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UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA: A PRODUCTION HISTORY

MARK LANGLEY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Bath Spa University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Art, Film and Media, Bath Spa University

DECEMBER 2023

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ETHICS STATEMENT

Following initial supervisory ethical discussion, full ethical approval from the Bath Spa University Ethics Panel was not required. The research has been conducted in line with requirements in place at the time of this decision. Should you have any concerns regarding ethical matters relating to this study, please contact the Research Support Office at Bath Spa University (researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk).

All participants provided recorded informed consent prior to enrolment in the study and for any associated datasets to be utilised as presented within this thesis.

DATA STATEMENT

Excerpts from the dataset gathered in this research are included in the appendices. The full underlying dataset is available on request from the author, Mark Langley.

For Joe, May, and Kath – promise kept.

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CAST LIST

The following introduces the participants involved in, or orbital to, the making of *Cleopatra* (Mankiewicz, 1963, Fox).

THE CAST

Of the film's 80 roles, the following are central characters, or the actors' recollections inform the production narrative.

Elizabeth Taylor Widow of Mike Todd and cast as Cleopatra for \$1,000,000.
At the start of production married to Eddie Fisher

Stephen Boyd Cast as Mark Antony for the UK production but replaced for the Italian production. Boyd later starred in *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (Mann, 1964, Anchor Bay Entertainment).

Richard Burton Cast as Mark Antony for the Italian production while playing in *Camelot* on Broadway. At the start of production, he was married to Sybil Burton.

Peter Finch Cast as Caesar in the UK production but replaced for the Italian production. Taylor had requested Finch for the role having worked with him previously.

Rex Harrison Cast as Caesar for the Italian production, then subsequently cast as Higgins in *My Fair Lady* (Cukor, 1964, Paramount).

Roddy McDowall Taylor's long-time friend, cast as Octavian for the Italian production while playing in *Camelot* on Broadway with Burton.

- John Valva** In a relationship with McDowall at the time and cast in the Italian production in the uncredited role of Valvus.
- Hume Cronyn** Cast as Sosigenes in the Italian production. A long-time friend of Mankiewicz, the director.
- Martin Landau** Cast as Rufio in the Italian Production.
- Robert Stephens** Cast as Germanicus in the Italian production, having first been considered to play Rufio.
- Michael Hordern** Cast as Cicero in the Italian production and knew Harrison from previous projects.
- Douglas Wilmer** Cast as Decimus in the Italian production. A friend of the Burtons and later cast in *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964).
- George Cole** Cast as Flavius in the Italian production, Caesar's mute servant.
- Desmond Llewelyn** A member of the 'repertory company' that worked on the Italian production. Later famous for playing Q in the James Bond Franchise.
- Angela Douglas** A member of the 'repertory company' that worked on the Italian production.

THE CREW

With a crew of over 150, the following persons were either central to the film's narrative, or their recollections inform that narrative.

Walter Wanger As its independent producer, a part-owner of the film, along with Taylor and Fox.

Rouben Mamoulian The director of the film's UK production.

Joseph L. Mankiewicz The director and screenwriter of the film's Italian production.

Ray Kellogg One of the film's 1st assistant directors for the Italian production but left the film because of ill-health.

Andrew Marton Kellogg's replacement for the film's Italian production. He also contributed to early drafts of the Mankiewicz screenplay.

Fred R. Simpson A second 1st assistant director for the film's Italian production, and regular Mankiewicz collaborator.

Carlo Maria Franzero The historian on whose book the film was based.

Laurence Durrell Author who contributed to the film's UK and Italian screenplays, but also wrote *The Alexandria Quartet* that Mankiewicz was adapting at the time he was asked to direct *Cleopatra* (1963).

Sidney Buchman Writer who contributed to the UK film's screenplay and subsequent treatments of the Italian version.

Ranald MacDougall	Writer who contributed to the screenplay of the Italian production.
Leon Shamroy	Director of Photography for the Italian production and for the first ever CinemaScope film, <i>The Robe</i> (Koster, 1953, Fox).
John DeCuir	Regular Fox production designer for films including <i>The King and I</i> (Lang, 1956, Fox), <i>Cleopatra</i> (1963) and later <i>Hello Dolly!</i> (Kelly, 1969, Fox).
Vittorio Nino Novarese	Italian designer of the male costumes for the Italian production.
Renié	American designer of the female costumes for the Italian production.
Irene Sharaff	American designer of costumes for Taylor for the Italian production.
Hermes Pan	Choreographer for the Italian production.
Alex North	Composer for the film.
Dorothy Spencer	Editor for the film, a long-serving Fox employee, with whom Mankiewicz had worked previously.
Sydney Guilaroff	Hairdresser for many Hollywood leading ladies including Monroe and Taylor.
Forrest E. (Johnny) Johnston	Formerly Mankiewicz' prop man, promoted to production

manager for the Italian production. Ill-health forced him to withdraw.

C. O. (Doc) Ericson Respected Hollywood production manager who replaced Johnston for the Italian production, but also worked on *The Misfits* (Huston, 1961, Fox).

Saul Wurtzel One of Fox's studio production managers drafted-in to support the Italian production.

Sid Rogell Fox's Executive Production Manager, drafted-in to oversee the Italian production.

Chris Mankiewicz Mankiewicz' eldest son, who worked on the film observing his father's struggles first hand.

Tom Mankiewicz Mankiewicz' youngest son, who worked on the film during his university vacations – later a leading Hollywood screenwriter.

Rosemary Matthews Mankiewicz's production assistant, whom he later married.

Ray Austin The stunt co-ordinator for the Italian production with oversight of the procession scene as Kellogg's assistant. Austin's (2020) account is published here for the first time.

THE STUDIO

At this time, the studio was called the Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, following the 1935 amalgamation of Fox Pictures and Twentieth Century Studios. Today, the studio is a

Disney subsidiary called 20th Century Studios. The following persons – who worked for the studio – informed the film's production.

Spyros P. Skouras Fox President who had formerly run its distribution business. During the film's production he stepped down to become studio Chairman.

Darryl F. Zanuck Fox's former Head of Production who – as *Cleopatra's* (1963) production began – was working independently on *The Longest Day* (Annakin, 1962, Fox). In a boardroom coup he then became Fox President, charged with reversing Fox's fortunes.

Buddy Adler The Head of Production appointed by Skouras after Zanuck's departure. Until his death, Adler oversaw the early stages of the film's UK production.

Peter Levathes Initially Vice-President in Charge of Television, Skouras appointed Levathes as Head of Production, in which post Levathes simultaneously oversaw *Cleopatra's* (1963) Italian production, and Monroe's *Something's Got to Give*.

David Brown A Fox producer who claimed to have suggested Cleopatra as a suitable subject for filming.

Jerry Wald An independent producer with whom Fox worked regularly, and who produced several Monroe films.

Judge Samuel Rosenman Chairman of the Fox Board during 1962.

Milton S. Gould A Wall Street lawyer who served on the Fox board and who

ran the company during 1961/62.

John L. Loeb A Wall Street financier and president of Loeb, Rhoades and Company which owned stock in the studio. Along with Gould, Loeb drove a campaign to oust Skouras as president.

Peter G. Treves A Wall Street financier and broker who served on the Fox board, leading an alternative faction against Skouras. Brodsky and Weiss in *The Cleopatra Papers* (1963) referred to Treves as 'The Boat,' but without naming him.

Frank Ferguson Head of Fox Legal throughout the film's production.

Owen McLean Head of Fox Casting.

Stuart Lyons Casting consultant who worked with McLean and oversaw the film's UK and Italian productions.

Joe Di Muro Ferguson's main contact in Rome for the first part of the Italian shoot. His Letters to Fergusson described various legal matters affecting the production.

Elmo Williams Zanuck's long-time assistant, who at one point tried to edit *Cleopatra*.

Richard Zanuck Darryl Zanuck's son, appointed as Fox's Head of Production after Zanuck became President.

Robert Wise The director of *The Sound of Music* (Wise, 1965, Fox).

INDUSTRY FIGURES

The following industry figures were not directly involved with *Cleopatra* (1963), or Fox, but affected circumstances surrounding the production.

Lew Wasserman Starting as head of the Music Corporation America agency, Wasserman championed the package system, changing Hollywood's operational model. MCA's purchase of Universal Pictures and Decca made Wasserman the most influential person in Hollywood.

Cecil B. DeMille The director/producer who reinvigorated the Hollywood epic, establishing a template that other directors and studios copied for over 14 years.

William Wyler Director of *Ben-Hur* (Wyler, 1959, Warners), a notable adaptation of the DeMille template for epic films.

George Stevens One of Taylor's preferred directors and commissioned by Skouras to direct *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, which he eventually did, but for United Artists.

Samuel Bronston Independent producer and head of Samuel Bronston Productions, which for example produced *El Cid* (Mann, 1961, Anchor Bay Entertainment) and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964).

Anthony Mann Director of *El Cid* (1961) and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964). Originally appointed as director of *Spartacus* (Kubrick, 1960, Universal) until he was replaced by Kubrick.

Kirk Douglas Actor and independent producer of *Spartacus* (1960).

Audrey Hepburn At one stage considered for the role of Cleopatra, Hepburn was Taylor's friend with whom they shared an agent.

Sophia Loren An Italian actor who refused to play Cleopatra, but along with Audrey Hepburn was one of the first actors to benefit from Taylor's \$1,000,000 contract.

Gina Lollobrigida An Italian actor considered for the role of Cleopatra.

Joan Collins A British actor, contracted to Fox, considered for the role of Cleopatra.

PRESS AND PUBLICITY

These persons either worked for Fox's publicity department, or reported on the film, or reviewed it.

Charles Einfeld Fox's Director of Marketing and Public Relations and part of the Fox executive team.

Jack Brodsky One of two unit-publicists appointed to support the Italian production and co-author of *The Cleopatra Papers* (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963).

Nathan Weiss The second unit-publicist appointed by Fox to support the Italian production, co-author of *The Cleopatra Papers* (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963).

Louella Parsons The first gossip columnist appointed by the Hollywood studios to help them control press coverage about their stars. In time, Parsons became very powerful.

- Hedda Hopper** A second gossip columnist appointed by the Hollywood studios to counterbalance Parsons, but who became as powerful, if not more so.
- Sheilah Graham** A Hollywood gossip columnist who throughout the Italian production failed to gain an interview with Taylor.
- Pauline Kael** One of the leaders of a new wave of film criticism in America. Kael's reputation was for biting critique of films and filmmakers.
- Judith Crist** A critic who shared many of Kael's ideas but was also America's first female syndicated television film critic.
- Bosley Crowther** *The New York Times'* veteran film critic, considered out of step by Kael and Crist.
- Joe Hyams** A Hollywood reporter present at Monroe's house after her death and later worked with Wanger on his book *My Life with Cleopatra* (Wanger and Hyams, 1963).

TAYLOR'S CIRCLE

Before, during, and after the filming, Taylor was married to – or supported by – a series of employees and family members.

- Mike Todd** Taylor's third husband, killed in a plane crash in March 1958. Prior to this, he had led the Cinerama Widescreen process development, then the Todd-AO widescreen process, in which he shot his first and only independently produced

film, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Anderson, 1956, Michael Todd Company).

Eddie Fisher Taylor's fourth husband, from whom she separated during the Italian production. Prior to their marriage, Fisher had a successful recording career as a singer and was married to Debbie Reynolds.

Michael Howard Wilding Taylor's 1st son, whose father was British actor Michael Wilding.

Christopher Edward Wilding Taylor's 2nd son with Wilding.

