performances, and most fraudulent when he tried to make it tender". But as Falstaff, "[Welles's] emotions don't seem fake anymore; he's grown into them, too" (Kael 1967).

Playing Falstaff, Welles makes his body do a lot of work. The portly knight takes on a double duty as his body stands in contrast to both the skinny Henry IV (John Gielgud) and the nimble Hal who circles around Welles's bumbling frame. As Henry IV, John

[1] This film is a mix of five plays, the Henriad and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and had been for Welles a lifelong project. In 1939, Welles had prepared for the stage a version of the script known as *Five Kings*, which had a limited run with mostly negative reviews, but even before then, when he was still a student at the Todd School for Boys, Welles starred in a play that he wrote and directed, a rearrangement of the first tetralogy that he called *The Winter of Our Discontent*. Welles, of course, played Richard III. See Callow 1996, 423-25, 67-68.

Gielgud stands in for a Shakespeare refined and elevated like the films of Laurence Olivier. The poetry of the words will not be missed. While playing Falstaff, Orson Welles puts body before mind and throws out his words like the everyday repartee of a man whose wits hope to outpace his debts. It is easy to miss what Falstaff is saying, but no matter. Words, as the knight tells us, are but made of air. For the most part, the film maintains a parity between the rowdy and refined Shakespeares. Early on, when Hal and Poins circle Falstaff, enclosing him in his own lies, it is difficult to catch what the three of them are saying. But the details of Falstaff's compounding lies are trivial in comparison to the taunting faces and jeering tones that paint the scene for the viewer. At the Battle of Shrewsbury, Falstaff brings the tavern to the open field, and his mute, toddling body is a counterpoint to the clamor of armed men and horses. The battle is an aesthetic competition between the serious and the comic registers of Shakespeare, and by casting his lot with Falstaff, Welles consigns his Shakespeare to defeat. In *Chimes at Midnight*, Welles sides with the banished.

The coronation scene begins with Falstaff's eager face floating behind the wall of people lining the royal hall. The knight bursts through the crowd and shouts at Hal with the irreverence of a heckler, and the new king turns to face the knight. Crowned, caped, scepter and orb in hand, Hal is a figure of majesty. The low-angle shot emphasizes his grandeur, and the sequence that follows alternates between low and high-angle shots that reflects the rift opening up between the two men. For the first time, Falstaff does not seem larger than life. The sound comes a steady stream from Hal, and Falstaff, silenced, no longer projects his size through the volume of his voice. As Hal's words flow through the scene, Falstaff chuckles and moves towards him, gesturing towards a conversation, but the new king does not permit him to speak. Falstaff does not get in a word and falls to his knees, a banished man. The sound suggests that Gielgud's Shakespeare has prevailed. But the faces tell another story. The shot-reverse shots that magnify Hal but shrink Falstaff carry out a dialogue of faces. A look of awe and abandon sweeps over the knight's face while the new king speaks, and before Hal turns his back to his boyhood friend, we see a small quiver on his chin, one mirrored by Falstaff's

trembling beard. No such look ever flitted across the grave face of Henry IV. When he was Bolingbroke, the late king was a popular man, but in *Chimes at Midnight*, he is without a friend to betray. As king, Henry IV was alone, and Hal is on his way to that solitary seat. The quiver on the to-be king's chin is the last twitch of a dying boyhood and a bleating farewell to friendship.

In an interview with Kenneth Tynan, Welles said of *Chimes at Midnight* that "[t]he main change is no excuse for the betrayal of a friendship. It's the liberation of that story that justifies my surgical approach to the text" (Welles 2002, 133). It is a peculiar interview. Welles, as usual, is putting on a persona, and Tynan plays along. Elaborating on the film's theme, Welles says that "[i]t laments the death of chivalry and the rejection of merry England. Even in Shakespeare's day, the old England of the greenwood and Maytime was already a myth, but a very real one" (132-33). Tynan follows up on some other real myths, asking Welles to "*check on a few of the popular rumors*" about himself – a tendency to "*go over the budget*" ("False"), "*power*[*s*] *of clairvoyance*" ("sometimes"), and "*too much energy*" spent on "*talk*":

> PLAYBOY [Kenneth Tynan]: *A third charge often leveled against you is that you dissipate too much energy in talk. The English critic Cyril Connolly once said that conversation, for an artist, was "a ceremony of self-wastage". Does that phrase give you a pang?*
> ORSON WELLES: No, but it reminds me of Thornton Wilder and his theory of "capsule conversations". He used to say to me: "You must stop wasting your energy, Orson. You must do what I do – have capsule conversations". Just as a comic can do three minutes of his mother-in-law, Thornton could do three minutes on Gertrude Stein or Lope de Vega. That's how he saved his energy. But I don't believe that you have more energy if you save it. It isn't a priceless juice that has to be kept in a secret bottle. We're social animals, and good conversation – not just parroting slogans and vogue words – is an essential part of good living. It doesn't behoove any artist to regard what he has to offer as something so valuable that not a second of it should be frittered away in talking to his chums. (133-34)

For Welles, there is no economy to a person's energy. A person who refrains from talk to guard that energy like a precious resource

harbors a contempt for others in line with imperial ambitions. Civil war and usurpation are second to Hal's privation of friendship: "The rejection of Falstaff by the prince means the rejection of that England by a new kind of England that Shakespeare deplored – an England that ended up as the British Empire" (133). Renouncing Falstaff, Henry leads the English to Agincourt, but it may also be Vietnam that is on Welles's mind: "America doesn't have a history of losing wars and it has only a few bad wars on its conscience; this is one of them" (139)[2]. Whenever Tynan asks him about America, Welles hangs on to an America soon to be lost to imperial ambitions. Of contemporary American directors, Welles says Stanley Kubrick and Richard Lester interest him, but his favorites are "John Ford, John Ford and John Ford" (135). The studio system was a source of great creative agon, and Welles felt that he should have arrived at Hollywood earlier, not later (136). Had he entered politics, Welles would have run as the junior senator from Wisconsin, against "a fellow called Joe McCarthy" (138). And New York is not what it used to be – neither its people nor its theater scene. Back then, "[w]e were still within speaking distance of the age when [New York] was called the melting pot […], and there was a genuine internationalism that did not come from the mass media" (138). The nostalgia is palpable, and the myth of "merry England" seems to stand in for the America of his youth, back when people "were within speaking distance" of a cosmopolitan past.

