

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Orson Welles, the director of *Citizen Kane*, was titled the greatest director of all time by the British Film Institute in 2002. He was also the first film director whose name became more famous than his own works. Welles was the first director who implemented long takes, deep focus, illusions, and mirrors reflection as a device to tell a story in filmmaking. He has been nominated for more than 35 awards in total. Some of his best works are *Touch of Evil* (1958), *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Mr. Arkadin* (1955), *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), *F for Fake* (1974), *The Trial* (1962), and *Othello* (1952). Among all of them, *Citizen Kane* is often considered to be the best film ever made (Berg and Erskins 7). All of his achievements clearly prove a statement that Orson Welles is a director necessary to be studied if one's goal is to study films generally.

In 1961, *Citizen Kane* was crowned the greatest film of all time by the first ever critics poll in the history of cinema. It also won the once-in-a-decade critics' poll by The British Film Institute's Sight and Sound in 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992, 2002, but fell to the second place in 2012 to Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). Welles

once marketed this film as a 'the greatest film of all time' and it turned out such a weighty claim has become true (Roberts and Wallis 54).

This film has won several awards. It won the Academy Awards for best writing, and original screenplay, as well as nominated for best actor, director, and film editing. Additionally, the New York Film Critics Circle Awards gave *Citizen Kane* a victory for a category of best film (53).

Citizen Kane is acknowledged to be both a phenomenally good film and an innovative one. Additionally, watching the film is almost similar to experiencing a box full of clever tricks. It is a perfect combination of cinematic craft and humane storytelling. Audience have a hard time trying to focus on the aspect of the cinematography for they always end up being swallowed by the emotions in the storyline (55).

The film was made in the early 20th century when America started their obsession with consumerism. One's wealth and possession of goods were viewed as the desired way of living. It was a time when almost all of the populations owned a credit card installment. Every American citizen was capable of purchasing their own personal automobile even when they did not have the money (Alchin). *Citizen Kane's* core message criticizes the values of that time. The main character, Charles Kane, teaches that even if he is the richest man in the world with all the priceless possessions, he cannot have the love he desires and dies a lonely man. Kane considers sentimental values to be more attractive than materialism which contradicts the American's consumerism at that time.

This film focuses deeply on the hunt for the object called "Rosebud"; hence, I believe symbolism is the most suitable element to analyze in the film. Symbolism is a literary device that uses one thing to represent an abstract idea (Mahler). In the film, the journalists and/or reporters are not able to find the meaning behind the

word “Rosebud”. In the process of finding out what Rosebud is, the audience instead begin to learn more about Charles Kane, the protagonist himself. Furthermore, finding out what Rosebud is at the end of the film strengthens our understanding of Kane. Therefore, I believe that studying the symbol of Rosebud may reveal Kane’s characteristic even further.

I believe that formalism is the best approach to study *Citizen Kane*. Formalism focuses almost exclusively on the literary text itself, or in this case, the film. This excludes extrinsic sources as additional contexts (Augustyn). This choice is made for I believe that whatever knowledge required in order to understand *Citizen Kane* is already inside the duration of the film. This film is made to be universally understood by its audiences and such decision can only be made if the film does not refer constantly to extrinsic knowledge (Roberts and Wallis 54).

Statement of the Problem

The problems I am going to discuss in this study are:

1. What does Rosebud symbolize?
2. How does the film visually show the symbol?
3. How does the symbol reveal the characteristic of Charles Kane?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems above, the purposes of this study are:

1. to show what Rosebud symbolizes;
2. to show how the film visually shows the symbol;
3. to show how the symbol reveals the characteristic of Charles Kane.

Method of Research

The method use in this analysis is library research. I begin the research by viewing the film, Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* multiple times. Then, I decide which object is chosen to be analyzed as the symbol. After that, I analyze what the object might symbolize. I analyze every scene when the object and the idea it represents become significant. Finally, I conclude how the director portrays the protagonist through the ideas that the object symbolizes.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which includes Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter is the Analysis of the Character of Charles Foster Kane in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* Through the Symbolism of "Rosebud". The last chapter is Conclusion. The thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, which consist of Synopsis of the Film and Biography of the Director.