Liza Todd-Tivey Taylor and Todd's daughter.

Maria Taylor Burton Taylor's daughter, adopted during the Italian production, and whom Burton eventually adopted too.

Kurt Frings Todd's former poker buddy, subsequently Taylor's agent. Eventually Frings represented several actors, including Audrey Hepburn.

Dick Hanley Formerly Todd's assistant, whom Taylor retained as her personal assistant after Todd's death.

Montgomery Clift Taylor's friend since they worked together in *A Place in the Sun* (Stevens, 1951, Paramount). Clift also appeared in *The Misfits* (1961) with Monroe.

Rex Kennamer Initially Clift's doctor, Taylor met Kennamer at the time of Clift's near-fatal road accident, after which she asked

Kenamer to become her personal physician too.

Frank Sinatra Singer and actor, like Clift, a close friend of both Taylor and Monroe.

Sybil Burton Sybil was an actress before she married Burton, after which she devoted her life to looking after him and their two daughters. She was aware of Burton's many affairs, but always reasoned that he would 'comeback' to her.

MONROE AND HER CIRCLE

From 1958-1962, several people supported Monroe or were married to her.

Marilyn Monroe Monroe was Fox's pre-eminent female actor in the 1950s. She was contracted to Fox for 7 years but seeking independence had used her box-office power to win the right to appear in films produced by her own production company while still fulfilling her Fox contract.

Arthur Miller Monroe's third and final husband, who wrote *The Misfits* (1961) for her, but during its production their marriage broke down.

Yves Montand Monroe's co-star in *Let's Make Love* (Cukor, 1960, Fox) with whom she had an affair, ending her marriage with Miller.

Joe Di Maggio Monroe's second Husband, who supported Monroe after her separation from Miller.

Billy Wilder Director of Monroe's most successful film *Some Like it Hot*

(Wilder, 1959, MGM).

George Cukor The Hollywood director who – despite being fired from *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming, 1939, Warners) – enjoyed a highly successful career. Cukor directed Monroe in *Let's Make Love* (1960) and started production on the unfinished *Something's Got to Give*. He won his only Best Director Oscar for *My Fair Lady* (1964).

Nunally Johnson Long-time Fox writer who wrote the screenplay for Monroe's preferred version of *Something's Got to Give*.

Dean Martin Monroe's co-star in the unfinished *Something's Got to Give*.

Cyd Charisse Monroe's co-star in the unfinished *Something's Got to Give*.

Lee Strasberg Monroe's acting coach and creator of 'the Method' approach to acting.

Paula Strasberg Lee Strasberg's wife and Monroe's on-set acting coach.

Ralph Greenson Monroe's psychiatrist at the time of her death.

Eunice Murray Greenson encouraged Monroe to employ Murray as her housekeeper.

Aaron Frosch Lawyer to both Taylor and Monroe. He was a director of Marilyn Monroe Productions and held a similar role in Taylor's company too, then later did the same for Burton and Harrison.

FOREWORD

This research observes Harvard referencing conventions, but to avoid unnecessary repetition and to ease the flow of reading, the text refers to the studio as Fox and after their initial citation, *Cleopatra* (Mankiewicz, 1963, Fox) and *The Longest Day* (Annakin, 1962, Fox) appear in italics without their 1962 or 1963 dating.

Monroe's unfinished film, *Something's Got to Give* and the Fox version of *The Greatest Story Ever Told* are undated because they were never released. *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (Stevens, 1965, Fox) refers to the later United Artists version.

The archival material at Fox was uncatalogued, and in some instances – because of ink bleed or poor-quality scanning – it was impossible to read dates, sender, or recipient information. Therefore, some Fox archival material is listed as uncatalogued.

My sincere thanks to Suman Gosh for his unstinting and hugely liberating support throughout this study. Thanks also to family and friends who have been so patient as they played 'Cleopatra Bingo' with me over many years. I also wish to acknowledge my gratitude to The British Library staff; The Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick library; to Tom Kennedy and Gianna Babando at what was then 20th Century Fox, and to Preston Geeting for the introduction to them; thanks also to Gregory Schreiner for sharing his knowledge about Taylor and Monroe, but also the opportunity to see one of Taylor's *Cleopatra* costumes. Above all, my deep gratitude to Ray Austin for his time and his agreement to talk so freely about his experience of the making of the film.

INTRODUCTION

ABSTRACT

Using a wealth of extant and previously unreferenced evidence, this critical history reconstructs, examines, and interrogates Fox's production of *Cleopatra* (Mankiewicz, 1963, Fox) from 1958-1966. The absence to date of an objective critical account¹ means that for 60 years *Cleopatra* has acquired near-mythical status as one of Hollywood's biggest flops, obscuring its pivotal role in the shift from the classical to the modern Hollywood system, and the impact of that shift upon *Cleopatra's* production and subsequent reception. The critical history at the heart of this research considers how key events and decisions informed *Cleopatra's* reaction to, and impact on, the economic and ideological shifts changing America's mainstream film industry as all Hollywood sought to find a new way of working. This study therefore considers a pivotal moment in Hollywood's conversion from the Classical to the Modern Studio System.

BACKGROUND

Schatz (1998), and Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson (2004) defined the classical Hollywood system as a vertically integrated business model, in which Hollywood studios – emulating Ford's production-line process – produced multiple films weekly, released them through their own cinema chains, then reinvested their income in more films. However, the landmark

¹ The only complete account of the production is Zacky, Burns, and Bider's *Cleopatra: The Film That Changed Hollywood* (2001), a 2-hour making-of documentary to accompany *Cleopatra's* release on America's Turner Classic Movie channel. Later, Rothman and Lewinson's *Fox Movie Channel Presents Fox Legacy with Tom Rothman*, *Cleopatra* (2010) compared *Cleopatra* with *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997, Fox). Again, this was prior to the film's release on a movie channel. The only written accounts to directly address the film's production are chapters in Carter's *Vanity Fair's Tales of Hollywood: Rebels, Reds and Graduates and the Wild Stories Behind the Making of 13 Iconic Films* (2008) and Medved and Medved's (1984) *The Hollywood Hall of Shame: The Most Expensive Flops in Movie History*. Both accounts are cursory in detail and tone.

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Paramount Decree² ended this monopolistic practice by divorcing production from distribution. Thereafter, each film became a single financial unit, and with competition from television and other leisure activities, box-office revenues fell, meaning all studios struggled to generate income. This research considers how – from its inception in 1958 to the end of the resulting legal actions in 1966 – *Cleopatra* was affected by, and affected, these changes to Fox and all Hollywood.

The Paramount Decree also changed how Hollywood engaged the star talents – producers, writers, directors, and actors – it relied upon to attract audiences. In early Hollywood, studios used 7-year contracts until talent agencies began bargaining for their clients on an independent basis, demanding ever-higher salaries and a cut of the box-office gross.³ This initiated the package system,⁴ increasing Hollywood's reliance on independent producers, rather than the central producer approach at the heart of the classical system. For instance, until his resignation in 1956, Darryl F. Zanuck⁵ was Fox's Head of Production overseeing and quality-controlling Fox's entire output. Concurrently, major companies began subsuming studios into larger conglomerates, which with the package system moved Hollywood from a vertically to a horizontally integrated business model.⁶

During this evolution, all Hollywood sought ways of boosting audience figures. Television could not match the lavish productions and 'casts of thousands,' or colour images and

² The *United States v. Paramount Pictures, Inc.*, 334 U.S. 131 ruling in 1948 was nominally brought against Hollywood's founding studio Paramount Pictures, however the ruling eventually included all the major studios. Independent exhibitors argued that because studios distributed their own films through their own cinema chains, they operated a monopoly that excluded independent exhibitors. The US Supreme Court's ruling went much deeper than the exhibitors had intended, changing how studios produced films, as well as how they distributed and exhibited them. The Supreme Court decreed that Hollywood was a monopoly that violated the United States' antitrust law. Known as the Paramount Decree, the ruling forced Hollywood to change its business model away from the kind of vertical integration that had to date underpinned the entire industry. This forced Hollywood to change its business model: how it employed its talent; and therefore, how it worked with that talent. The Paramount Decree forced Hollywood to rethink its entire *modus operandi* (Lev, 2003, p. 10-11).

³ The total box-office income before subtracting the costs of making the film.

⁴ Here, a studio or producer engaged all the required talent rather than cast from a resident pool of talent. With each film being financed independently, it became a single unit driven by the demands of its subject.

⁵ See biography in Appendix 1.

⁶ Here the business model was to place a studio within a larger conglomerate of mutually supportive businesses. For example, the Disneyland theme park drew on the characters and settings of Disney's films, but also provided income to make more films. With each film being produced as a distinct package, the film had to recover its own costs.

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stereophonic sound of the epic films initiated by *Samson and Delilah* (DeMille, 1949, Paramount). Fox's launch of CinemaScope⁷ with *The Robe* (Koster, 1953, Fox) further matched the narrative scale of biblical or ancient history epics with the visual splendour of widescreen. For 5 years, Fox and the 'CinemaScope Bounce' sustained Hollywood, but having become the industry standard by 1958, widescreen lost its novelty: Fox – like all studios – struggled once more.

From *Samson and Delilah* (1949) to *The Bible: In the Beginning* (Huston, 1966, Fox), epics were Hollywood's prestige productions.⁸ Charlton Heston commented that defining an epic was 'only slightly less complicated than making one' (Elley, 1984, p. 13),⁹ but given the prevalence of these usually 3-hour plus, large-budget films, filmmakers adapted the epic form. *The Ten Commandments* (DeMille, 1956, Paramount) marked the pinnacle of DeMille's interpretation of it, later *Ben-Hur* (Wyler, 1959, Warners) and *Spartacus* (Kubrick, 1960, Universal) moved epics towards greater realism. Then *El Cid* (Mann, 1961, Anchor Bay Entertainment) integrated spectacle with a deeply human and personal narrative, but outside an ancient setting.

In that context, in 1958, Fox President Spyros P. Skouras¹⁰ engaged Walter Wanger¹¹ to produce *Cleopatra*, but not as an epic film. Yet Wanger's long-held vision was to cast Elizabeth Taylor¹² in an epic production. Yet Skouras chose the UK for the filming location and Rouben Mamoulian to direct, a Hollywood veteran whose vision for the subject did not match Wanger's or Taylor's. The British climate precipitated Taylor's ill-health, preventing her from shooting a single foot of film for Mamoulian, who resigned. Skouras then appointed Joseph L.

⁷ CinemaScope used anamorphic lenses to compress the negative image when being shot and expanded it when being projected. Only Paramount did not adopt CinemaScope, developing VistaVision instead. Cinerama was a three-film-strip process championed by Todd who – disliking the seams in the projected image – therefore led the development of Todd-AO, which overcame CinemaScope's flaws, but was used relatively few times. CinemaScope therefore became the dominant widescreen process.

⁸ Movies of scale and high production values intended to draw large audiences.

⁹ At another time, Heston concluded: 'I think the epic film is the most difficult genre in which to succeed artistically, or to put it another way it's the easiest film to make lousy' (Talking Pictures: Epics, 2018).

¹⁰ See biography in Appendix 1.

¹¹ See biography in Appendix 1.

¹² See biography in Appendix 1.

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Mankiewicz¹³ to direct, but when Taylor's illness became a near-death experience,¹⁴ Fox shut down the UK shoot. Rather than cut its losses, Fox attempted a second version, finally accepting *Cleopatra's* epic nature, but without allowing Mankiewicz development and pre-production time. The subsequent poorly planned shoot in Rome was the antithesis of how studios usually made an epic.

