

Portrayal of Women in *Citizen Kane*

Citizen Kane is a timeless classic directed and co-written by Orson Welles. The film tells the story of Charles Foster Kane, a powerful and wealthy newspaper tycoon, and the journey of several journalists as they try to uncover the meaning behind his famous dying words, “Rosebud.” Although the film has received critical acclaim for its innovative editing and captivating storytelling, it fails to portray women as independent characters and feeds into Hollywood's picture of them as weak and helpless.

In *Citizen Kane*, women are portrayed as objects to be acquired and possessed by men. These women must sacrifice their morals and submit to their husbands' wills to gain success. For example, Susan Alexander, the wife of the publisher of the Inquirer, refuses to publicly support her husband's mayoral bid because she wants to stay true to her journalistic principles. Despite her objections, she eventually relents and joins her husband on the campaign trail to support him. In my opinion, this reinforces the patriarchal idea that women are meant to be subservient to men and are incapable of taking the initiative or making decisions on their behalf.

Susan Alexander is portrayed as a frail and dependent woman who cannot stand up to Kane on many occasions. She is described as fragile and sickly on several occasions throughout the film. For example, when Susan accidentally breaks a valuable painting, Kane confronts her in the kitchen, and she breaks down in tears. In this example, Susan is reduced to an object of ridicule and mockery because of her emotional fragility. This, in my opinion, only proves the idea expressed by contemporary feminists that women are seen as inferior to men and are second-class citizens in our society.

Additionally, the film's portrayal of women reinforces the stereotype that women are only valuable for their beauty and ability to satisfy men. For example, throughout the film, Susan is frequently referred to as Kane's wife. Even though she is an active contributor to his newspaper, she is never given credit for her accomplishments and only exists as a passive object of desire for her husband. I believe such details further contribute to women being seen as mere commodities to be used and disposed of by men whenever it suits them.

Citizen Kane has been praised for its cinematographic innovations, but it failed to acknowledge women as an independent and equal part of society. As I see it, such portrayals reinforce harmful societal beliefs about females and can damage women's self-esteem.

It is crucial to note that the film was made in 1941, and the societal norms and attitudes towards women were much different at that time.

However, examining and critiquing the film's portrayal of women is still relevant to better understand how media and entertainment can reinforce harmful gender stereotypes. As an evolving community, we should challenge every art piece that perpetuates such attitudes to move toward a society free of sexism and gender discrimination.