

Citizen Trump

Todd McGowan

What Kane Doesn't Have

There was at least one time when Donald Trump showed himself more capable than any other American president. When asked to name his favorite film, Donald Trump responded with an answer worthy of a film scholar. He named Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) as not just the greatest film ever made but as his personal favorite.¹ Surely this is the best answer that any American president has ever given to this question.² But when we first consider it, this answer seems like it must have been an unconscious slip. Trump identifies as his favorite the one film that chronicles the emptiness of a rich and powerful man who bears a remarkable resemblance to himself.

In fact, it is tempting to link Donald Trump to *Citizen Kane* because of the similarities between Trump and Charles Foster Kane (Orson Welles). If we didn't know better, we might imagine that Welles had Trump rather than William Randolph Hearst in mind as a model for Kane, which suggests that Trump is part of a long line of American figures rather than being *sui generis* (as he is often interpreted as being).³ Both Trump and Kane built financial empires through the media and then sought political office while conducting themselves with bombast and hubris. The parallels between them are impossible to miss. But the significance of *Citizen Kane* for Trump's rise lies not in the parallels with his life but in how the film provides a diagnosis of his politics and his appeal. In this sense, his love for the film requires a thoroughgoing misinterpretation of it in order to reconcile this love with his politics.

The film examines the fundamental error of exactly the type of promise that Trump makes – to restore a lost object by through incessant accumulation.

Citizen Kane is the portrait of a figure of excess. The film depicts how excess – specifically excessive accumulation of commodities – emerges through the attempt to overcome lack. But this attempt goes woefully awry. Kane accumulates an increasing quantity of objects that have the paradoxical effect of augmenting his dissatisfaction rather than ameliorating it. The more that he tries to eliminate lack through excess, the more lacking he becomes. More excess produces more lack because the flight from lack into excess always backfires. The object that connotes his status as a lacking subject, the sled named “Rosebud,” remains forgotten and disappears amid the excess of commodities. As the one object identified with lack, it embodies not the possible realization of desire but the subject’s inherent incompleteness that no object can eliminate. The sled, unlike all the commodities that Kane accumulates, announces its own insufficiency, which is precisely what neither capitalist subjectivity nor Donald Trump can countenance. By contrasting the sled as the embodiment of lack with the excess of objects that Kane accumulates, *Citizen Kane* provides an image of enjoyment that defies the capitalist system.

The film begins with Kane’s dying word, “Rosebud,” and attempts to attach an object to this signifier through a series of ultimately failed interviews conducted by the reporter Jerry Thompson (William Alland). Though Welles never shows Thompson uncovering the solution to the mystery, the end of the film does give the spectator the answer that no one in the diegesis can see.⁴ But the key to this answer is that it is thoroughly disappointing. As a worker at Kane’s mansion tosses sundry items into a furnace, we see a child’s sled being burned that bears the name “Rosebud.” The audience connects this to a scene toward the beginning of the film when Kane was playing with this very sled at the moment that Walter Thatcher (George Coulouris) took him away from his parents’ home in order to give him the best schooling possible.

Though the young Kane seems to have a good relationship with his mother, his father was abusive. This leads his mother to send him away, using the fortune that she inherited to give him what she assumes will be a better life. Given the treatment that Kane endured from his father, the sled cannot represent a time of pure satisfaction or former innocence. The sled is not a forgotten ideal that Kane has lost or betrayed. It is not something satisfying that Kane has lost. Instead, it stands for the loss itself. The sled is an object that Kane relates to as lost rather than as obtainable.