Wanger doggedly pursued Taylor's casting because he wanted to tell the whole Cleopatra story.¹⁵ Skouras initially objected because of the press coverage surrounding Taylor's personal life.¹⁶ Once cast, Taylor's involvement shaped *Cleopatra's* production. When Mankiewicz became director he reflected Taylor's identification with the role in his script, which also recognised Wyler¹⁷ and Kubrick's shifts towards greater realism. Observing Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* plays, Mankiewicz decided on a 2-film solution.

The scrutiny of Rome's aggressive paparazzi and the world's media, once it became aware of Taylor's affair with Richard Burton,¹⁸ generated more pre-publicity for *Cleopatra* than any previous film. Fox insisted on such coverage to assure *Cleopatra's* box-office return, but soon lost control of the publicity, much of which contributed to the mythology of an 'infamous blockbuster flop' (Mauncer, 2022)¹⁹ that still surrounds *Cleopatra* and which this production history aims to penetrate. *Cleopatra* was not a flop critically; or in terms of its box-office; or even financially, despite its excessive cost.

Cleopatra's critical reception was mixed, not universally poor. 'Vast numbers of people' wanted to see the film (Powers, 1963). In audience surveys, 82% thought it 'excellent' or 'good' (Lev, 2013, p. 257). It was 'an enormous hit' (Mann, 2009, p. 332). Audiences often

¹³ See biography in Appendix 1.

¹⁴ Taylor developed pneumonia which caused her breathing to fail, resulting in her dying three-times on the operating table, before being revived. This event became world-wide news with at least one newspaper mistakenly publishing Taylor's obituary.

¹⁵ From a 9-year-old girl until her death aged 39.

¹⁶ In 1958, after being widowed by the death of her third husband, Mike Todd, Taylor began an affair with Todd's best friend Eddie Fisher. His divorce from wife Debbie Reynolds created a huge backlash from conservative Americans.

¹⁷ See biography in Appendix 1.

¹⁸ See biography in Appendix 1.

¹⁹ See also Zacky, Burns and Bider (2001), Medved and Medved (1984), Carter (2008).

INTRODUCTION

embrace a film that critics hate – such a film is not a flop. For example, *Mamma Mia* (Lloyd, 2008, Universal) received poor reviews, yet for many years it was Britain's top box-office film. Conversely, critics praise films that audiences avoid: Spielberg's *West Side Story* (2021, Fox) gained a Best Picture Oscar nomination and unanimous critical praise but failed to return a fraction of its budget. A film that fails at the box-office is a flop. Many films have been box-office flops. For instance, following the release of *The Sound of Music* (1965) Zanuck tried to recapture its success by releasing *Doctor Doolittle* (Fleischer, 1967, Fox), *Star!* (Wise, 1968, Fox), then *Hello Dolly!* (Kelly, 1969, Fox). Each had excessive budgets yet on their initial release returned a fraction of their cost. *Cleopatra* was not unique, not even for Fox, but none of those films acquired *Cleopatra's* totemic status.

BBC's *Talking Pictures* (Epics, 2018) described *Cleopatra* 'flopping dismally at the box-office:' it did not. *Cleopatra* was 1963's top-grossing film earning \$26,000,000, representing 80.3% of 1963's domestic share. *Cleopatra* outgrossed *Spartacus* (1960) by \$2,000,000; *West Side Story* (Wise, 1961, MGM) by \$6,355,000; *The Longest Day* (Annakin, 1962, Fox) by \$3,000,000 and paved the way for *Mary Poppins'* (Stevenson, 1964, Disney) \$31,000,000 gross, then – significantly for Fox – *The Sound of Music's* (Wise, 1965, Fox) \$72,000,000 gross. *Cleopatra* marked a turning point in global box-office grosses.

Allowing for inflation, *Cleopatra's* unprecedented \$44,000,000 cost would in 2023 be £426,344,507. *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* (Marshall, 2011, Disney), at a cost of \$378,500,000, was the first film to overtake *Cleopatra*, which in 2011 would have cost \$323,441,699 (the-numbers.com, 2023). Costing \$13,500,000, in its first year *The Ten Commandments* (1956) took \$26,000,000 – the same amount as *Cleopatra* – and subsequently increased to \$100,000,000 worldwide. Therefore, studios recognised that big-budget films recovered their costs over several years, making them longer-term investments. Even though *Cleopatra* did not take the \$100,000,000 gross Wanger and Skouras predicted (Rothman, 2011, 0:03:53), Fox expected it to provide income over several years. *Cleopatra* broke even within two years, when in 1965 Fox sold the rights to screen it on television in 1972.

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Media coverage established impossibly high expectations that *Cleopatra* could not meet. Judith Crist,²⁰ who wrote the film's most negative review, recalled that '*Cleopatra* was so publicized, so talked about, so gossiped about. And that cost! To think you were going to see something that expensive' (*Judith Crist Interview*, 2012, Foundationinterviews). Those making *Cleopatra* believed it would be a great success but had not accounted for changes in Fox's management. Following a boardroom coup,²¹ Zanuck became Fox President and eager to return Fox to solvency rejected Mankiewicz' 2-film idea. Forced to create 1 film, Mankiewicz failed to adapt the epic form. The final edit was so heavily cut that characters and plot points lacked background or depth. Some critics admired *Cleopatra's* breadth; others castigated it for not having enough.²²

With *Cleopatra* blamed for Fox's near demise and angered by the way Fox had treated him – culminating in firing him from his own independent production – Wanger published the first 'tell-all-account' of the making of a film to be published before its premiere. Concurrently, the film's publicists published their personal correspondence too. *My Life with Cleopatra* (Wanger and Hyams, 1963) and *The Cleopatra Papers* (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963), then Taylor's later memoir (1967) and even more recently *The Cleopatra Files* (Chrissochoidis, 2013b) all aimed to apportion blame for a film that failed to meet the impossible expectations placed upon it. Subsequent legal actions aimed at restoring personal reputations or recovering lost income were all eventually withdrawn. Apportioning blame is a distraction. *Cleopatra* remains 'emblematic of the breakdown of an entire production process that historically had been well-planned, systematic, and accountable' (Monaco, 2001, p. 36). *Cleopatra* was a nexus point in the changes affecting all Hollywood.

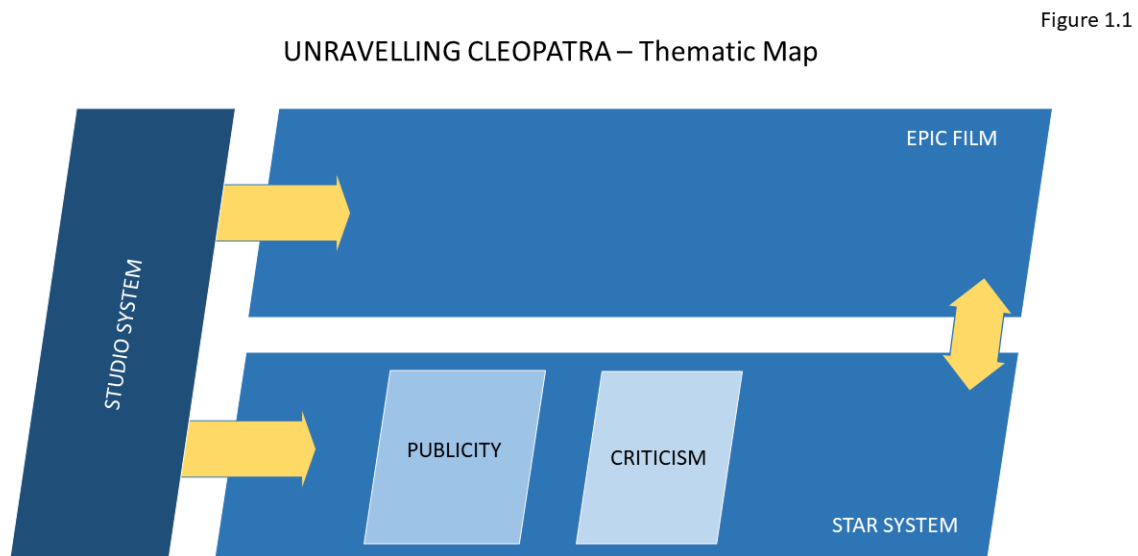
²⁰ See biography in Appendix 1.

²¹ This happened the day after *Cleopatra* ended principal photography, 25 July 1962. Zanuck – angered by the lack of leadership for a company he had in part founded – had amassed Fox stock, so that should there be a proxy fight, he would – along with Skouras – command enough shares to assure victory. Ultimately, there was no need for the proxy fight because the board appointed Zanuck to assuage the angry shareholders who saw Zanuck as the company's saviour.

²² Such reviews included *Variety* (1963nn); Powers (1963); Crist (2020); Crowther (1963).

CONTEXT

During the research for this critical history, 5 themes (Figure 1.1) emerged. The themes are institutions or systems that affected the entire industry. They are thematic because they function irrespective of individual studios and productions. Collectively they form a critical framework for *Cleopatra*.



As the studio system changed it looked to epic films and stars to draw audiences back to cinemas. The double-headed arrow illustrates the interaction between epic films and the stars they relied upon to ensure their box-office success. Embedded within the star system are publicity and film criticism, which both contributed to broader changes in the star system and particularly affected *Cleopatra*.

By 1958, the studio system was no longer vertically integrated, yet a horizontally integrated model still had to emerge. MGM, historically Hollywood's most successful studio,²³ was struggling financially, as were Universal and Fox, but the changes exposed deep flaws in Fox's

²³ Dick (1983, p. 25-26) captured this supremacy when he wrote: "there was something about the typical MGM product that reminded one of a gourmet meal served cafeteria style; such was the alliance of Irving Thalberg's grand bourgeois style and Mayer's chicken soup ethic."

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management, fragmenting its board with each faction seeing Fox's future differently. Skouras partially caused that fragmentation, because with his background in distribution, he lacked production experience when Fox most needed to focus on product. Fox slowly adapted how it worked with the star talent that, increasingly, it employed on an independent basis, evident in its handling of its lead contract artist, Marilyn Monroe.²⁴ All Hollywood struggled with the change process but Fox's hesitancy – and a lack of vision – exacerbated its financial problems.

Studios looked to epics to reinvigorate declining audiences. As one of the main proponents of silent film epics, DeMille revived the genre with *Samson and Delilah* (1949). Subsequent epics boasted a scale television could not rival. Their core message of the triumph of the Christians against the Roman Empire symbolised a 'message of personal and political freedom' (Elley, 1984, p. 13), and appealed directly to an American post-war/Cold-War sensibility. The Romans symbolised the oppression of communist Russia, Christianity the power of liberty and democracy. The formula was so successful that DeMille's last film, *The Ten Commandments* (1956), finally exceeded *Gone with the Wind's* (Fleming, 1939, Warners) box-office record. Inspired, other studios gambled on epic films for their salvation, such as MGM's big-budget production of *Ben-Hur* (1959), and Universal's *Spartacus* (1960).

Any genre's longevity relies on filmmakers adapting the form to keep it fresh while observing key elements. The epic genre evolved from 1949 to 1966. Significantly, *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), and *El Cid* (1961) balanced epic elements with a very personal drama told realistically. Wanger saw *Cleopatra* this way too, but Skouras saw it as a small film, like an earlier Fox release, *The Egyptian* (Curtiz, 1954, Fox). Skouras' preferred epic subject was a treatment of the life of Christ with the working title, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. With Mankiewicz directing and the Fox board cancelling Skouras' project, *Cleopatra* became, ipso facto, Fox's studio-saving epic.