In *Chimes at Midnight*, Falstaff represents not only a side of the Anglo-American rivalry but the very conditions of this interaction. For Welles, the loss of Falstaff is a loss of dialogue as, without him, Hal will no longer be on familiar terms with anyone else; he will be alone. As Laurie Shannon has shown, early modern theories of friendship and monarchy introduced a double break between the sovereign and his friends:

> Friendship theory and its faith in decorous parity, along with monarchy theory's interpellating exaltation of the sovereign and demand for the subordination of his private self, converged precisely

[2] On the strain of anti-war *Henry V* productions in America, see Loehlin 1997, 151-70.

> to one effect: affectively speaking, they rendered the proper sovereign *solitary*. (Shannon 2002, 155)

In *Henry V*, Shakespeare stages this loneliness through a device unusual in his plays, a sustained Chorus that provides a rapid and panoptic survey of the war's background. Acknowledging the technical difficulties of staging a military campaign, the Chorus asks the audience "to admit th'excuse / Of time, of numbers, and due course of things, / Which cannot in their huge and proper life / Be here presented" (Shakespeare 1982, V.Chorus.3-6). The audience is to "a thousand parts divide one man, / And make imaginary puissance" (Prologue.24-25) though on stage only "a crookèd figure may / Attest in little place a million" (15-16). At once the medium of this spectral multitude and the exception to its unreality, the Chorus figures dramatically the corporation sole, which, Ernst Kantorowicz says, "was at once immortal species and mortal individuation, collective *corpus politicum* and individual *corpus naturale*" (Kantorowicz 2016, 394). The ontological difference between staged and unstaged bodies prevents interaction between the multitude and the characters on stage, least of all Henry V. The limits of dramatic representation correspond to those of the king who cannot come in touch with his own subjects, and the absence of "huge and proper life" we feel in *Henry V* seems to be the hole left by a character who could touch the royal body without waging war.

In lieu of interpersonal relationships, Shakespeare supplies Henry with various substitutes. In the beginning of Act V, the Chorus describes the multitude that comes out to greet Henry upon his return from France:

> CHORUS
> Behold, the English beach
> Pales-in the flood, with men, maids, wives, and boys,
> Whose shouts and claps out-voice the deep mouthed sea,
> Which like a mighty whiffler fore the King
> Seems to prepare his way.
> (Shakespeare 1982, V.Chorus.9-13)

Boundaries collapse in this scene of celebration as people are liquidated into a flood, and the sea is personified as "a mighty whiffler". However, as harmonious and jubilant as this scene may be, it is not staged, and the unreality of this scene limns the king's body with a longing for physical union, which the final act of the play supplies through Catherine. The bilingual courtship is a romantic resolution to military hostilities, but the conversation remains awkward. The final act does not lift the strain placed on Henry's language. In general, Henry has difficulty talking to other characters, a difficulty Anne Barton attributes to the linguistic predicaments of having to represent both the king's two bodies[3]. The military campaign, Barton suggests, resolves this tension, for "[t]he war in France provides Henry with 'friends' of a rhetorical and special kind" (Barton 1975, 105). During the campaign, Henry assumes the "we" not as an impersonal formality but as a concrete reference to him and his army, and

> [a]s the peril of the situation in France grows, so does Henry's sense of fellowship. It is almost as though he extracts from danger a kind of substitute for the genuinely personal relationships abandoned with Falstaff and Scroop. (106)

This compensation, however, is not total and is rather "an easy jocularity which is familiar without being intimate, essentially distant at the same time that it creates an illusion of warmth and spontaneity" (106).

For Welles, the withdrawal from social interaction signals a hostility or disregard towards the well-being of others. The connection that Welles draws between Hal's rejection of Falstaff and his future military campaign is a shared sensibility, one that Welles rebuffs through the figure of Thornton Wilder whose capsule conversations accord with Hal's fellowship with his soldiers. In Shakespeare's play, the Chorus takes note of the king's "essentially distant" manner when describing Henry's composure

[3] When Henry dispenses with the traitors, for example, Anne Barton points out that the king alternates between the impersonal "we", in stating the damages done to England, and the personal "I", in stating the injuries inflicted upon him by Scroop (Barton 1975, 103-4).

on the eve of Agincourt: "Upon his royal face there is no note / How dread an army hath enrounded him" (Shakespeare 1982, IV.Chorus.35-36). While his soldiers are concerned about the French army that encircles them, the king seems indifferent to their number and thus projects onto his soldiers a different understanding of their shared situation. This indifference is good for English morale, but the king's aloofness to the multitude is also a disregard for their well-being. After the battle, the king will sweep away the untitled, "common men" (IV.viii.77) when he coolly counts off the casualties: "None else of name" (103). The piles of slaughtered men are as unreal to Henry as the choral multitude who were never fully alive. The bawdy conversation of the tavern no longer reaches the ears of this king, and to hear again the sounds of frankness, to so much as appear in the same scene with Pistol, Henry must approach the other characters in disguise.