When he loses the sled, he loses loss itself. Though “Rosebud” is Kane’s dying word, he spends his entire life attempting to escape from the lack that it signifies through excessive accumulation. *Citizen Kane* plays out the consequences of the fetishistic disavowal of lack that characterizes capitalist subjectivity through the figure of the missing sled and the excess of commodities that accumulation uses to obscure the persistence of this lack. The commodity functions as a fetish through its promise of completion that it extends to the subject, a promise that it perpetually violates and reconstitutes.⁵

By showing the contrast between the sled as a lost object and the plethora of empirical objects that Kane amasses, Orson Welles offers one of the clearest visions of how the dialectic of lack and excess plays out, especially within capitalist society. *Citizen Kane* focuses on the contrast between the singularity of the impossible lost object that provides satisfaction through its absence and the excessive accumulation of empirical objects that leaves the subject unable to recognize its own form of satisfaction. Kane spends his life trying to fill in lack with excess but dies lamenting his abandonment of lack. In contrast, the spectator, who experiences the lost object at the end of the film that no one in the diegetic reality does, is able to recognize this object as the source of satisfaction.⁶ We see in *Citizen Kane* that excess is a response to lack, an attempt to replace what the subject doesn’t have with an excess of what it does have.

Kane responds to lack exceptionally – more excessively than most. But nonetheless he functions as an exemplary subject. Entry into language – the subjection to the signifier – produces a lacking subject, a subject with desires that cannot be realized. These desires provide satisfaction through their non-realization rather than their realization, through the repetition of failure that characterizes desire. Whenever the subject finds a particular object that promises to fulfill its desire, it quickly moves on to another object. No object proves fully satisfying because no object can be the object – the object that embodies what the subject feels that it has lost. In the guise of a search for a variety of empirical objects, the subject seeks out a non-existent lost object that would provide it the ultimate satisfaction.

The failure of desire is the result of the type of object that desire hinges on. It is not a present object but an absent one. Or, as Jacques Lacan puts it in terms of our desire to look, “what is the subject trying to see? What he is trying to see, make no mistake, is the object as absence.”⁷ Even though one cannot see an absence, one can nonetheless recognize the satisfaction that derives from what isn’t there. This is

what psychoanalysis unlocks but what capitalist subjectivity forces us to disavow because it would shatter the illusion that gives the commodity its allure.

The non-existence of this object doesn't extinguish the subject's desire but has the opposite effect. Its absence produces an excess within subjectivity. Because they are inherently lacking, subjects desire excessively. We imbue our desire with the ultimate weight because it cannot be realized. This fundamental overlap between lack and excess defines subjectivity, but it also marks the subject with an inescapable trauma. The defining trauma for subjectivity is its inability to separate lack from excess. Our capacity for excessive enjoyment is inextricably linked to our status as lacking subjects. As a result, no amount of excess can ever enable us to escape from lack. The more we have, the more that we feel we're missing. No excess is ever excessive enough to transcend lack altogether. Excess has its basis in lack, so that the more excessive we become, the more we experience our lack, which is the trajectory that Welles chronicles in *Citizen Kane*.

Like Kane, Donald Trump's success has a clear relation to excess. He lives excessively: buying vast properties, surrounding himself with attractive women, building large hotels, and accumulating massive wealth (or at least the appearance of it). Those who flock to him as a presidential candidate profess the hope that he will bring the economic and social excesses from his personal life to the country as a whole, that he will make America great again by creating all sorts of excesses – an excess of prosperity, of security, of national identity. But the key to the popularity of his political program lies less in his deployment of excess than that of lack. Trump triumphs by convincing supporters that they are lacking subjects who confront an excessive other in the form of the immigrant, the Chinese government, or political correctness. By invoking this specific distribution of lack and excess, Trump enables followers to enjoy the excess of the other that repulses them while at the same time assuring themselves that they are not excessive. The importance of *Citizen Kane* for Donald Trump lies in the film's ability to diagnose the reasons for his appeal.

Images of the Other's Excess

Trump's great instinctive insight is to recognize that the experience of excess is always surfeited with lack and thus never excessive enough. In other words, he understands that the image of excess sells much better than the experience of it. Images of excess seem perfectly excessive, while the experience of it necessarily comes up lacking in some way. But Trump does not simply show images of the

world of excess he hopes to create – the America made fully great again. Instead, he points toward images of excess in the figure of the other. Excess truly appears excessive only when we see it in the image of other rather than in ourselves. The image of the excessive other is the pure form of excess, which is why populists such as Trump constantly have recourse to it.

