



# Orson Welles and the Unfinished RKO Projects: A Postmodern Perspective

*Marguerite H Rippy*

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*Orson Welles and the Unfinished RKO Projects: A Postmodern Perspective* traces the impact of legendary director Orson Welles on contemporary mass media entertainment and suggests that, ironically, we can see Welles's performance genealogy most clearly in his unfinished RKO projects.

Author Marguerite H. Rippy provides the first in-depth examination of early film and radio projects shelved by RKO or by Welles himself. While previous studies of Welles largely fall into the categories of biography or modernist film studies, this book extends the understanding of Welles via postmodern narrative theory and performance analysis, weaving his work into the cultural and commercial background of its production. By identifying the RKO years as a critical moment in performance history, Rippy synthesizes scholarship that until now has been scattered among film studies, narrative theory, feminist critique, American studies, and biography.

Building a bridge between auteur and postmodern theories, *Orson Welles and the Unfinished RKO Projects* offers a fresh look at Welles in his full complexity. Rippy trains a postmodern lens on Welles's early projects and reveals four emerging narrative modes that came to define his work: deconstructions of the first-person singular; adaptations of classic texts for mass media; explorations of the self via primitivism; and examinations of the line between reality and fiction. These four narrative styles would greatly influence the development of modern mass media entertainment.

Rippy finds Welles's legacy alive and well in today's mockumentaries and reality television. It was in early, unfinished projects where Welles first toyed with fact and fiction, and the pleasure of this interplay still resonates with contemporary culture. As Rippy suggests, the logical conclusion of Welles's career-long exploration of "truthiness" lies in the laughs of fake news shows. Offering an exciting glimpse of a master early in his career, *Orson Welles and the Unfinished RKO Projects* documents Welles's development as a storyteller who would shape culture for decades to come.

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