Falstaff does not disguise himself. The knight puts on a dress in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, but it is to escape a confrontation rather than to enter into another's confidence[4]. Remarking upon this aspect of Falstaff's character, W. H. Auden compares the knight to Christ:

> The Christian God […] appears in this world, not as Apollo or Aphrodite might appear, disguised as man so that no mortal should recognize his divinity, but as a real man who openly claims to be God. And the consequence is inevitable. The highest religious and temporal authorities condemn Him as a blasphemer and a Lord of Misrule, as a Bad Companion for mankind. (Auden 1962, 207-8)

In the *Playboy* interview, Tynan asks Welles if he agrees with Auden, and while Welles expresses some reservations about "the word 'Christ'", he ultimately assents:

> I think Falstaff is like a Christmas tree decorated with vices. The tree itself is total innocence and love. By contrast, the king is decorated only with kingliness. He's a pure Machiavellian. And there's something beady-eyed and self-regarding about his son – even when he reaches his apotheosis as Henry V. (Welles 2002, 132)

[4] Welles does not include this scene in his film.

Welles continues, describing Falstaff as "the prince's spiritual father, who is a kind of secular saint" (132). Simon Callow finds the description "remarkably counterintuitive stuff" and instead proposes that

> [i]t is love – Falstaff's love of Hal – that is, for Welles, at the centre of the man; and it is love that sanctifies him. Like the woman taken in sin in St Luke's Gospel, Falstaff's sins are forgiven him, because he has loved. (Callow 2015, 132)

Emerging from these varied figures of contradiction, delightful and divine is a character whose open incarnation appears to those in disguise as indecent exposure. The scandal of Falstaff is a licentious love that does not guard itself against others like the opaque self-regard of Hal's beady eyes.

Near the end of *Chimes at Midnight*, there emerges a new wave of feeling, a free-swinging love with Jeanne Moreau as Doll Tearsheet. The battle is won, and Falstaff wades through the partying crowd to make his way towards Doll, not unlike how Henry reaches Catherine after the celebration of Agincourt. Hal and Poins spy on Doll and Falstaff, but they soon mix together in the open. Bardolph is there grunting and so is the Page, smiling[5]. In an appearance on *The Dean Martin Show*, Welles described Falstaff as "what you might call a swinger. In the late fifteenth century, they didn't call them swingers, but they swung. And nobody more so than Sir John" (Garrison 1968). The tumble of bodies rolls around as they exchange jeers and endearments, much in contrast to how Henry woos Catherine with sly diplomacy. That is more Olivier's world where seduction rules. In his adaptation of the play, Olivier cuts out the traitors and parts of the Chorus, decisions that attenuate Henry's isolation. The multitude is incarnated alongside the king, and when Henry delivers his speeches, the film shows his words register on the faces of his subjects. None betray him. Olivier is also smooth in his courtship with Catherine, but seduction is not always conversation. This wooing does not deliver the king from

[5] Falstaff's Page is played by Beatrice Welles, Welles's daughter.

isolation. In Olivier's film, Henry is still without proper interlocutors, but it may be this solitude that Olivier wished to convey when he closed his lips and played the soliloquy as a voiceover. The words are beyond the frame, for the king is not talking to other characters or even the audience but the only other figure that he can address frankly[6]. This soliloquy is a prayer.

The soliloquy presents a challenge to the director of Shakespeare because film is without the generic controls of theater that make intelligible a character's sudden withdrawal from the scene of action[7]. Without a stage, the soliloquizer appears to be engaged in what Erving Goffman calls "self-talk", which he classifies as a type of "roguish utterance" that "produc[es] communicative effects but no dialogue" (Goffman 1981, 78). These "utterances" are "roguish" not only because they "violate [the] interdependence" (78) that Goffman believes is fundamental to utterances, but also because

> our self-talk – like other "mental symptoms" – is a threat to intersubjectivity; it warns others that they might be wrong in assuming a jointly maintained base of ready mutual intelligibility among all persons present. (85)

6 Ernst Kantorowicz points out that when "[m]using over his royal fate, over the king's two-natured being, Shakespeare's Henry V is disposed to recall Shakespeare's Richard II, who – at least in the poet's concept – appears as the prototype of that 'kind of god that suffers more of mortal griefs than do his worshippers'" (Kantorowicz 2016, 26).

7 Take for example a scene from Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Birdman* (2014). The movie takes place entirely indoors at a New York theater space until Riggan Thompson (Michael Keaton) exits the building onto the street. Riggan is a washed-up film actor trying to stage a comeback through a play that he is writing, directing, and starring in. The film's initial absorption in Riggan's production reflects the character's all-consuming obsession with theatrical success. During his excursion, Riggan runs into a disheveled man (Bill Camp) reciting a soliloquy from *Macbeth* as he swings on the metal tubes of a building's scaffolding. After roaring "sound and fury signifying nothing", the man asks Riggan if it was too much: "I was just trying to give you a range". Riggan seems shocked by the performance and abruptly turns away from the man, frightened by his foil who also seems unable to respect the boundaries between life and theatre. In film, all the world is not a stage.

Like Welles, Goffman discerns in public self-absorption a hostility towards others. The reality of the social world rests on the tacit consensus of its participants who project their understanding of the situation through their behavior. A person engaged in self-talk seems absorbed in a reality different from the one shared by his observers and thereby projects onto them a dissenting interpretation, which is nothing less than a challenge to their notion of reality. In film, the turn to soliloquy threatens the understanding, among the characters as well as between the film and the audience, that the characters are in a film and not a theatrical production[8]. The filmed soliloquy thus often serves as the emblem of drama's transposition to film, and how the director negotiates this adaptation reflects the connections the film draws between life, to which film lays claim, and theater, from which film wrests this claim. It is not the claim of the Shakespeare film that it transcends all dramatic contrivance to realize the play in its authentic setting, say, the battlefield, just as Goffman does not claim through his social theory "that social life is but a stage" (4). Rather, the filmed soliloquy, like Goffman, makes a "technical" point: "that deeply incorporated into the nature of talk are the fundamental requirements of theatricality" (4).