Trump's political strategy involves bombarding would-be supporters with images of excess in the other while contrasting these images with the lack in those he addresses. The figures of excess for Trump are Mexican criminals, Chinese political leaders, Muslim refugees, and the purveyors of political correctness at universities. While these figures are enjoying their excesses, ordinary Americans endure lack. They suffer from unfair trade agreements, religious persecution, and drug overdose epidemics. In this sense, it is the absence of greatness in America and the greatness of the other – American lack and foreign excess – that is ironically essential to Trump's appeal. He requires America not being great so that his supporters will not experience the unalloyed excess that he promises them, since pure excess is impossible to experience. His appeal depends on the failure of his supporters to recognize how they are already beings of excess themselves, how we must confront the necessary admixture of lack and excess that is constitutive of us as subjects.

It is always easier to recognize excess in the other or in the future than in ourselves. This is because we never experience the excess completely divorced from lack. Our lack intrudes on even our most extreme moments of excess, creating a situation in which our everyday moments of excess do not seem all that excessive to us. If we are absorbed by the football game or consumed by the task of eating a piece of chocolate cake, at points during the events we lament how soon they will be over or think about going to work the next day or endure an interruption from our children during the crucial play or the tastiest bite. As desiring subjects, we cannot experience pure excess. While we might imagine that the disturbances that interrupt it are just contingent, they have a necessary status. There is no unadulterated excess (though there is, with Trump, an adulterating excess).

But we can look at what seems to be a pure excess in the other: images of the jihadist, the Arab celebrating 9/11 on the rooftop, the orgy participant, or the politically correct university professor. Our excesses never seem as excessive as these excesses of the other. Confronted with the image of the excessive other, our experience appears to come up lacking, which is the experience that these images

reinforce. This deception involved in regarding the other has deleterious political consequences.

This is precisely what Welles diagnoses in *Citizen Kane*. We see Kane constantly seduced by the image of the enjoying other that he himself cannot fully access. All his attempts to purchase the perfect commodity or attain the proper status fail because he can never completely evade his own position as a lacking subject. Welles highlights the spectator's own lack in a way that coincides with Kane's. As spectators, we miss the signification for "Rosebud" that we seek just as Kane misses the perfect object.

But the film enables the spectator to become aware of the satisfaction that this lacking position offers in a way that Kane himself never does. Kane keeps searching for excess free from lack while the film enjoins the spectator to embrace the excess that is found through the structure of lack. It is this fundamental tension between the position of the spectator and that of Kane (and the other characters within the diegesis) that defines the film.

The position that *Citizen Kane* creates for the spectator also enables one to interpret the phenomenon of Donald Trump. Trump's appeal exists in the constant search for an untrammelled excess that he attributes to the other and that he promises to win back for the lacking American subject. By attributing this excess to the other and depriving "true Americans" of it, Trump preserves its pristine quality.

The ability to see an excess in the other that we cannot experience ourselves lends itself to a basic political conservatism. If we wonder why conservatism always seems to have an easier political task than leftist struggle, the answer lies in the form of appearance that lack and excess have. Lack is obscure and difficult to see in the other but easy to experience in oneself. Excess, in contrast, is readily visible in the other but never fully apparent to oneself. As a result of this distribution, we have an inherent suspicion about the other combined with a belief in ourselves as the victim of the structural situation.

The dynamic of recognizing lack in ourselves and excess in the other is the fundamental form of fantasy.⁸ Fantasy provides the structure for how subjects organize their enjoyment. It targets the other's excess – the other's ability to enjoy where the subject itself doesn't – and offers the subject a scenario through which it can access the other's enjoyment that would otherwise remain unattainable for the subject.⁹ In this way, fantasy enables the subject to accomplish the impossible, to bridge the gap that separates the subject from how the other enjoys itself.

Trump sells the fantasy that Kane lives out. It is a fantasy of discovering the other's unrestricted excess attained through a process of ceaseless accumulation. In order for this fantasy to function, it requires the image of an excessive other. The core of Trump's political strategy involves speaking to the fantasy of pure excess by convincing followers that they are beings of pure lack while others (immigrants, China, politically correct Hollywood elites) enjoy themselves excessively. Not only does this contrast between the lacking subject and the excessive speak to a basic injustice that the ordinary American has endured, but the excessive other, in Trump's schema, has stolen the excess that properly belongs to those who lack. This is the logic at work in "Make America Great Again."