Cleopatra films from cinema's inception reflect the epic nature of her story, yet widescreen epics centred on strong, male protagonists. As Richards (2008, p. 55) argued, Cleopatra did not reflect the sensitivities of post-war American culture, especially compared to Moses, Ben-

²⁴ See biography in Appendix 1.

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Hur, Christ, or El Cid. Cleopatra maintained the binary choice for female characters in Hollywood epics, to be either good and therefore 'mates and converters,' or bad, and therefore decadent (Joshel et al, 2001, p. 15). Hollywood had always shown Cleopatra as the latter. The naturalistic dialogue and plotting of Mankiewicz' 2-film idea aimed to adapt the epic form and perceptions of the character too, but the reduction to 1 film destroyed his attempt. After *Cleopatra's* release, no other studio commissioned a new epic – although several were already in production – so Zacky, Burns, and Bider (2001) argued that *Cleopatra* ended the Hollywood epic.

The cost of big-budget epics meant that studios relied on stars to assure their box-office success. Yet as Hollywood changed, so did the way it engaged its talent. In early Hollywood, studios used stars to define easy-to-read character types, or to rescue poor-quality films, or sell films that appealed to niche markets. Each studio created a roster of stars²⁵ and equally relied on the reputation of writers, directors, or producers to sell films. As their output decreased, studios needed to reduce costs, so began withdrawing from exclusively contracting talent: soon, talent became independent. In 1958, Taylor and Monroe were under contract to MGM and Fox respectively but sought independence. Taylor achieved it, but while Fox allowed Monroe to establish her own production company, she was at the time of her death in 1962 still under contract, symbolising Hollywood's struggle to find a new way of working with talent.

Public expectations of stars also changed. Monroe was one of the predominant female actors of the 1950s, Taylor and Audrey Hepburn represented the 1960s' liberated outlook. Audiences equally had expectations of directors like Mankiewicz or George Cukor;²⁶ or expected producers like Wanger or Jerry Wald to make certain kinds of film; they recognised studio heads like Zanuck and Skouras. However, by the 1960s a new kind of audience was dominated by younger men who demanded films with greater realism. Younger actors like Marlon Brando, Paul Newman or Taylor embodied this more-realistic, less-censorious outlook. There was still a place for glamour and heroism – embodied by actors like Heston, Sophia Loren, and Audrey Hepburn – but these too were tempered by greater realism, evident in *El Cid* (1961) or

²⁵ MGM famously boasted it had more stars than there were in the heavens.

²⁶ See biography in Appendix 1.

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Breakfast at Tiffany's (Edwards, 1961, Paramount). Taylor and *Cleopatra's* production were instrumental to changes in how Hollywood managed its talent.

Lew Wasserman,²⁷ president of talent agency Music Corporation America (MCA), spearheaded that change. With studios abandoning 7-year contracts, MCA began negotiating on behalf of its clients until eventually studios engaged independent talent for each film. Wasserman won his clients evermore-lucrative deals, like convincing Hitchcock to front the *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955) television series, broadening Hitchcock's appeal to television and cinema audiences, significantly contributing to his visibility and fortune. Film deals soon included a percentage of a production's box-office gross and allowed stars to produce their own projects, so *Spartacus* (1960) star Kirk Douglas was also its independent producer. Under legal pressure, Wasserman finally sold MCA, to takeover Decca Records and Universal²⁸ creating the first Hollywood studio horizontally integrated within a much larger conglomerate.

Embedded within the star system was publicity – the way studios portrayed their stars – which also changed during *Cleopatra's* production. In the classical system, studios publicised their films with carefully composed campaigns and reports by gossip columnists in the 1960s. Italy's emerging paparazzi introduced antagonistic photojournalism, with headlines around the world exposing stars' flaws as much as their glamour. Studios were at best reactive to such reports, failing to control them. In Rome, *Cleopatra* felt the full force of the paparazzi, while in Hollywood, Monroe used old-style publicity to fight her battles with Fox. With the younger audience no longer reading Louella Parsons²⁹ and Hedda Hopper³⁰ – Hollywood's most powerful columnists – studios' tight control over publicity faltered.

Although a part of publicity, studios had never controlled the opinions of film critics, whose opinions were changing too. Writing in *Cahiers du Cinéma* during the 1940s, Bazin and Astruc had developed the auteur theory, seeing the director as the author of a film. Truffaut and

²⁷ See biography in Appendix 1.

²⁸ The decline of Universal affected the success of its parent company Decca Records, which in 1958 agreed to sell the studio's real estate to Wasserman, knowing he was wanting to move into film. However, this initiated a series of moves, which enabled MCA to acquire both Decca and Universal (Sharp, 2003, p 105-106).

²⁹ See biography in Appendix 1.

³⁰ See biography in Appendix 1.

Godard considered Hitchcock the finest exemplar of an auteur. Inspired, American critics like Sarris began considering film in a similar way. Pauline Kael³¹ rejected this approach, viewing films on their own terms, not within the context of a director's other movies. Kael's rejection of the auteur theory mirrored a similar reaction in Europe, where the aim was to view each film independently when considering its cultural impact.³² Kael believed that the growing youth and counterculture movements rendered the status quo obsolete. Opposing the idea that films were the oeuvre of a single author or studio – therefore rejecting auteur theory and the central producer system – Kael placed film in a modern cultural context. Britain's *Sight and Sound* magazine followed a similar path, and exemplified an emerging tranche of new film magazines that enabled critics like Kael to challenge what they regarded as the sycophancy and unquestioning criticism of established critics (Roberts, 2010, p. 172-173).

Just prior to *Cleopatra's* release Crist – *The New York Herald Tribune's* film critic and Kael's contemporary – became the first film critic to appear weekly on American television. Crist also objected to established critics, chiefly *The New York Times's* Bosley Crowther, whose praise of *Cleopatra*, in contrast to Crist's excoriating review, exemplified – for younger critics – Crowther's superficiality.

Cleopatra bisected all these changes and precipitated some of them. In summary, *Cleopatra* failed to adapt the epic form and soon after the genre failed. Fox failed to understand the star system's move towards greater independence, affecting *Cleopatra's* production. Fox's inability to manage the profusion of publicity marked a significant change in how studios sold their films. *Cleopatra's* critical reception first revealed to the American public the battle over film criticism. Previous accounts have considered how *Cleopatra* engaged with each of these individually, none have considered how the interaction between them affected *Cleopatra*.

³¹ See biography in Appendix 1.

³² Kael's first book, *I Lost It at the Movies* (1965) was a collection of her reviews, in which she often attacked the opinions of other critics (like Sarris or Crowther). The audience for film criticism grew through mainstream magazines and small esoteric journals, such as *Film Culture* first published in 1955. Kael's pointed out that the growing youth and counterculture movements meant that upholding the status quo of an outmoded generation wasn't going to last. She attacked Crowther, who catered for his 'stuffy, bourgeois, New York-centric, eastern-elite,' with 'condescendingly beneficent viewpoints' (Roberts, 2010, p. 172-173, 178).

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In their studio histories, Lev (2013), and Solomon (2002) explored *Cleopatra's* impact on Fox but did not consider Fox's impact on *Cleopatra*. *Cleopatra: The Film That Changed Hollywood* (Zacky, Burns and Bider, 2001) and Rothman's (and Lewinson, 2010) *Fox Legacy Cleopatra edition* considered *Cleopatra's* production history. However, Fox – or affiliated studios – made both television documentaries to promote *Cleopatra* re-releases, revealing an inherent bias. For example, drawing comparison with Fox's later – and highly successful – *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997, Fox), Rothman (2011, 0:00:52) focused on *Cleopatra's* status as a runaway production.

Rothman (2011, 0:27:10) concluded *Cleopatra* remained such a fascinating subject because: 'If the story within the film had not been such a keen mirror for so much of what was going on behind the film, I don't think its fame would have so endured.' He noted *Cleopatra's* dominant irony being 'itself a tale of ambition and politics, of lust and betrayal, of the ultimate destruction of an empire born of over-reaching, miscalculation, and love. Above all love.' This captured *Cleopatra's* mythology but failed to recognise the impact of the changes surrounding it.

Previous accounts have not surveyed *Variety's* contemporaneous 'industry-reading' of *Cleopatra* and Fox. Therefore, understanding *Cleopatra's* production history relied on cross-referencing all the information in the public domain with unpublished documentation accessed in the Fox archives and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library.

Although gossip-laden biographies and autobiographies of *Cleopatra's* company exemplify the bias of authorship, no previous account has cross-referenced them. For instance, Michael Hordern (with England, 1993), Douglas Wilmer (2009), and Rex Harrison³³ (1975) each recounted Harrison forgetting his lines when first shooting the procession scene. A fight broke out between Hordern and Harrison later that evening. Each remembered the reason for the fight differently, but each remembered there was a fight.

³³ See biography in Appendix 1.

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Although Monroe's career was not of primary concern to this research, Fox's management of her revealed its failure to recognise industry changes. There have been more books written about Monroe than any other film star (McCann, 1988, p. 32), yet only Barham and Brown (1992)³⁴ contextualised Monroe's final days with *Cleopatra's* production. However, subsequent authors have questioned the quality of evidence Barham and Brown (1992) provided. Still, circumstances surrounding Monroe's death illustrate that Fox managed two major stars very differently: Fox favoured Taylor and repeatedly turned to Monroe to aid its financial recovery. Therefore, the research focuses on those instances when Monroe's actions directly affected the management of Fox, or where her treatment and Taylor's varied greatly, despite the similarity of their circumstances. For example, Fox was happy to publicise Monroe's affair with Yves Montand, yet denied the Taylor-Burton affair.

This production history only considers biographical elements that directly affected *Cleopatra*. For example, although interesting, not all aspects of the Taylor-Burton affair are relevant. Similarly, it only draws on later ideological or cultural readings of *Cleopatra* – such as Hughes-Hallett's (1990) analysis of Taylor's performance as a proto-feminist icon – where those authors cite evidence that reveals some aspect of the film's history.

Cleopatra's role in the demise of the epic genre also required clarification. *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964, Anchor Bay Entertainment) was the first epic to flop at the box-office, closing the Samuel Bronston Studio, after which no other studio greenlighted an ancient historical epic until *Gladiator* (Scott, 1999, Dreamworks Pictures). *Variety* had already speculated about the demise of the epic genre before *Cleopatra* premiered. It is truer to say that *Cleopatra* failed to revive the epic genre: it did not end it.

Cleopatra's 60th anniversary is an ideal moment for a retrospective, and to consider the causal relationship between *Cleopatra*, Fox, and changes affecting all Hollywood. Using a considerable body of new research and freshly uncovered material, this critical history provides insights into *Cleopatra's* long-term legacy. It proposes that *Cleopatra* was the result

³⁴ Spoto (1993, p. 675) considered Barham and Brown (1992), 'the most astonishing compendium of error,' explaining that the authors had 'quoted people and sources inaccurately [and] embellished incidents.'