Laurence Olivier approached the filmed soliloquy from several different angles. In *Henry V*, Olivier presents the speech as a voiceover, a private conversation between a king and the god of battles. Olivier's *Richard III* casts the Duke of Gloucester as a television host who solicits the audience's involvement in his plots. In these films, Olivier restages the soliloquy to maintain the fiction that the words will be heard by the viewers but not the other characters. Franco Zeffirelli, who approaches *Otello* by way of Verdi, presents a comparable model when he uses the aria to secure the lyric conditions of Othello's impassioned eloquence. In *Hamlet*, Olivier takes a different approach and stages the soliloquy as a speech directed to no one. These soliloquies are the closest to the

[8] This is Welles's understanding of Olivier: "Larry Olivier has made fine Shakespearean movies that are essentially filmed Shakespearean plays; I use Shakespeare's words and characters to make motion pictures" (Welles, 2002, 132).

dramatic model, but they take place on castle towers and seem less dramatic contrivances than symptoms of the play's madness[9]. The soliloquies verge on the self-talk that Goffman designates as "mental symptoms". Akira Kurosawa presents a similar solution when he does not have Hidetora, his catatonic Lear, rage against the storm and instead has him keep his promise from the English play: "No, I will be the pattern of all patience, / I will say nothing" (Shakespeare 1997, III.ii.37-38). The threat that the soliloquy poses to the integrity of film can be embraced as the effects of the play's action upon its character, or it can be defused by laying alternative foundations for the magical monologue that goes unheard by others.

In *Chimes at Midnight*, Orson Welles breaks new ground. The two main soliloquies of the film present their speakers behind one another, and Welles makes it ambiguous whether they are speaking to themselves or the other person in the frame. The theatrical soliloquy dwells between the address to self and to the audience, and Welles transposes this ambiguity to that of self and other. The first soliloquy of *Chimes at Midnight* is Hal's. When he exits the Boar's Head Tavern, we are given a glimpse of the outside world. Shown through a gate, the view is narrow and quick. We see some trees and a group of horsemen, but Falstaff's voice turns the camera back to Hal. A trunk covers the right side of the frame, almost contiguous with the wooden building of the tavern in whose doorway stands Falstaff. At the bottom of the frame are the tree's branching twigs whose fingers seem to beckon Hal to turn away from the coaxing knight. When Hal is king, Falstaff says, rogue knights like he will "be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade"

[9] In his discussion of persistent self-talk, Erving Goffman writes: "an adult who fails to attempt to conceal his self-talk […] is in trouble. Under the term verbal hallucination we attribute failure in decorum here to 'mental illness'" (Goffman 1981, 82). Goffman appends a footnote to this statement, which captures the interpretive dilemma of *Hamlet*: "I leave open the question of whether the individual who engages in verbal hallucination does so in order to create an impression of derangement, or for other reasons, and is merely indifferent to how he appears, or carries on in spite of some concern for the proprieties. And open, too, the question of whether in treating unabashed self-talk as a natural index of alienation, we have (in our society) any good grounds for our induction" (82n4).

(Welles 1965). Hal does not respond but turns his back to Falstaff and faces the camera. The composition of the soliloquy is then established. Falstaff's face is in the center of the shot. The trunk, Hal, and the branches direct our attention towards Falstaff while Hal whispers his ambitions. The speech stands somewhere between a monologue and a conversation. Falstaff listens, reacts, but does not intervene, and Hal seems to be speaking more for his own benefit than any listener's. The shot is relatively flat, but it has the simultaneous action of Welles's deep focus. The play of Falstaff's face is a counterpoint to Hal's soliloquy in the foreground. The knight's expression moves from surprise to bemused admiration. Caution, perhaps even fear, flits across his face before we see Falstaff bearing the look of patronizing amusement as if he were a parent who has heard his child declare world domination.

The filmed soliloquy, as Welles presents it in *Chimes at Midnight*, does not have the performer flee the scene of social interaction nor does it hold on to the theatrical conceit that these words cannot be overheard by other characters[10]. The soliloquy does not secure an inviolable isolation for the performer. The small drama of Falstaff's face expresses the effect of the words upon him, and these features, too, are sociable self-expressions that lay claim to his participation in the scene. Hal's soliloquy serves as a hinge between the tavern and the castle, and while he speaks, a momentary barrier seems to be raised between him and Falstaff, which will, by the end of the film, become permanent. Hal knows this. Falstaff does not. In Shakespeare's play, Falstaff is out of hearing. Welles, in contrast, insists that Falstaff has heard these words but has understood them

[10] Emma Smith describes a similar composition in Welles's *Macbeth* (1948): "A sharply focused, miniature Lady Macbeth in the back of the frame traces the shifting power dynamic of their relationship: alternate shots first establish her in a conventional diminutive position, but at her encouragement 'We'll not fail' (1.7.61), Macbeth moves into the background and she takes up the dominant position" (Smith 2020, 191). What is a soliloquy in *Chimes at Midnight* is a dialogue in *Macbeth*. Thought and speech become intwined as the two characters seem to share a mind. As Stanley Cavell notes in his meditation on the magical qualities of the play's language: "They exemplify exchanges of words that are not exchanges, that represent a kind of negation of conversation" (Cavell 2003, 238).

differently[11]. The soliloquy suspends rather than cuts short the interaction between Hal and Falstaff, and when the prince turns to face the knight again, the two pick up their banter. Hal's sly face seems to soothe the rogue as Falstaff resumes colloquy with his royal protégé, and while he lets the prince have the last word, the knight has the last laugh. Falstaff bellows as Hal pounces away towards the castle, and we may notice that the trunk that had covered half the shot was not so thick after all but rather lean, like Hal. The prince clicks his heels, and the trumpets blare at the castle.