The belief that the other has stolen our excess or our greatness is the basic formula for paranoia, which takes the logic of fantasy one step further.¹⁰ Paranoia is the psychic structure that develops out of the logic of fantasy. While fantasy doesn't attribute malevolence to the excessive other, paranoia posits the other as the barrier to the subject's own excess. Jacques Lacan claims that "paranoid knowledge is knowledge founded on ... rivalry."¹¹ The paranoiac never escapes the specter of rivalry, so that its lack necessarily entails a corresponding excess in the other. The other's excess becomes, for the paranoid subject, the cause of the subject's lack. What this subject cannot see is that the other can only be excessive insofar as it suffers from the same lack as the subject itself.

On the one hand, paranoia constantly reminds the subject of its failures in relation to the other. The other illegitimately enjoys an excess that properly belongs to the subject while the subject toils away in lack. Immigrants come to this country illegally and take jobs or benefits that properly belong to citizens. Chinese leaders appropriate the capital that rightly belongs to America. Champions of political correctness take away all of our formerly permitted social transgressions. In all these ways, paranoia ensconces us in disappointment.

But on the other hand, paranoia is such a satisfying psychic position because it enables us to believe that there is someone who really enjoys a pure excess free from lack. While attacking the other who has stolen our excess, we actually enjoy this excess in a way that would otherwise be impossible. It is the attack on the other in the guise of eliminating the other's illicit enjoyment that provides the opportunity to experience genuine excess. We identify with the enemy that has stolen our enjoyment. In this sense, paranoid subjectivity allows us to glimpse an

excessiveness that no one can experience. Because it provides access to a pure excess that doesn't exist, paranoia has an appeal that outstrips all other psychic structures. This is why subjects are so ready to adopt a paranoid attitude even when it directly contradicts not only the facts but even their own moral compass.

Paranoia is difficult to undo because whenever one reveals that the other lacks just like the paranoid subject, this subject can imagine a hidden excess lurking within that lack. This is why news reports that depict the horrible plight of refugees in concentration camps or the normality of Mexican immigrants are seldom effective. The excess that the paranoid subject sees has nothing to do with the empirical other. This excess is the subject's own self-relation. To abandon one's belief in it is to abandon one's own ability to enjoy it. Even as the paranoid subject inveighs against the other's illegitimate excess, this subject derives an otherwise impossible enjoyment from it. To deny the existence of this enjoyment is to deprive the paranoid subject of its own enjoyment, which is why no quantity of news reports about the actual state of things can ever be convincing.

The defining fact of Donald Trump's political career is his successful deployment of the logic of paranoia. He caters his appeal to those who experience themselves as lacking and offers a path to enjoying a non-lacking excess. In this way, Trump offers his followers the chance to be Charles Foster Kane – that is, a citizen of excess. In doing so, he simply amplifies the same incentive structure that capitalism provides for the psyche. His political success reveals that he has learned the basic lesson of capitalism, not as an economic system but as a psychic one.

Capitalism and Fascism

Both Donald Trump and Charles Foster Kane are paradigmatic capitalist subjects. But Trump's political success results from his ability to take advantage of the specific way that the logic of capitalism fails in the psyche. He is not simply a representative of the capitalist system but instead presents himself as offering the corrective for what it cannot deliver. In this sense, he represents the turn toward fascism.