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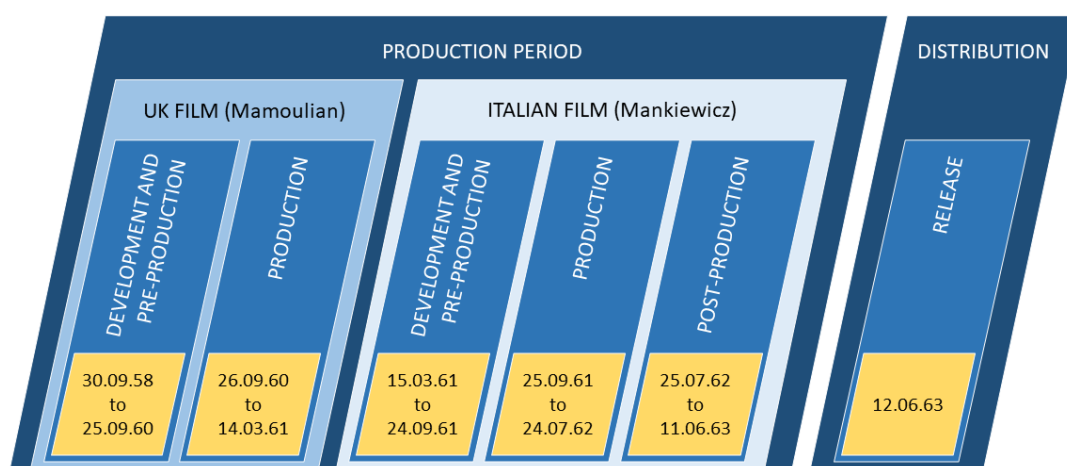
of Fox's attempts to survive the crisis facing the entire studio system. The research recognises 3 objectives, to:

1. Analyse collected data to reconstruct the complex sequence of events leading to the making of *Cleopatra*, by investigating multiple accounts to produce an accurate and evidenced critical history of *Cleopatra* and its legacy.
2. Identify key decisions, significant events, and pivotal moments in *Cleopatra's* production.
3. Analyse and evaluate *Cleopatra's* reception and its medium and long-term impact.

The production history follows a chronological model to clarify and organise the information gathered. There are several precedents: Wanger's (and Hyams, 1963) diarised, and Brodsky and Weiss' (1963) epistolary accounts are linear timelines that Chrissochoidis (2013b) later mirrored. Likewise, newspaper articles, letters, contracts, memos, and archival material were also dated, and most of the biographies were linear. The sequence of events is often revealing too, such as those surrounding Mamoulian's resignation, which indicate Skouras had planned to replace him months earlier.

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Production Timeline

Figure 1.2



Cleopatra disrupted the sequential production process of development and pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution (see Figure 1.2), because it had two periods of

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development and pre-production, and two production periods, not including re-shoots. The unusually long shoot broke down into Mamoulian's UK film and Mankiewicz' Italian film: Mamoulian shot for 164 days and Mankiewicz for 303 days, followed by an additional two weeks of re-shoots in February 1963. The film shot for 467 days, roughly a year and 3 months. For context, *South Pacific* (Logan, 1958, Fox), shot in part on location, required only 81 days.

The research process focused on gathering, storing, and processing the information. Arguably the volume of research material risked overwhelming any analysis of the 5 themes (Figure 1.1), so the research made every attempt to look beyond *Cleopatra's* production to consider the impact of changes in Hollywood's core practices. For instance, Hollywood relied – and still does – on big-budget films to draw audiences. If the format of those films became predictable or failed to capture public interest, then Hollywood struggled financially.

Some material would have reduced the need for the quantity of research gathered. A full and complete shooting script or a copy of the shooting schedule for the Italian production would have proved more authoritative, but the lack of both plagued the production too. Knowing the exact sum of Monroe's life insurance and date of payment would have clarified the extent to which her death funded *Cleopatra's* re-shoots, but this information was not available. The research benefitted from one interview with one of the few cast and crew still living. This interview was significant and similar interviews would have helped to cross-reference key events, but despite many attempts this was not possible. Consequently, the only way to assure that no event or comment was overlooked was to gather and review all known data.

The research objectives detailed above informed the methodology used to process that data. Chapter 2 details the research aims and process, and it evaluates their effectiveness. Chapter 3 provides a contextual background for the research through the filters of the 5 themes (Figure 1.1) but also 8 subjects that predominate this history. It also establishes the events that influenced and led to Skouras' meeting with Wanger on 30 September 1958, asking him to independently produce a *Cleopatra* film. Chapters 4 to 9 are the production history at the heart of this research. Each chapter concludes with a summary considering how the 5 themes and 8 subjects interacted throughout *Cleopatra's* production. The summary to Chapter 9

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considers *Cleopatra's* medium-term impact. Chapter 10 then draws conclusions about the film's long-term impact.

Rothman's (2011, 0:27:10) analysis of *Cleopatra* was only partially true. Rothman failed to describe that when Skouras invited Wanger to meet him, the Hollywood system – created at the inception of the new entertainment medium in the early 1900s – was in freefall.

Rothman's focus on *Cleopatra* as a runaway production sustains the mythology that surrounds the film: an objective account places *Cleopatra* within a much broader context. Chapter 2 outlines the meticulous process of gathering and ordering information used to reveal that broader context.

METHODOLOGY

AIMS

A principal aim of this critical history is to examine the causal relationship between *Cleopatra*, Fox, and changes to the Hollywood system. The production history therefore details *Cleopatra* from inception to release within the broader context of an entire industry in freefall. It examines *Cleopatra* against the background of Fox – needing to reverse its financial downturn – setting a \$2,000,000 budget that eventually reached a then unprecedented \$44,000,000. It considers how Fox lost control of *Cleopatra* as personal and industry events created an unforeseeable situation around which relentless media scrutiny created impossibly high expectations no film could meet.

Why these things happened is the theoretical problem underlying *Cleopatra's* lasting impact and influence on a changing Hollywood. Exploring that question reveals how Fox reacted during this major shift, and *Cleopatra's* interaction with the industry-wide 5 themes (Figure 1.1). Those changes were responses to cultural shifts affecting America as it entered the 1960s, so those changes were specific to a particular moment that influenced the modern industry. Consequently, a principal aim of this research is to interrogate and analyse the relationship between *Cleopatra* and the evolution of Hollywood's industrial framework, rather than posit a retrospective socio-political reading of the decisions made, the film, or its performances.

OVERVIEW

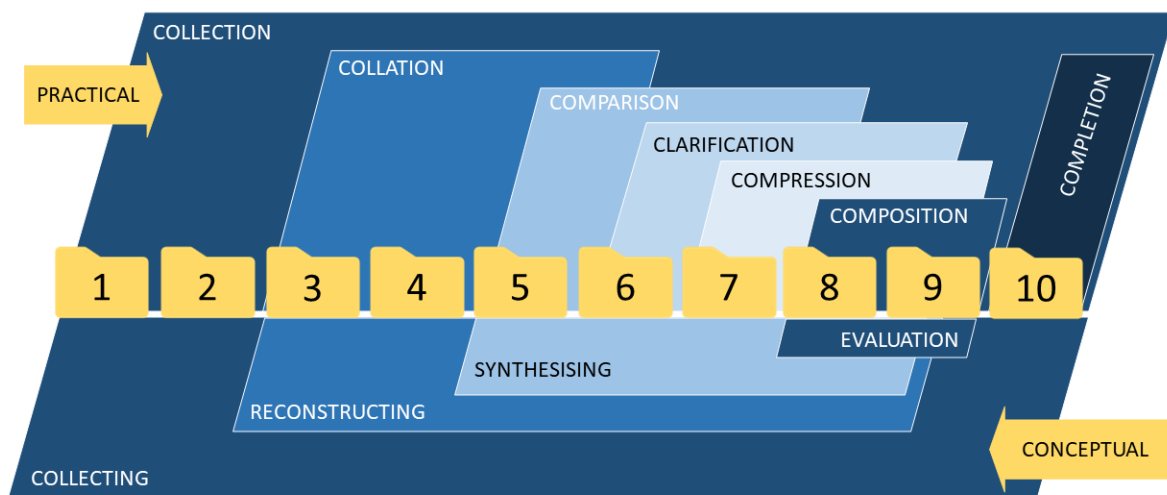
To create *Cleopatra's* first critically contextualised production history, the research adopts a historical qualitative methodology, using 5 themes to develop a critical framework. The 626 sources cited drew on 1143 individual sources, of which 73% were primary and 27% were secondary. Primary sources included the Fox archives and the Margaret Herrick Library in Los

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Angeles; *Variety* articles accessed at the British Library; video footage and bonus features accessed on Blu-ray/DVD; films and film soundtracks; autobiographies, letters, and memos; the internet; and one interview. Secondary sources included biographies and critical commentaries; some websites; Blu-ray/DVD bonus features; televised documentaries; and e-books. Overall, the methodology followed established models for film production histories, such as those used by Auiler (1998) or Goode (1986). The research's originality was that this was the first time this approach was applied to *Cleopatra*.

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Project Plan

Figure 2.1



METHODOLOGY

The project plan (Figure 2.1) centred on practical and conceptual elements. A 10-phase practical process gathered evidence to compose a production history. Optical character recognition software or transcription of commentaries or interviews converted all published evidence into electronic text. Later iterative stages reduced the volume of text to compose a detailed, chronological, narrative description of *Cleopatra*'s production. Electronically storing the output of each phase made it possible to retrace evidence back to the full text if required. The 4,000,000 words of evidence gathered necessitated different evidence management approaches at different phases. Approaches usually spanned several phases but in advance of the final completion stage, they were introduced as follows.

- **COLLECTION**

Phase 1 began collecting evidence which continued throughout the research. Phase 3 completed a survey of every published book about *Cleopatra* or relevant critical theories. Given the research spanned 7 years, later stages added any newly published work. Tracking and purchasing each book was a lengthy process. Bibliographies in one book led to other titles, as did internet searches for books by key figures. For example, comments by Wanger about repeated requests for an interview with Taylor while she was in Rome initiated a search for Sheilah Graham's¹ (1968) book. A subsequent search located a copy to an American second-hand bookstore. Goode (1986) was not available to buy, so was acquired through a library loan.

Many writers wrote in detail about Taylor or Fox, but no previous source wrote from the perspective of the film. Nor did previous accounts reference autobiographies, such as those by Robert Stephens (with Coveney, 1995), Wilmer (2009), or George Cole (with Hawkins, 2013). Autobiographies separated into those that found the making of the film deeply irritating or felt honoured to work on such a prestige production. No previous research has reviewed all published information about *Cleopatra*, which was the first stage in this research. The research cross-referenced the perception that *Cleopatra* was a flop that nearly destroyed Fox, with unpublished evidence not in the public domain. Therefore, phases 4 and 5 added archival material to what was an emerging chronology and, in most instances, verified that chronology, or provided further detail and definition. For instance, Taylor's contract with Fox challenged the perception it was for \$1,000,000.

- **COLLATION**

The initial plan was to gather all the evidence then collate it. By phase 3 the volume of text clearly required better management, so chronological listing continued, overlaid with subject groupings. Where the same calendar date recorded several entries, each separate entry had a heading such as 'Monroe,' or 'studio system,' or 'Cleopatra.' This approach helped to locate undated events in the timeline and eventually 8 main subjects emerged, informing the composition in phase 9. Unlike the 5 themes underpinning the

¹ See biography in Appendix 1.

critical framework, the 8 subjects were persons, institutions or ideas specifically related to Fox and *Cleopatra*. Phase 4 concluded with a basic chronology of events, enabling that later cross-referencing with information not in the public domain.

- **COMPARISON**

Phase 4 introduced archival evidence. From phase 5 onwards, it was possible to compare information in the public domain with unpublished information. Such comparison continued throughout the remaining phases, although the major bulk was completed by the end of phase 6, with later phases providing greater refinement.