Not every character is aware that their soliloquy produces a different understanding between themselves and their overhearers. A muttering retinue surrounds Henry IV as the dying king slashes his way through the castle, and his soliloquy seems more in line with the methodical derangement of Olivier's Hamlet than the cunning theatricality of Welles's Hal. Falstaff, in contrast, solicits his audience rather than have them overhear him; he will not be left alone. In his honor speech, Falstaff constantly beckons Hal for his attention. It is Hal who installs Falstaff into the composition of a soliloquy by turning his back to him. But as Falstaff begins to speak, Hal turns his head now and then to look back at the knight. Once Falstaff ends his "catechism", the battle begins, and afterwards, the two reprise the sequence as the soldiers celebrate the victory with ale. Falstaff holds up a cup to Hal and declares: "If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them would be this: to forswear thin potations, and to addict themselves to sack" (Welles 1965). Welles delivers the lines with a wink, and there is the flash of an advertisement in his promotion of drink, not unlike his work for Paul Masson[12]. But here, Hal is not seduced by Falstaff's

[11] In "The Long Goodbye: Welles and Falstaff", Samuel Crowl draws our attention to the series of foreshadowed partings in Welles's film. Crowl notes that by including Falstaff in the frame, Hal not only turns his back to the knight but, by looking into the camera, also "separates us from Falstaff, making us members of the Prince's party by confiding to us his regard for the past and his plans for the future" (Crowl 1980, 375). Crowl does not comment whether he believes Falstaff can hear Hal's words, though he does note that Welles shows his critical understanding of the play by "mak[ing] us see Falstaff's inability to comprehend Hal's projected threat of banishment" (376).

[12] As Welles remarks on *The Dean Martin Show*, "this is Shakespeare's first and greatest of all commercials on the subject of booze" (Garrison 1968).

invitation to conversation. The prince turns his back to the knight and lets his cup clatter on the ground as he walks towards the royal retinue. The clatter is a farcical repetition of the trumpets that blared as Hal skipped towards the castle. This time, the knight does not laugh.

The soliloquies of *Chimes at Midnight* are not inviolable modes of self-expression whose contents are absolutely interior to their speakers and thus radically separate from the rest of the film world, but neither are they sociable presentations that lend themselves to reciprocal interaction with other characters. The language of the soliloquy is at once too intimate and inflated, suited neither for rhetorical projection nor dialogic exchange, and by embedding soliloquies into concrete communicative contexts, Welles lends them a peculiar sociability, one that is consonant with the expressionist distortions of his films. The shifts in scale, and contrasts of light and shadow manipulate aspects of the film world so as to reflect the interior states of characters. In *Citizen Kane*, the titular character seems too small for Xanadu but is also too large to be at home in his world. Kane dies clutching a snow globe that encases a replica of his childhood home, the smaller, miniature world of snow and nostalgia that he has outgrown. As a visible feature of the characters' surroundings, the distortions should be available to every seeing character who inhabits this world, but just as they may not hear the words of the soliloquizer, the characters of the film seem not to notice the distortions of their world. Welles's characters can neither describe to one another these distortions nor acknowledge them as their shared condition. To the viewer, these distortions come across as a soliloquized style, a line of communication between film and viewer that is unavailable to the characters. However, unlike the language of a play, the visual components of film are not bound to seeing bodies of the *dramatis personae*. The camera moves independently of the characters, and the soliloquized style of Welles's films raise questions of attribution. It is often unclear whose state of mind the expressionist distortions reflect and what relation the viewer thus obtains through them.

The problem of attribution lies at the center of Welles's *Othello* (1951) whose film style initiates a troubling relationship with the

viewer. In adapting the film, Welles cut out many of Iago's (Micheál Mac Liammóir) lines, particularly the soliloquies he delivers at the end of scenes. In those speeches, Iago lays out his intentions and makes the audience participate in the play's asymmetrical distribution of knowledge. In his *Othello*, Welles creates this asymmetry through the film's visual style. As Emma Smith remarks:

> Welles' film has little stylistic affinity with the play's lyrical mode – what the mid-century critic G. Wilson Knight famously called "the Othello music" – and more immediately aligns itself with the disruptive, improvisatory bricolage of Iago. (Smith 2020, 192)

The jagged editing presents a disjointed narrative, and the contrasts in color cleave the frames into black and white sections. The colors organize the frame and govern the film world as the contrast is upheld by light and shadow as well as the color of characters' skins. Embodying the "[f]oul disproportions" (Shakespeare 2006, III.iii.237) that Iago claims to smell on Desdemona's (Suzanne Cloutier) interracial love, the film's style develops an intimacy between the viewer and Iago's manipulations. Observing its artifice, the viewer is left to speculate with Emilia (Fay Compton) that "some eternal villain" (IV.ii.130) has "devised this slander" (133). By removing Iago's soliloquies, Welles enacts his disavowal ("Fie, there is no such man! It is impossible" [134]) and Iago becomes diffuse but pervasive. The viewer cannot tell whether the black and white grid of this world is Iago's invention or the features of a racialized world that he violently exploits. With Welles's *Othello*, viewers develop a familiarity with Iago that cannot be disentangled from their complicity with his racist deceptions.