The capitalist economy depends on subjects viewing themselves as lacking while identifying an excess in the other. This is what motivates the competition that drives the capitalist system. The other's excess is what capitalist subjects aim to appropriate through the process of exchange and through the accumulation of capital. The accumulation of capital is the attempt to appropriate the other's excess

for oneself in order to eliminate one's lack, to have excess without any trace of lack. Marx describes this process as the appropriation of the other's surplus labor, but the structure is at work more broadly throughout the capitalist system. Every capitalist action has its basis in attempting to appropriate the other's excess for oneself in order to eliminate one's own lack. That is the psychic logic of capitalism.¹²

Without this psychic disposition bent on overcoming lack through the accumulation of capital, capitalism simply could not function. Capitalism requires subjects for whom accumulation is the unbreakable law – or what Marx calls “Moses and the prophets.”¹³ If we already believe that we have an excess, we would not embark on the process of constantly accumulating more. This is why capitalist entities must constantly remind people that they are lacking and that excess is available solely through the commodity. This is the basic function of the advertisement aimed at consumers, but it is also what drives the corporation trying to hire employees, as well as the business owner considering an investment in additional productive capacity or the stock trader pondering what to buy and to sell.

Capitalist subjects accumulate with the idea of amassing enough money or enough commodities to allow them to enjoy without restraint. The idea of enjoying without restraint instead of just enjoying is absolutely crucial to the psychic structure of capitalism. If we recognized that enjoyment involved lack and thus depended on some form of restraint, we could no longer be effective capitalist subjects. The image of a non-lacking enjoyment is the only type of enjoyment that capitalism permits.

The problem, however, is that one never reaches the goal of having enough because this point recedes in the distance the closer one gets to it, just like the green light that marks Daisy's house for Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*. As he comes closer to it, it increasingly recedes in the distance. In the psychic universe of capitalism, the more that one has, the more that one experiences one's lack. Rather than filling lack, excess ends up highlighting it. This is why the most ardent accumulators in the capitalist economy are not those at the bottom but those at the top.

Whenever I attain what I want, it soon becomes apparent that excess entails a little bit more. After obtaining what I previously desired, I desire more money, a newer phone, or a larger television. Accumulating inevitably leads to the desire for additional accumulation rather than the sating of desire. Within the capitalist psychic economy, no one says I have enough because one never experiences what one has as excessive enough. This is because the experience of an excess cannot be as

satisfying as its image promises that it will be. Excess is excessive insofar as we can never reach it, which means that it never delivers us from our lack.

The result of this logic is that capitalist subjects find themselves constantly dissatisfied without any clear explanation for this dissatisfaction, since it stems from the capitalist system itself. Within the logic of capitalism, there is no solution to this problem. But left unsolved, it has the potential to produce a revolutionary spirit that looks beyond the horizon of capitalism to a different socioeconomic system. In order to avoid this eventuality, a paranoid fantasy comes to capitalism's rescue.

The psychic disposition of capitalism is always on the verge of tipping over into paranoia, which is why capitalist democracy constantly confronts the danger of fascism. The fantasy that the other is the barrier to the pure excess that capitalism promises is the basic fascist fantasy, and it is precisely the fantasy that Donald Trump promulgates. For Trump, it is the excessive other – the criminal immigrant, the intelligent Chinese government, or the politically correct university professor – who stands as a barrier to the American escape from lack. America can become non-lacking or great again only by eliminating this barrier. This is the paranoid twist that Trump gives to the capitalist fantasy. It is a twist that causes capitalist democracy to move toward fascism.

Capitalist democracy relies on the subject's fantasy of the other's excess. It cannot do without this basic fantasy because it motivates the subject's incessant competition with the other. Without this fantasy of the other, no one would embark on the project of accumulation to the extent that capitalism requires it. Even Adam Smith confesses this. He points out that the wealthy actually live miserable lives, but the fantasy that wealth brings complete satisfaction is a necessary one. Smith argues that this fantasy "rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind."¹⁴ If we don't believe in the fantasy of accumulation leading to an ultimate satisfaction, we will cease to accumulate.

But when this basic capitalist fantasy turns to paranoia about the other functioning as an illicit barrier to this excess for the subject, fascism erupts. Fascism is the putting into practice of paranoia. It identifies an other (or multiple others) responsible for the theft of the society's excess and engages in the impossible project of eliminating this other. But fascism is ultimately itself a dead end street. Fascism cannot succeed because its paranoid structure depends on the other that it tries to eliminate. The more that fascism eliminates the other acting as a barrier to

pure excess, the more it must erect another barrier. Because there is no pure excess, there is no successful fascism.