Shaping an accurate account of *Cleopatra*'s production relied on comparing accounts to verify what happened and when. Overall, dates aligned. Sometimes archival evidence provided more detail, such as a complete casting list rather than sample names. Some events remained undated by the end of Phase 5, like the timing of Sybil Burton's attempted suicide, which could have happened anytime in 1962 or 1963. Until it could be resolved, it was attributed to 1962. Any undated events were temporarily attributed to the first point at which they could have happened.

Two examples indicate the scrutiny applied. As an example of factual accuracy, Young (2018), mirrors Taraborrelli (2006, p. 163-164), who echoed Waterbury's (1964) account of the first day on set in Rome, stating that Taylor entered in a mink coat covering her gold dress. Taylor and Burton exchanged terse words before Harrison urged Mankiewicz to set the cameras rolling. However, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 98) reveals Taylor did not wear her gold dress, while Harrison's work cards reveal he had yet to arrive in Rome. This research cited only verifiable events and dates, noting differing interpretations where appropriate.

Second, some authors interpreted the impact of what happened differently. For instance, after Mankiewicz produced the first edit of the film, Zanuck fired him. Each held press conferences to voice their arguments. Writers, focused on Zanuck's rescue of Fox, regarded the firing differently to those focused on Mankiewicz' attempt to re-define the epic form. In such instances the research aimed to verify events.

Although some archival information was previously available publicly,² it was only possible to view original copies and other unseen documents at the Fox studio in Hollywood. The research could not begin without knowing if Fox would grant access to its archives. Fox agreed on 19 December 2013 in a Research Permission Agreement. Throughout, the research adhered to the accompanying Conditions of Access to the Archival Collection. It was not permitted to re-use, publish, reproduce, publicly display, or broadcast material from the Archives without written permission from Fox Legal or Fox Clearances Departments. Any publication of materials from the Archives collection had to acknowledge the source and no copies could be made of the documentation.

Access to the Mankiewicz papers at the Margaret Herrick Library was more restricted. Some authors have previously referred to these papers, but reading the smaller details provided further links to the emerging narrative. For example, an annotated copy of Volkmann's *Cleopatra* (1958) demonstrated that Wanger gave Mankiewicz his own notes – presumably in early 1961 – only by viewing the papers was it possible to discover this. Access to the Academy Library was through an online portal and granted for 27 April 2017. The library also permitted readers to request up to 100 pages of photocopies per year. That allowance was used in a single visit.

A visit to read the Skouras' papers at Stanford University was planned, but shortly after contacting the library, Chrissochoidis (2013a, 2013b) released his books in the UK, bringing the relevant documentation into the public domain. Academy Library staff advised that Zanuck's papers had minimal *Cleopatra* content.

- **CLARIFICATION**

Phase 6 established *Cleopatra's* 6 production periods (Figure 1.2) and continued the process of verification begun in phase 5, aiming to reduce repetition. When several sources cited the same facts, this phase reduced the various sources about each event

² Prior to 2012, the UCLA library held photocopies of some of the *Cleopatra* material in the Fox archive.

into a single text. The research favoured primary sources but cited secondary sources that offered additional information.

Phase 6 added information gathered from *Variety*, accessed at the British Library in London, which holds one of the UK's few historic collections of the newspaper. Access to the British Library required attendance at a training session, before being issued with a reader's pass. *Variety* had no index, so finding articles involved viewing each microfiche reel – ordered prior to each visit – page by page. This time-intensive process considered the 11-year period from 1955 to 1966 and was completed in 5 full-day visits over a 9-month period. It was possible to email screen shots of each article for later perusal. The *Variety* reportage and dated articles formed a reliable chronology, especially for matters surrounding Fox board meetings.

Blu-ray/DVD and some historic television content were added during this phase. Primary source material – featuring members of cast and crew, contemporaneous documentaries, or newsreel footage – recalled the making of many of the films of this period. For instance, no other *Cleopatra* commentary refers to the lengthy footage from the *My Fair Lady* (Cukor, 1964, Paramount) press lunch, which revealed Harrison's perceptions soon after finishing the film's re-shoots. Secondary sources from Blu-ray/DVD and television documentaries provided a means of confirming the chronology developed to date. A subsequent internet search for the source videos used in these documentaries provided more detail, such as video footage of Mankiewicz's (Luce Cinecittà, 2021) arrival in Rome on 27 July 1961, which up to that point had proved difficult to determine. Phase 6 reduced the material by 53%.

- **COMPRESSION**

Phase 7 aimed to compress multiple entries for each day into a single entry to highlight any connections between events. For example, on 4 June 1962, Monroe called in sick after going out for her birthday on 1 June. This coincided with Peter Levathes³ attempt in

³ See biography in Appendix 1.

Rome to end production on *Cleopatra*. Seeing these two events collectively emphasised their relationship. This phase reduced the material by a further 63%.

This phase also added the one interview with a surviving member of the production. Having checked the 297 names of *Cleopatra*'s cast and crew on IMDb (2023), 38 people were still alive. Some, such as actor Richard O'Sullivan, were in care homes. Jean Marsh did not reply to a letter requesting an interview. Taylor's children, while alive at the time of the filming, were not actively involved. Actors such as Angela Douglas, Francesca Annis, John Alderton, and Amanda Barrie were contacted through their agents, but did not reply. Lynn Taylor replied by email saying she recalled very little. John DeCuir Jnr provided some observations about his father's work by email. The only contact resulting in an interview was Ray Austin, the assistant director for the procession scene, who agreed to an online interview on 22 February 2020. A transcript captured the interview's key points.⁴

Phase 7 confirmed much of what had already emerged and clarified any dating issues. The final evidence source before starting Phase 8, the Austin interview, offered insights into on-set feelings about the film and commented on emerging theories. Most significantly, Austin dated the start of the Taylor-Burton affair much earlier than previous sources.

- **COMPOSITION**

Phase 8 produced a detailed narrative account of *Cleopatra*'s production, reducing the remaining material by 49%. This phase identified key events and turning points within the narrative and completed the clarification process started in phase 6. For instance, dating Sybil Burton's suicide attempt was difficult because she did not write an autobiography and never publicly discussed her divorce from Burton. She made one comment about April 1963 being her lowest time, which aligned with Mike Nichols' comments about seeing razor cuts on her wrists. While the actual day cannot be determined, the evidence suggests it happened in April 1963; not in London or New York as some writers suggest,

⁴ See Appendix 3.

but in Switzerland. Such dating was only possible because of the breadth of evidence gathered.

Phase 9 shifted from a content-based qualitative research methodology to a discourse-based analysis of *Cleopatra's* production within the context of the 5 themes. This phase also adopted a comparative approach to regard *Cleopatra* beyond its phenomenological status to consider it as a response to a series of challenges that every studio faced.

The practical process on the top row of Figure 2.1 enabled the conceptual aspects of the methodology indicated on the bottom row. The conceptual elements overlapped throughout the practical stages, and connected directly to the research objectives, which were to:

1. Analyse collected data to reconstruct the complex sequence of events leading to the making of *Cleopatra*, by investigating multiple accounts to produce an accurate and evidenced critical history of *Cleopatra* and its legacy.
2. Identify key decisions, significant events, and pivotal moments in *Cleopatra's* production.
3. Analyse and evaluate *Cleopatra's* reception and its medium and long-term impact.

These all relied on collecting evidence and a historiographical analysis of the primary source material and any secondary source interpretations. Being *Cleopatra's* first-ever production history, that evidence spanned 65 years. The conceptual approaches identified on the bottom row of Figure 2.1 – of collecting, reconstructing, synthesising, and evaluation – facilitated both historiographical and qualitative research methodologies. The reconstruction in phase 8 turned the raw evidence into a narrative account of *Cleopatra's* production, achieving the first research objective.

That reconstruction bridged the historiographical research methods used to collect, verify, collate, and classify the evidence, and the qualitative historical research approach that underpinned the second research objective of identifying the key decision-making points and events that affected *Cleopatra*. Synthesising the evidence resulted in a concise reconstruction from which it was possible to infer observations about the film's impact on the industry. The

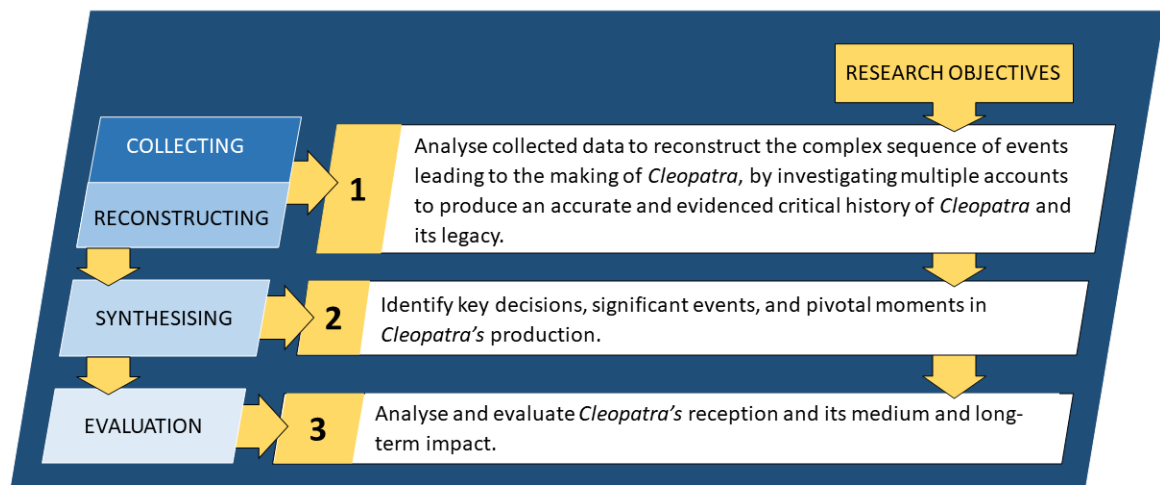
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synthesis of different evidence sources happened in tandem with reconstruction, enabling the qualitative process of reviewing historical events to develop conclusions about the making of *Cleopatra*.

Significantly, evaluating the production history aligned with the third research objective. The production history created by the end of phase 8 was an intermediate account highlighting the impact of key events on *Cleopatra*. Those moments also articulated the shift in Hollywood's mode of production from a vertically to a horizontally integrated model. The intersections between production issues and the adaptation of the studio system were pivotal to the aim of the research. For instance, to combat criticism by stockholders that Fox did not control its stars, Fox fired Monroe after she sang 'happy birthday Mr. President' at a Democratic Party gala in May 1962. Fox did not fire Taylor, whose film would potentially generate a bigger income. Fox determined which star offered the best financial return and least resistance. Understanding why that happened helped to determine any causal relationships.

Figure 2.2

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Research Methodology and Objectives



The conceptual aspects of the research methodology connected directly to the research objectives (Figure 2.2). Collecting and reconstructing created the critical history; synthesising achieved the objective of understanding why Fox made the decisions it made; evaluation

considered *Cleopatra's* impact on the film industry. From there it was possible to discern the causal relationship between *Cleopatra* and Fox and their impact on Hollywood.

EVALUATION

The methodology aimed to compare several primary and secondary sources to verify the film's chronology. For instance, archival documentation in both the Fox archives and Academy Library proved that Fisher's⁵ (1981, 1999) suggestion in his two biographies – that much of the film's casting was his idea – was entirely false. Information cited by a single source – such as letters in the Fox archive or the Austin interview – were examples of new research. Verifying these events relied on deciding which accounts were the most factual, any conflicting opinions were indicated in the study.