Welles is notably evasive about race in his *Othello*. Cutting out many of Iago's lines, Welles excludes from the film the play's most vicious proclamations of racial animus, and in addition to displacing Iago to the film's style, Welles further conceals the character behind his own bricolage. The jagged editing shows Welles's hand in cutting and rearranging Shakespeare's text as well

as his responses to production contingencies[13]. Strapped for funding, Welles made the film in pieces, shooting over four years across several countries, and the film's makeshift quality reveals this history. Welles also had to dub in the dialogue, and in the film, he voices both Othello and Roderigo. These two stylistic features, the disjointed editing and multiple voice acting, indicate not only Welles's hand in shaping the film but also Iago's manipulation of the other characters. Welles differentiates Roderigo (Robert Coote) from Othello by giving the former a mawkish voice and thus entangles fantasies of black masculinity with anxieties about white emasculation. The connection between the two characters is also established visually. When Iago murders Roderigo in the bathhouse, the film switches to a disoriented first-person point of view whose overlapping dissolves reprise the first-person sequence of Othello's seizure. These sequences align the viewers with the characters such that the effects of Welles's technique on the viewer coincide with those of Iago's on the characters. The complicity that Shakespeare's soliloquizers sometimes seek with their audience is in Welles's film achieved through its bricolage, the film's soliloquized style, which, unlike the theatrical soliloquy, does not relent until the drama has come to an end. This may be Othello's story, but it is Iago's film.

As an actor, Welles upholds the film's black and white world through his use of blackface. "[O]ne of the legacies of blackface", Ayanna Thompson writes, "is an enduring sense that performing blackness is a white endeavor, and that virtuosity in performance can be tied to cross-racial impersonation" (Thompson 2021, 53-54)[14]. As Thompson notes, Laurence Olivier was proud of his full-body minstrelsy in Stuart Burge's *Othello* (1965) and wanted his audience to see the simulated blackness as authentic (62). Welles's blackface is more of a tan, and the divergence in practice reflects a different investment in blackness. Welles had put on blackface

[13] Marguerite Rippy notes that "[e]arly stage and screen scripts demonstrate that Welles' technique of adaptation consisted of literally cutting and pasting parts of the text to develop a script (Lilly, Box 5, folder 32)" (Rippy 2013, 16).

[14] See Thompson 2011 for a consideration of contemporary critical and directorial discussions on the use of blackface in performing *Othello*.

before. In 1936, when Welles put on his "Voodoo" *Macbeth*, Maurice Ellis, who was playing Macduff, fell ill, so Welles took on the role in blackface. Later, Welles would boast that nobody knew that it was in fact he and not a black actor on the stage[15]. Unlike Olivier, Welles did not want his audience to see that he had simulated blackness but wanted them not to see him at all. By assuming blackness, Welles performed the social withdrawal that he found so troubling in Hal, and the investment that Welles has in blackness is once again aligned with Iago's, a misdirection that allows the performer to disappear from the scene of dissimulation. In *Othello*, Welles is recognizable as Orson Welles in blackface, and while the racial prosthetic connotes a desire for authenticity, it also collaborates with the film's visual style to have his body vanish into a darkness and become a pure voice free from the vicissitudes of racial embodiment.

The final soliloquy of the film begins with Othello's shadow projected on a wall, and the screen fades to black as he begins to speak. The black screen functions as the filmic prosthetic that simultaneously racializes Welles's performance and removes him from the frame. After a few lines, Welles's head emerges from the right, and his face and torso come in and out of sight as he wades his way through the darkness towards Desdemona's window on the other side of the frame. The interests of the actor and the role are at odds here. While Welles performs his disappearing act, Othello struggles to maintain his existence on the screen. As he is consumed by Iago's suggestions, the film's visual style begins to coincide with how Othello has come to view the world, and more importantly, Desdemona. When Othello opens the curtains to her

[15] Marguerite Rippy suggests it might have been Jack Carter and not Maurice Ellis that Welles replaced. Rippy also raises doubts about Welles's claim that the audience did not recognize him, given that as a famous radio actor, his voice would have been well-known. In Rippy's view, Welles put on blackface out of a desire for fraternity: "Welles's understanding of blackness was that it could render him part of the anonymous throng even when he was playing the leading role in *Macbeth* and despite the fact that, even following his own logic, his famous voice should have revealed him readily to most audiences. Part of his love of disguise, blackface allowed him to escape his role as white intellectual and enter into the realm of undifferentiated masculinity (at least in fantasy), as had his racial and sexual touring of Harlem with Jack Carter" (Rippy 2009, 77).

bed, Desdemona abruptly closes her eyes, and she remains the visual focus of the soliloquy. As in *Chimes at Midnight*, Desdemona's body serves as a counterpoint to the language; her chest heaves and her eyelids twitch as Othello contemplates her murder. Played by Suzanne Cloutier, this Desdemona glows in the darkness that Welles wraps around his body like a cloak. Sound, scene, and body come together in this filmed soliloquy to simulate a blackness that allows Welles to become a speaking shadow all the while upholding Desdemona as the whiteness imperiled by his darkness.

Richard Dyer has read the cinematic trope of the dark man and the glowing woman as the "dark desire for the light" (Dyer 2017, 139). In the interracial drama of Welles's *Othello*, "[d]ark desires are part of the story of whiteness, but as what the whiteness of whiteness has to struggle against" (28), and in Welles's *Othello*, the white actor becomes black by failing in this struggle. As Dyer elaborates, "the whiteness of white men resides in the tragic quality of their giving way to darkness and the heroism of their channelling or resisting it" (28). Othello's growing obsession with Desdemona dwindles his presence on screen as if it were his "dark desire" that is making him black. Welles stages the murder scene as one of failed enlightenment. As Othello lays his head beside Desdemona's, only a fragment of his forehead is visible, and when he looks out from the shadows as a pair of eyes, she calls out to him, not out of drowsiness but in defense. The call to dialogue summons Welles back into the light and brings his vanishing act to a close. It is then by silencing Desdemona that Othello claims a final isolation.