Orson Welles Speaks

After one time that he named *Citizen Kane* his favorite film, Donald Trump went on to suggest a brief interpretation of the film. He claimed that the lesson of the film is that Kane never found the right woman, that the right woman would have provided him the satisfaction that neither his newspaper nor his properties nor his statues ever could. Kane tried twice to marry and failed each time, whereas Trump himself – or so he contends – found the solution with his third spouse. In this sense, Trump learned the fundamental lesson of *Citizen Kane* and kept looking for the right woman until he found her.

As absurd as Trump's interpretation sounds, it is not completely on the wrong track. But its error is the basis for Trump's entire political project. Trump correctly sees that the film does focus on the object that provides satisfaction. But rather than positing that Kane simply never found his Melania, the film reveals that his failure results from his effort to achieve excess without lack. The correct object is not an empirical one like the right woman but an absent one. Kane doesn't see that satisfaction always involves one in what is lacking, that lack is not only unavoidable but salutary for the subject. Kane's refusal of the necessity of lack condemns him to a life of unending striving that never leads anywhere.

This is the position that the spectator also occupies throughout most of the film. As James Naremore puts it, "Like Kane's own newspapers, the camera has become an 'inquirer,' its search implicating the audience in a desire to find Kane's private rather than his public meaning."¹⁵ But at the end of the film, Welles distances the spectator from Kane's perpetual search for the ultimately satisfying object. The point at which the film distances the spectator from Kane (and from the other characters in the film) is the point that Trump fails to account for, either in his brief interpretation or in his political project.

In the final spoken words of the film, the reporter Thompson sums up his investigation. He concludes that his inability to find the object that corresponds to the signifier "Rosebud" indicates that no such object exists, that there is no satisfying object at all to the problem that the film establishes in its opening. A reporter says to him, "If you could've found out what Rosebud meant, I bet that would've explained everything." Thompson then replies, "No, I don't think so, no. Mr. Kane was a man

who got everything he wanted and then lost it. Maybe Rosebud was something he couldn't get, or something he lost. Anyway, it wouldn't have explained anything. I don't think any word can explain a man's life. No, I guess Rosebud is just a piece in a jigsaw puzzle, a missing piece." As Thompson speaks, Welles pulls the camera back to create an extreme long shot of the interior of his mansion Xanadu that encompasses many of the objects that Kane accumulated. This shot seems to confirm the validity of his thesis: amid all these objects, it is impossible to pick out one that holds the secret of someone's existence.

Welles might have ended the film with the final speech of the reporter Thompson, who declares our ultimate inability to identify the excess that drives a person. If he ended the film at this point, Welles would have been proclaiming that we cannot know the excess of the other. Such an ending would have left the spectator with the illusion of an excess with no relation to lack. It would have left the spectator in the position of the capitalist subject. In this sense, despite the formal inventiveness of what comes before it, it is the shot of the sled in the flames that gives the film its political importance.

By showing the spectator the sled as the object corresponding to the signifier "Rosebud," Welles allows the spectator to see what Thompson and the other characters cannot. Rosebud is not some mysterious object that Kane enjoys excessively, as we imagine it might be throughout the film. It is the loss that defines his subjectivity. Rather than being Kane's specific form of success, it is his singular failure. Welles forces the spectator to see the inevitable connection between the subject's lack and its excess, between what the subject misses and how it enjoys, which is what Kane himself never sees.

The misrecognition of Kane as a subject is the insight of *Citizen Kane* as a film. One escapes the logic of envy and paranoia only insofar as one accepts that one's excess is inextricable from one's lack. Only in this way does one avoid seeing the excesses of the other as barriers to one's own satisfaction. Excess does not fill in lack and eliminate it but always recreates it anew. It is the path to the confrontation with our lack.