The research constantly recognised the bias of each source. For instance, in two memoirs Taylor (1967)⁶ promoted her status as a major Hollywood star unfairly judged by some of the public. Her *South Bank Show* interview (2019) underscored her mistreatment by the studio system, that as a female actor she was oppressed by MGM until she achieved independence. Equally, subsequent statements published after out-of-court settlements, questioned some of the content of Wanger's *My Life with Cleopatra* (1963) and Brodsky and Weiss's *The Cleopatra Papers* (1963). Chrissochoidis' *The Cleopatra Files* (2013b), commissioned by Skouras' family, aimed to exonerate Skouras of any blame in *Cleopatra's* problems. All three books embody their author's bias. However, Wagner, and Brodsky and Weiss' accounts – written independently of each other – often confirmed incidents in the other book.

Wanger's diarised book established a template for all subsequent accounts. The obvious countercheck to Wanger's dating would have been a shooting schedule or a copy of the finished script, but the script never was finished, and a schedule proved impossible to locate. Verifying Wanger's timings relied on comparison with Brodsky, Weiss, and Chrissochoidis; letters in the archival evidence; and *Variety* articles. Published weekly, *Variety* dated each

⁵ See biography in Appendix 1.

⁶ And also Taylor, 1988.

report to the day it was filed, providing a reliable calendar. Wanger's chronology was broadly accurate.

Failing to find an alternative way of charting events was a potential weakness of this study. Writing an account under themed headings could have worked, but when things happened often explained why they happened, so the chronological approach remained. However, this meant that the Italian production section was unavoidably longer than any other, therefore, sub-headings portioned each chapter into manageable units.

Phases 1 to 3 surveyed all extant publicly available material. The project accessed archival evidence, observing the requirements of the Fox archive and the Academy Library, but Fox relaxed their document control rules and provided over 300 pages of copied material. Any evidence extracted from that material, or the Mankiewicz papers was referenced in the text, as required of the Harvard conventions. There were no data protection issues with the Austin interview⁷ because he gave permission to use the evidence he provided. Given that most of the key participants have died, and that those participants who are still alive and who were willing to be interviewed or provide comment have given permission to be quoted, the study did not raise any ethical concerns.

CONCLUSION

The selection of a carefully planned historical qualitative research methodology informed the direction of the thesis. A qualitative strategy reconstructed *Cleopatra's* production that later relied on comparative and interpretivist approaches. The key research tools were a highly detailed survey of all existing published and archival information about *Cleopatra*, and a survey of discourses surrounding the studio system, epic films, and the star system. One interview with a surviving member of the production was possible. Collectively these addressed the lack of a critical account of *Cleopatra's* production that books about the film or

⁷ Appendix 3 is a transcript of the interview. Austin (2020) was a stuntman on the UK shoot and asked for the stunt co-ordinator role in Rome. He arrived in Cinecittà with 4 stuntmen, including Italian-born Romo Gorrara who became Austin's translator.

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its stars, and two filmed documentaries failed to provide. The outcome of this approach was the first complete critical account of the making of one of the most infamous films in Hollywood's history.

A TIDE IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN

(*Julius Caesar* – Act 4 Scene 3)

Figure 3.1

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Thematic Matrix

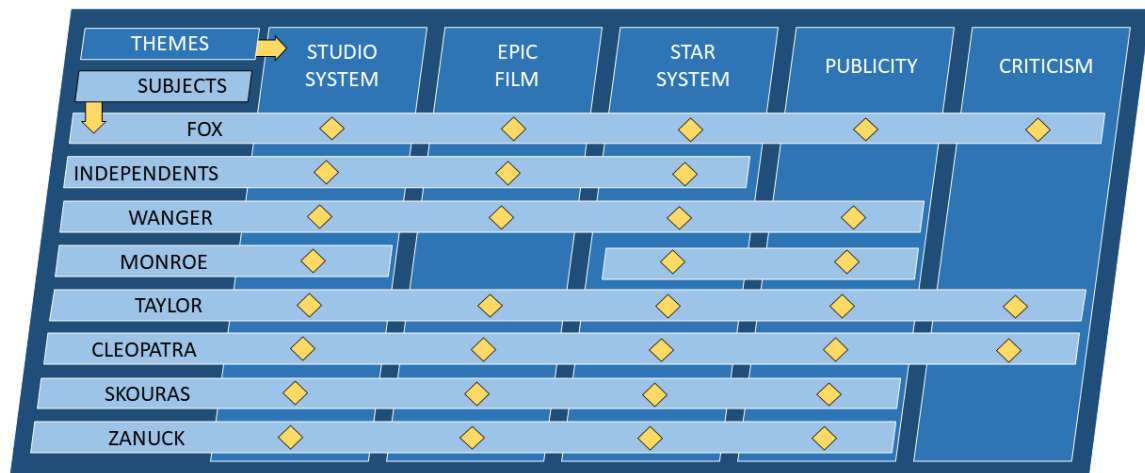


Figure 3.1 visualises how *Cleopatra* and Fox interacted with broader industry-wide developments in Hollywood's operational model. The matrix illustrates the interaction between 5 themes (Figure 1.1) and 8 subjects. The themes highlight industry-wide issues: the subjects emerged throughout the collation phase of the research and are ideas, institutions, or persons – although interest in them is not biographical – directly related to Fox and *Cleopatra*. Where the themes are general to the entire industry, the subjects are specific instances of how the production interacted with the themes. Some potential subjects are embedded within others, so Burton – who joined the production midway – sits within Taylor's narrative and Mankiewicz within the *Cleopatra* narrative. The 5 themes form the horizontal axis, and the 8 subjects form the vertical one. Spaces in the matrix indicate where there was no interaction. This chapter introduces the themes and subjects: subsequent chapters detail the multiple points of interaction.

THE STUDIO SYSTEM

In 1905 – producing films through a process mirroring Ford's factory production line and acquiring Paramount to distribute them – Zukor established the studio system. Using this vertically integrated model, studios made films which they then distributed to their own cinemas, the income from which financed more films (Gomery, 2008, p. 11-12).¹ The only significant change to Zukor's formula arose after MGM's initial film *Ben-Hur* (Niblo, 1925, MGM) nearly destroyed the company at inception, MGM appointed Irving Thalberg as its central producer to ensure that each film observed MGM's house-style; Paramount did the same; and Warners appointed a young Zanuck² as their Head of Production (Gomery, 2008, p. 33).³

Zukor's system remained unaffected for the next decade, reaching its apogee in 1939, with *Gone with the Wind* (1939) its apex (Leva and Nasr, 2009, 00:00:27). Selznick, an independent producer, prepared for two years with Cukor, his director, who – thinking his pacing slow – he fired after the first 10 days shooting. Shutting-down production for 17 days, Selznick replaced Cukor with Fleming. Throughout the shoot, Selznick re-wrote the script at night, while Fleming took daily injections to keep him awake or asleep. At one point, Fleming left the picture, Wood replaced him and then shared directing duties when Fleming returned two weeks later. The shoot lasted 125 days, after which Selznick edited 1,500,000 feet of film into a 20,000-foot picture. The 226-minute film was America's longest to date with an unprecedented \$4,000,000 negative cost.⁴ Selznick released the film as a roadshow⁵ at only one cinema in each town, with audiences buying advanced tickets. Withdrawn from roadshow release in

¹ This mirrored French film distribution process and the American vaudeville circuit (Gomery, 2008, p. 38-39, 44).

² By 1926, Zanuck earned \$5,000 a week and oversaw Warner's release of *The Jazz Singer* (Crosland, 1927, Warner Bros.).

³ See also Schatz, 1998, p. 48, 153-154.

⁴ This is the cost of delivering the negative version of the film, therefore, the production cost, not the cost of creating copies of the negative for distribution.

⁵ Roadshowing was a release model that mirrored theatre performances, with audiences booking tickets in advance of the event at larger prestige venues. For longer films there would be an intermission (like an interval) and people would 'dress' as if attending the theatre. Roadshows were the first opportunity audiences had to see a film following its premiere, tickets were therefore charged at a premium rate. Usually, roadshows only showed at one cinema in a city or larger town.

January 1941, it went on general release⁶ at half-price admission, but without shortening the film. This established Hollywood's roadshow distribution model for 20 years (Thomson, 2006), during which time nothing surpassed Selznick's box-office success.

Just before the outbreak of World War II, independent cinema owners objected to Hollywood's monopoly. Delayed by the War, the resulting Anti-Trust suit resumed just as the cost of raw film stock and building materials increased; as unions began fighting for better wages and working conditions; and as the House Un-American Activity Committee (HUAC) hearings on Communism forced Hollywood to make the Waldorf Declaration⁷ (Lev, 2013, p. 105-110).

Throughout this, television gained huge popularity, so collectively these circumstances challenged Hollywood, but the outcome of the Anti-Trust suit, the Paramount Decree, ended Zukor's system. The US Supreme Court's 'divorcement' order separated cinema chains from studios, forcing them to sell individual movies to individual cinemas, limiting production and forcing up rental terms for each film, making each movie a separate risk for studios and exhibitors alike. The decree also banned studios from buying TV stations, restricting them to supplying programmes and leasing their film back-catalogues. This weakened Hollywood's financial stability for 3 decades as the entire industry strove to find a solution to its collective need for a new and effective business model, which Hollywood finally achieved with *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975, Universal) (Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 125-129).⁸

⁶ Following a film's roadshow release, studios released movies on 'grind' or general release to all kinds of cinemas in all cities and towns at lower ticket prices and without prebooking. Sometimes films would be edited for the grind release, but usually they were shown in the same length as the roadshow release. Also, the grind release occurred many months after the film's initial release, unless a film was released 'straight to grind.'

⁷ This required all studios to agree to never 'knowingly employ a Communist or anyone seeking the violent or illegal overthrow of the U.S. government.' It was called the Waldorf Declaration because it was signed at the Waldorf Hotel.

⁸ See also Schatz, 1998, p. 472-473; Lev, 2003, p. 10-11, 107-108.

FOX

As one of classical Hollywood's major studios, William Fox, Zukor's chief rival, established a permanent Fox studio in Hollywood, another in New York, and distribution offices around the world. In 1924, he purchased a 450-acre plot for \$2,000,000 to build a new Hollywood studio. Next, Fox mortgaged his studio – at high interest rates – to purchase a 33% interest in Loew's distribution company. Fox finally controlled the world's largest motion picture production-distribution company, until the Wall Street Crash destroyed his financially overstretched empire (Gomery, 2008, p. 38-39).⁹ Fox's ailing company merged with 20th-Century pictures in 1935, creating Twentieth Century-Fox with Zanuck as Head of Production,¹⁰ and owning Hollywood's largest studio lot.

Zanuck built Fox's prestige and financial success. He cut the payroll and brought in new talent. Every script required action, characters, and pacing. Zanuck held story conferences throughout the creative process and 'advised' producers and directors about casting. He watched rushes daily with the director and supervised the cutting of every film. Maintaining this centralised approach until 1956, Zanuck increased Fox's success-rate by 33%, personally producing over 150 movies, and winning over 30 Oscars. Without Zanuck, Fox 'would almost certainly have spluttered and died within a couple of years' (Pickard, 1978, p. 438).¹¹ Yet while Zanuck served during World War II, Skouras became Fox President. On his return, Zanuck again re-built Fox's prestige and increased profits by reducing the number of 'B' films Fox released. On 12 June 1950, *Time* described Zanuck as Hollywood's pre-eminent executive¹² but the Paramount Decree affected Fox like all other studios.

Fox led Hollywood in 1951, then its profits fell to \$4,300,000 forcing Skouras to announce a 2-year 'voluntary' pay-cut for 130 executives. Skouras then tried to extend these cuts to highly paid directors and actors, whose guilds objected.¹³ Casting established stars in productions

⁹ See also Lev, 2013, p. 7-8; Eyman, 2021, p.3.