The premier social form in Welles is dialogue, and it is only by way of blackness that a performer elides with impunity the formal demands of this sociality. Welles draws analogous conclusions from Hal and Othello because for him sovereignty and blackness are exclusive as well as exclusionary. There is only one king or black man on screen. But the fate of blackness is not sovereignty[16]. In

[16] Frank Wilderson argues that this analogy between exclusions within and from the social world is a ruse: "This attempt to position the Black in the world by way of analogy is not only a mystification, and often erasure, of Blackness's grammar of suffering (accumulation and fungibility or the status of being non-

Welles, blackness connotes the "social death" that Orlando Patterson saw as the constitutive feature of slavery. As Patterson elaborates, it is less so that the slave labors when the master does not or that the master has sexual relations while the slave does not but that, unlike the master, the slave has no claim to have her labor and relations formally recognized by the community in which she lives and labors (Patterson 1982, 6, 44). Othello's drive towards isolation in Welles's film is one towards social death, and in his final speech to the Venetians, Othello is a grey face floating in a black pool whose blackness threatens him with oblivion. The overhead shot is followed up by Othello's low-angle point of view, which shows a group of blank-faced Venetians. Othello's speech is a direct address, but the Venetians show no signs of hearing him and thus consign his speech to self-talk. It is less that Othello loses his power of speech than that he has been stripped of his right to dialogue. Othello's plea is for a just history to which, Patterson notes, the socially dead have no claim (5, 79). This Othello does not kill himself. Instead, the Venetians shut an iron lid on him and Desdemona, as if physical and social death were one and the same.

The entombment finalizes Othello's isolation, brings about his social death, and ends his sensory disorientation that the viewer had accessed through the film's style. In Welles, social isolation warps the senses, be they of scale, color, or time. In his film *The Stranger* (1946), Welles plays a character who loses his sense of the time and mutters in front of a grandfather clock: "my sense of proportion is failing me these days" (Welles 1946). As in other Welles films, no one but the viewer hears this acknowledgement, along with its Shakespearean echo:

> RICHARD
> Music do I hear?
> Ha, ha, keep time. How sour sweet music is

Human) but simultaneously also a provision for civil society, promising an enabling modality for Human ethical dilemmas. It is a mystification and an erasure because, whereas Masters may share the same fantasies as Slaves, and Slaves can speak as though they have the same interests as Masters, their grammars of suffering are irreconcilable" (Wilderson 2010, 37). Blackface may be its fabricated reconciliation.

> When time is broke and no proportion kept.
> So is it in the music of men's lives;
> And here have I the daintiness of ear
> To check time broke in a disordered string,
> But for the concord of my state and time
> Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.
> I wasted time and now doth time waste me,
> (Shakespeare 2011, V.v.41-49)

Here is another character, entombed. Richard II's faults as ruler cannot be separated from his penchant for theater, and the excessive license he has taken in ruling by soliloquy, too personal and too aggrandizing, has trapped him in an eternal monologue heard by no one. The loss of proportions is the consequence of tyranny, the refusal to acknowledge the claims of others, or in a more early modern idiom, the illicit unification of the king's two bodies[17]. Imprisoned, the tyrant is stripped of the body politic but is not supplied an alternate social identity, and receiving no confirmation of his self from others, he begins to lose his grasp on reality.

The predicament of the sovereign is democratized in mid-century America where people are regularly deposed from their social roles[18]. Unlike the social deaths observed by Patterson, these

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[17] This is Lorna Hutson's reading of Kantorowicz and *Richard II*: "Between them, Hereford and Gaunt mock Richard's literalist political theology, his naive equation of his breath with God's, and his mouth with the word of the law" (Hutson 2009, 138). Hutson stresses that Kantorowicz's account distinguishes legal fiction from religious belief.

[18] Kantorowicz recounts the genesis of his project as an encounter with the American incorporation of religious congregations: "One day I found in my mail an offprint from a liturgical periodical published by a Benedictine Abbey in the United States, which bore the publisher's imprint: *The Order of St. Benedict, Inc*. To a scholar coming from the European Continent and not trained in the refinements of Anglo-American legal thinking, nothing could have been more baffling than to find the abbreviation *Inc.*, customary with business and other corporations, attached to the venerable community founded by St. Benedict on the rock of Montecassino in the very year in which Justinian abolished the Platonic Academy in Athens. Upon my inquiry, Max Radin informed me that indeed the monastic congregations were incorporated in this country, that the same was true with the dioceses of the Roman Church, and that, for example,

losses in status are not absolute, and some are even reversible (Patterson 1982, 9, 38). As Erving Goffman enumerates:

> One might consider the social processes of firing and laying-off; of resigning and being asked to resign; of farewell and departure; of deportation, excommunication, and going to jail; of defeat at games, contests, and wars; of being dropped form a circle of friends or an intimate social relationship; of corporate dissolution; of retirement in old age; and, lastly, of the deaths that heirs are interested in. (Goffman 1952, 463)

Examples range from the quick disposal of social identities propped up for the span of a polite conversation to the destruction of an identity that a person believed to be permanent, extending beyond their natural lives as their legacies[19]. Death is a final farewell and goodbye, a minor death. The viewer of a Welles film experiences a loss in status when it ends. As someone who cannot have her reactions be acknowledged by the film world, the viewer remains perilously close to the characters who experience a loss in status. The soliloquy and its stylistic correlative protect the viewers' status as privileged observers by granting them access to aspects of the film world unavailable to the other characters. Viewers of *Othello* become implicated in Iago's deception through the film's visual style, but they remain secure in their status as observers and are aligned with the blank-faced Venetians who do not respond to Othello's final speech. But in Welles's noir film, *Touch of Evil*, the viewer's isolation is open to abuse, and while the visual style still serves as a privileged line of communication with the viewer, it no longer has the integrity of a soliloquy. This film lies.

