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## The shot-reverse shot and long take as depicted in a Citizen Kane

Director Orson Welles, along with Cinematographer Gregg Toland and others, expertly controlled the atmosphere of Citizen Kane through the heavy use of long take and the occasional instance of conventional shot-reverse shot passages. Through careful use of framing within these shots, those in charge of Citizen Kane were able to focus the audience's attention on particular parts of the frame without forcing the viewer to observe only a small portion of the film's environment. When the shot-reverse shot technique was employed it signified dramatic turning points in the exuberant but troubled life of Charles Foster Kane. Taken as a whole, the long take adds realism, as it allows the audience to explore the setting on their own, while the shot-reverse shot passages eliminate deep space composition to focus attention on the dialogue and character emotions.

The first shot chosen for discussion is a particularly strong example of long take because it not only lasts two and a half minutes and has multiple elements of deep space composition, but it also utilizes a multitude of characters placed at varying depths. I have chosen this shot as it agrees with Jean Renoir's 1938 quotation that the characters are "set at different distances...to make them move about" and to avoid the shot from looking like a posed photograph. Occurring 1 hour, 26 minutes and 33 seconds into the film, the take begins with a dissolve in from Thompson's interview with Susan. At first, she stands in the foreground, along with Signor Matiste and the rehearsal pianist, covered completely in attached shadows. As the previous shot dissolves out, the key light is turned on and the characters appear in agreement with the lighting of the background. The set-up employs a high-key light in the three-point scheme to eliminate deep contrast. This form of soft lighting is used because this aspect of the narrative is important more for the development of Kane as an overbearing and forceful husband than it is as an emotional or dramatic scene that would often involve contrast and shadows to heighten facial expressions. Also, the fill light is necessary because the background plays a vital role as it is filled with elements like statues and paintings that reflect Kane's obsession with collecting, a trait that ultimately adds drama to the scene immediately before the revelation of Rosebud.

Upon completion of the transition, a crane mount becomes apparent as the camera, originally placed at a slight high-angle, moves forward and to the left in order to keep Susan in frame and her profile at a consistent angle. The only major change in framing during the take, this movement serves three purposes as the scene progresses. Most obviously, it places Susan in the immediate foreground, emphasizing that she is the center of attention, and it moves Matiste to the middle of the frame as he shoots up in disgust, distinguishing himself from the pianist.

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Most importantly, it places the doorway in the center of the background, so that when Kane enters the room twenty seconds into the take, he can be seen clearly in deep space. From his appearance, the drama grows as Matiste criticizes Susan for forty seconds before Kane has had enough and speaks up. Kane then enters the foreground, eliminating a large portion of the background space while the frame pans minimally to the right to keep him centered. Again relating to the Renoir quote, Welles avoids standing at the same level as Matiste, opting instead to come closer to the camera so that all four characters remain at distinct positions. By stepping forward Welles also creates the illusion that Kane is bigger than Matiste, keeping intact and furthering the master-servant relationship to which Kane believes he is entitled.

In deciding to film this scene in the fluid form of the long take rather than the more traditional method of cuts edited together, Welles and his crew took into account the mood of the scene. Although Kane and Matiste, and to a lesser extent Matiste and Susan, do compete in heated verbal exchanges, the feeling of the scene is not one of confrontation but of suspense. The continuous shot allows the audience to witness Kane enter the room forty seconds before the other characters notice him. As Matiste's temper rises and Susan becomes increasingly submissive, the viewer is left to wonder how far Kane will let his wife's emotions fall before he has had enough. The suspense builds and the audience eyes shift back and forth between Kane and Matiste, trying to anticipate who will crack first. Shooting this scene through a series of cuts would have required showing Kane in a separate shot, leaving out the expressions of Matiste, an element of the scene that is key in the development of his heightening disappointment. A long take avoids this potentially disastrous complication by providing the viewer full access to all the information present in the environment and allowing them to move freely from one character to the next.

Moving from the long take to the passage of shot-reverse shot, it is easy to see how abrupt cuts can control the atmosphere of a scene. In the passage under discussion, 1 hour, 43 minutes and 38 seconds in the film, Kane has just slapped Susan after she realized he did not love her. A long take here, rather than a series of cuts, would have altered the mood of the scene in a way not productive to the narrative. The shot-reverse shot technique creates a feeling of confrontation, in this scene accurately. The aforementioned long take avoided cuts to avoid a confrontational attitude, while this scene utilized the same concept to artificially heighten the sense of urgency and emotional disagreement.

In order to create the effect of a final and complete face-off between the characters, the filmmakers relied on lighting and camera positioning to create a false sense of intimacy for the viewer. Susan is seen in a close-up from above at a high-angle with her eyes ready to flood with tears, and a side light from the left creating a small cast shadow on her neck. She stares at Kane in silence, the only diegetic sounds coming from the off-screen band and a woman's ecstatic screams. Her eyes peer up, she talks and the cut occurs, transitioning seamlessly to

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Kane who stands as a perfectly opposing force. In this situation, a cut rather than a pan or tilt is used to give the impression that we are watching from the character's point of view. Cutting directly to Kane emphasizes a quick change of perspective, while camera movement would have taken longer and have left the audience feeling like an audience, rather than as the character in the scene. Now, almost in shock, Kane stares down at Susan while a low-angle camera looks up at a medium shot of his frame, again letting the viewer see Kane as if they were Susan. Faced with losing his wife, Kane for the first time appears to be neither cocky nor overbearing, but instead truly sincere. Although he understands that his relationship with Susan is most likely over, he has nothing to say to her as the scene ends ironically with the woman's screams, shouts of what seem to be pleasure, piercing the silence between the two.

Both the long take and passages of shot-reverse shot are techniques used by filmmakers to control the environment and the audience's perspective of the film. In the discussed scenes from Citizen Kane, the long take was utilized to create suspense by carefully composing the field of depth, while the shot-reverse shot communicated the tension of a troubled relationship. The two techniques vary greatly in their construction and purpose, but they can both be used to convey emotional states that may otherwise go unnoticed.

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