The wager of *Citizen Kane* as a film is that one can accede to the fundamental link between lack and excess. One need not spend one's life fruitlessly seeking after excess only to be thrust back into lack. One need not, in other words, fall victim to Donald Trump's promise of definitively overcoming lack. It is possible, instead, to recognize that the image of excess one sees in the other has nothing more to it than

one's own lacking experience. We escape paranoia only by recognizing that we are already excessive, which is the position that *Citizen Kane* enables us to accede to. Donald Trump's entire political project – and even his life project – has its basis in his misreading of the film. His belief in the promise of pure excess is precisely what the film shows to be unrealizable. It is only by glimpsing what Trump fails to see in the film that we can avoid falling victim to the capitalist promise that always leaves us on the verge of teetering into fascism. Donald Trump's favorite film demonstrates how to oppose him.

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Notes

¹ Trump named *Citizen Kane* his favorite film on multiple occasions, including a May 2016 interview with Megyn Kelly that appeared on FOX News.

² The list of favorite movies of presidents is revelatory. See

<https://www.businessinsider.com/presidents-favorite-movies-2016-8?r=AU&IR=T>.

³ For a detailed account of how Trump's life parallels the fictional life of Kane, see Benjamin Hufbauer, "How Trump's Favorite Movie Explains Him," *Politico* (6 June 2016):

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/06/donald-trump-2016-citizen-kane-213943>.

⁴ The key point is that the Thompson cannot find the object that corresponds to the signifier "Rosebud" because the excess of commodities obscures the singularity of all objects. As Johan-Frédéric Hel-Geudi notes in *Orson Welles: La règle du faux*, the investigators "do not know how to see what constitutes the crucial object of their search in the midst of the profusion of objects." Johan-Frédéric Hel-Geudi, *Orson Welles: La règle du faux* (Paris: Éditions Michalon, 1997), pp.60-61. Capitalist excess has the effect of making it impossible to recognize lack.

⁵ As Freud puts it, the fetish "remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it." Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," trans. Joan Riviere, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), p.154.

⁶ Laura Mulvey emphasizes the disjunction between the position of the spectator and the investigator in *Citizen Kane*, with the result that the spectator experiences the pleasure of desire that we don't see evident in Thompson within the filmic diegesis. She writes, "While 'Rosebud' signifies 'the Kane mystery' within the story, Welles presents the spectator with a series of visual clues which transform the literal mystery into images on the screen. The enigmatic text that then gradually materialises appeals to an active, curious, spectator who takes pleasure in identifying, deciphering and interpreting signs." Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p.99. But the difference goes even further than this. Because of the vantage point that spectators have on the sled as the satisfying lost object, they are able to recognize the satisfaction that resides in lack beyond the pleasure of deciphering that Mulvey points out.

⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), p.182.

⁸ Fantasy is not just a supplement that we inject into our daily lives in order to give them some additional enjoyment. It is the essential basis of daily life. But the fantasy that guides our lives is primarily unconscious. We know it only through the references to it that inspire us to act. As Juan-David Nasio puts it in his book on fantasy, "the subject is governed by its fantasy, but it doesn't see the

scene nor distinguish clearly the protagonists in it.” Juan-David Nasio, *Le Fantasme: Le plaisir de lire Lacan* (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 2005), p.17.

⁹ In *Imagine There's No Woman*, Joan Copjec points out that envy “wants nothing so much as to spoil the very capacity for enjoyment.” Joan Copjec, *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), p.159.

¹⁰ In his foundational essay on fantasy, “A Child Is Being Beaten,” Freud traces the path from the different forms that fantasy takes to the development of paranoia. As he sees it, the structure of fantasy ultimately points in the direction of paranoia. It does so because of the privileged status of other (and the other’s enjoyment) in fantasy. See Sigmund Freud, “A Child Is Being Beaten’: A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions,” trans. Alix and James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 22, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp.175-204.

¹¹ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses, 1955-1956*, trans. Russell Grigg, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1993), p.39.

¹² For a more detailed elaboration of this psychic logic, see Todd McGowan, *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

¹³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), p.742.

¹⁴ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New York: Penguin, 2009), p.214.

¹⁵ James Naremore, *The Magic World of Orson Welles*, rev. ed. (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1989), p.57.