In *Touch of Evil*, Orson Welles plays Hank Quinlan, a corrupt cop who frames those he suspects of a crime, and when Miguel Vargas (Charlton Heston) tries to expose him, he faces resistance from the

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the Archbishop of San Francisco could figure, in the language of the Law, as a 'Corporation sole'" (Kantorowicz 2016, xxxiii).

19 The death of the body natural is but a physical example of what is for Goffman a fundamentally social phenomenon, for he considers even the consolation of the afterlife to be that of status: "a dying person may be asked to broaden and empty his worldly loves so as to embrace the All-Father that is about to receive him" (Goffman 1952, 457).

other characters who have been responding to Quinlan's actions with varying degrees of complicity, ignorance, and willful disavowal. Robin Wood describes the film's effects to be "worrying" and "not entirely free of distaste" (Wood 2006, 188). Noting common themes and motifs, Wood compares the film to *Macbeth* but ultimately contrasts how the two works relate to the audience: "Shakespeare may make us feel that his Macbeth represents potentialities that exist in all of us, but he never sucks us into complicity with him, as Welles does with Quinlan – we are never invited to *condone* Macbeth's crimes" (188). *Touch of Evil* lays bare Quinlan's corruption as well as his animosity towards Mexicans but nonetheless affirms his "famous intuition" by revealing that Manolo Sanchez (Victor Millan) had planted the bomb; he "confessed" (Welles 1958). Proof is secondary in this world where the smell of a steamy secret is enough to discredit someone as an upstanding member of society. The viewer comes to participate in this practice of presumption as the film leaves ambiguous whether Susan Vargas (Janet Leigh) has been assaulted by a group of Mexican men whom the film presents in various menacing Dutch angles. But the truth of the matter is ultimately unimportant as the viewer becomes convinced that something awful has happened to Susan for having ventured too deep into the wrong side of the border.

Welles delivers all this quickly, and the viewer is not given the time, like Miguel, to sit down and sift through the frames in search of planted evidence. At the end of the film, viewers are left less with a clear account of the details than with an uneasy feeling that the film has done them wrong. There is then a formal tension to Welles's films. The frames are rigorously composed, and close attention yields additional features of their design, but his films are fast. Unlike Hitchcock whose stylistic clarity and perfect pacing seems to prosecute the plot, Welles's narrative befuddles the viewer like a con artist talking too quickly for any mark to fully comprehend the intentions behind his designs. That these designs are artistic is for Welles an abiding interest. The line between art and a con is thin. The viewer need not understand the plot to *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947) to have been affected by it and is in no doubt that the gullible Irish American has been framed, one way or

another. The con is delicate but fatal, and the swift end to Welles's films that denies us knowledge of what we saw also robs us of our status as viewers.

At the end of a Welles film, viewers experience a loss of intimacy that the film had led them to believe would be lasting. The oft-remarked extravagance of Welles's films seems to promise perpetual conversation that persists even through soliloquies and would continue on after death. Falstaff is the emblem of this promise, who, when caught playing dead by Hal, declares: "Counterfeit? I lie, I am no counterfeit. To die is to be counterfeit" (Shakespeare 1987, V.iv.113-14). For Falstaff, death is the only true lie. All other lies are but a part of life, which holds together the multifarious and mutually contradictory presentations of self. But in turn, each self must perish at the end of each presentation, and the unease felt at the end of every social interaction is for Goffman a minor death. When we part with our friends, we are left alone, no longer the person we were with them. It is difficult to say goodbye well, to console our friends and ourselves of our immanent minor deaths. We may suspect a person too fluent in the language of goodbyes to be close to a con artist who never forgets that his intimacy with his marks is temporary and, in the wake of the con, eagerly abandons them to their new status as losers. Here, Orson Welles diverges from the charlatans that he explored. The unease that viewers feel at the end of a Welles film marks the difficulty that he has in taking leave of his viewers. At their end, Welles's films return to their beginnings, and while these returns leave the viewer unsure where they stand with the film, they help avoid the finality of a farewell.

A few months before his death, Welles enclosed in a birthday message to Joseph Cotton a couplet from a Shakespeare sonnet. Cotton did not attend Welles's memorial service, saying that Welles would not have wanted such a gathering. Instead, Cotton sent as a message the couplet that he had received from Welles: "But if the while I think on thee, dear friend, / All losses are restored and sorrows end" (Cotton 2000, 216-17). Helen Vendler has mapped the complicated temporal structure of this sonnet with great clarity (Vendler 1997, 165-68), and *Sonnet 30* may present the design of Welles's films, which recall with renewed remorse "many a

vanished sight" (Shakespeare 2002, *Sonnet 30*, 8). The closing couplet, however, cannot be found in a Welles film, which refuses to deliver "thee (dear friend)" (13) a Rosebud that would bring the tortured ruminations to an end. The more Wellesian closure may come from *Othello*: "But I do love thee! and when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again" (Shakespeare 2006, III.iii.92-93). Welles's men cannot help themselves, and nobody saves them. To survive these men, one must leave them. That is what Susan Alexander does, as does Hal. The last friendly words that Hal says to Falstaff are a greeting: "Good night" (Welles 1965). The knight smiles and waves, for he hears, "See you soon". The scene is reprised with Doll Tearsheet when the knight heads to Westminster: "When wilt thou leave fighting o' days and foining o' nights, and begin to patch up thy old body for heaven?" (Welles 1965). Leaning weakly in the doorway, her hand limp at her side, Doll appears to be in mourning, aware in advance that Falstaff will soon be mortified by Hal's betrayal. But Falstaff brushes her off and heads to his banishment: "Peace, Doll. Do not speak like a death's head. Do not bid me remember mine end" (Welles 1965). The conversation must continue, and Falstaff refuses to die the minor death at the end of every social interaction. If Falstaff cannot see that Hal will betray him, it is because he never learned how to say goodbye.

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