¹⁰ Zanuck resigned from Warners on 14 April 1933 and 3 days later was the first vice-president in charge of production for the newly formed Twentieth Century Pictures, which then merged with Fox (Schatz, 1998, p. 48, 153-154; Solomon, 2002, p. 19-20, 40; Gomery, 2008, p. 16 and 22-25; Lev, 2013, p. 44-45).

¹¹ See also Gussow, 1971, p. 67-68; Victor, 1999, p. 332; Solomon, 2002, p. 9-10, 26, 35; Lev, 2013, p. 3, 44.

¹² He had a 10-year contract at a yearly base salary of \$260,000.

¹³ When business improved by the end of 1951, Fox returned the executive salary deductions.

failed to attract audiences, who wanted to see new younger faces, therefore Zanuck engaged new stars, including Burton for *My Cousin Rachel* (Koster, 1952, Fox), and continued to reduce production budgets. Fox fired 500 staff in 1953 and reduced its output from 60 films a year to between 12 and 25 (Reid, 2009, p. 5).¹⁴ After a decade of being Hollywood's top studio, Fox's fortunes declined. Roddy McDowall¹⁵ concluded that by 1958, 'the studio system had broken down. If you were in the studio system at Twentieth in the '40s there was this huge successful operation. As it began to fall apart in the '50s, it was just entirely different.' Zanuck resigned in 1956. Replacing him, Buddy Adler¹⁶ headed Fox's largest overseas location shoot for *South Pacific* (1958). The \$5,250,000 budget was a significant increase on *The King and I* (Lang, 1956, Fox), returning \$17,500,000 domestically, boosting Fox temporarily (Solomon, 2002, p. 133).¹⁷

Skouras sought other ways to increase Fox's income. Fox discovered oil on its lot in 1956, but by 1958 – with Paramount selling assets, Warners recording its first annual loss since 1934, and Universal barely surviving – Skouras hired consultants to consider Fox's 450-acre site. Described as 'a strategically located property which can well be described as one of the outstanding, undeveloped real estate assemblages in America,' Fox decided to sell the entire lot, but lease back 80 acres to maintain its film production and distribution business. New York developer William Zeckendorf paid \$5,000,000 in 1959 for an option on the property and – with partners – eventually paid \$38,000,000 more to complete the purchase.¹⁸ In 1961, Fox demolished its backlot and construction of Century City – an office, residential and retail development – began (Lev, 2013, p. 182-184). This disproves the recurring myth that *Cleopatra* forced Fox to sell its backlot. As recently as 2022, Brower (p. 169) repeated the error, stemming from David Brown's (2003) memoir, but Brown's anecdote is untrue.¹⁹ The sale happened because Fox was struggling financially before Skouras and Wanger ever met. In that struggle, Fox – like all studios – looked to epic films to attract audiences.

¹⁴ See also Custen, 1996, p. 321-322; Solomon, 2002, p. 94-95; Gomery, 2008, p. 125; Richards, 2008, p. 53; Lev, 2013, p. 3, 109, 161-162, 165-166.

¹⁵ See biography in Appendix 1.

¹⁶ See biography in Appendix 1.

¹⁷ See also *Variety*, 1958a; Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001; Sharp, 2003, p 9-10; Parish, 2006, p. 16-17; Smith, 2009; Lev, 2013, p. 182-183.

¹⁸ Ultimately, Zeckendorf could not afford the purchase, so ownership defaulted to Alcoa.

¹⁹ Brower (p. 169) records that Taylor – being driven past Century City – was asked if she knew the complex. 'Know it? Honey I built it' she replied, indicating that Taylor herself believed the myth.

EPIC FILM

Silent era epics attracted large audiences with their narrative breadth, historical/biblical settings, lavish productions, and casts of thousands. Early Hollywood's prestige genre also extended America's engagement with novels like Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), Wallace's *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880), or translations of novels like Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis?* (1895). With the success of the first film version of *Ben-Hur* (Olcott and Rose, 1907, Kalem Company), other studios recognised the genre's commercial potential. The first film version of *Quo Vadis?* (Guazzoni, 1913, Società Italiana Cines) lent gravitas to the fledgling industry, soon other studios adopted the genre (Solomon, 2001, p. 5).²⁰ Epics inherently demanded high-quality production values, elevating the narrative and visual standards and profile of early Hollywood.

A modern take on Juvenal's 'bread and circuses,' epics appealed directly to the values of a country that identified as 'a new Holy Land capable of driving out its imperial rulers and establishing peace through the embrace of Christ' (Wyke, 1997, p. 17). Epics gradually became synonymous with excess and expense, so – as America became increasingly active in international politics and business – epics spoke to America's emerging affluence. Italian epics were noted for their 'superior technique' and high production values, and Paramount boasted about the production cost of *The Ten Commandments* (DeMille, 1923, Paramount).

MGM's *Ben-Hur* (1925), having been shot in Italy under poor supervision, went way over-budget, so MGM appointed a new director, recast the movie, and built life-sized galleys in Hollywood for the sea battle sequence. The film grossed \$4,300,000 domestically and \$5,000,000 internationally but its \$3,960,000 production and \$5,000,000 promotion and distribution budgets meant it only broke even on its 1930 re-release. MGM's near disaster, and the later failure of *The Last Days of Pompeii* (Gallone and Palermi, 1926, Società Italiana Grandi Films), made studios wary of the genre (Elley 1984, p. 17).²¹ With the advent of sound, musicals became Hollywood's prestige projects and the epic genre declined.

²⁰ See also Elley, 1984, p. 17; Gomery, 2008, p. 8, 13, 38; Richards, 2008, p. 23; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 48.

²¹ See also Kaiser, 1993, 0:12:26; Solomon, 2001, p. 82-83; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 22-23, 48, 161.

Searching for a solution to the impact of the Paramount Decree, DeMille revived the genre with *Samson and Delilah* (1949). He reasoned: 'How could you go wrong? It has these elemental conflicts: the sex and violence and yet, the spirituality.... How could you not wanna use 2000 years of publicity?' MGM had reached the same conclusion, so – from 1946-1948 – invested in rebuilding Rome's Cinecittà studios to remake *Quo Vadis?* (Le Roy, 1951, Warners). Emboldened by *Samson and Delilah's* (1949) success, shooting commenced in April 1950 with a \$5,000,000 budget, a largely British cast, and 35,000 extras. Echoing how the press had described the excess of silent era epics, marketing for *Quo Vadis?* (1951) listed these facts and the number of costumes and props to underpin the film's 'colossal' strapline. Following *Gone with the Wind's* (1939) release model, the 171-minute film grossed \$21,037,000. Borrowing a World War II term, *Variety* called it 'a box-office blockbuster.' American reviews were positive, but Britain's *Sunday Times* described it as '3 hours of vulgarity, clichés and disgust,' establishing a pattern of British critics disliking epics (Richards, 2008, p. 54).²² Epic films had a scale and look television could not match, soon all Hollywood replicated DeMille's template.

Quo Vadis? (1951) also popularised shooting on location. Having served abroad during World War II, many Americans wanted real settings not Hollywood mock-ups. Cinecittà boasted the required craftspeople and Roman-looking extras, an authentic Mediterranean atmosphere but – significantly – cheap labour and government funding. Under Italy's Andreotti Proposals, American studios paid no tax on movies made in Italy, if they spent that income in Italy. Seeing the possibilities, in 1957, the British government's Eady fund taxed all movies, but returned it as rebates to 'British' films, even if Hollywood studios funded them (Nassief and Nasr, 2008).²³ Television could not match the authenticity of epics shot on location, and although location shoots increased production costs, they lowered studio overheads, therefore expenditure.

Nor could television rival the new technologies epic films showcased. Technicolor originated in 1917, with Mamoulian's *Becky Sharp* (1935, RKO Studios), but only when Eastman Kodak

²² See also Nassief and Nasr, 2008; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 137-138.

²³ See also Solomon, 2002, p. 68-69; Lev, 2013, p. 107, 153-154.

later developed cost-effective film stock with colour sensitive emulsions did colour films rise in popularity.²⁴

Next, studios looked to screen size and stereophonic sound. Widescreen lenses originated in 1899 with inventors demonstrating a two-lens Widescope system in 1922. Then Henri Chretien invented a single anamorphic lens process for *Napoléon* (Gance, 1927, Ciné France), achieving ultra-widescreen effects by compressing the widescreen image onto a single strip of standard film and decompressing it with a reverse lens when projected. Chretien's anamorphic process could accommodate a stereo soundtrack, which Fox's *Happy Days* (Stoloff, 1929) had also done with a 70mm film, but Depression-hit studios delayed widescreen and stereo investment. In 1948, Fox's Earl Sponable realised the link between Chretien's broader gauge film and stereophonic sound, then in 1952 created a single camera/projector system whose 2.55:1 dwarfed the 1.33:1 industry standard. Skouras promoted CinemaScope, which Zanuck thought would have 'an enormous effect on audiences everywhere' (Behlmer, 1993, p. 223).²⁵

Zanuck announced *The Robe* (1953) as the first CinemaScope film. Director Henry Koster and director of photography, Leon Shamroy, spent January 1953 working with the only CinemaScope lens in existence. They also shot a non-CinemaScope version on a standard lens camera. Skouras used these shots and similar ones from *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Negulesco, 1953, Fox), not shot in CinemaScope, to demonstrate CinemaScope to Fox staff in Los Angeles and New York, and other studio heads and exhibitors. On 1 February, Zanuck announced Fox would 'concentrate exclusively on subjects suitable for CinemaScope,' instructing producers to abandon any work that did not take 'full advantage of the new dimension,' adding not every picture must have 'epic proportions.' By 18 March, Skouras had convinced 750 cinemas to install CinemaScope and agreed a \$25,000 fee per film for other

²⁴ Colour films rose from 12% in 1947 to 50% by 1954 (Monaco, 2003, p. 68).

²⁵ See also Norman, 1981, p. 297-299; Behlmer, 1993, p. 223; Custen, 1996, p. 317-318; Solomon, 2002, p. 84; Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 2004, p. 358-364; Cousins, 2004, p. 220-221; Gomery, 2008, p. 125; Reid, 2009, p. 5; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 6, 147.

studios to use the process²⁶ (Lev, 2013, p. 171-172).²⁷ CinemaScope reversed Hollywood's fortunes.

Fox gradually overcame CinemaScope's technical issues. Directors thought widescreen close-ups disorientating, so initially shot from a distance with a wide aperture, creating shallow focus, resulting in 'washing line' composition that highlighted CinemaScope's depth of field problems.²⁸ Zanuck urged Koster to use more exciting shots and angles, delaying production, but building anticipation. Following *The Robe's* (1953) New York premiere, *Variety* thought it: 'a big picture in every sense of the word.' *The Hollywood Reporter* thought the picture and sound perfect. Britain's *Daily Herald* thought CinemaScope created 'a more complete illusion of something real happening before your eyes;' *The Financial Times* called it 'a long, lachrymose high-class sleeping draught.' Fox issued the film on general release, guaranteeing CinemaScope's instant success and rewarding those exhibitors who had converted their cinemas. The film cost \$4,100,000 and grossed \$31,000,000 (Cousins, 2011, p. 222-223).²⁹

Proving CinemaScope was not just for epics, Fox released *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953). In standard format, Monroe's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hawks, 1953, Fox) took \$5,300,000: her first CinemaScope film generated \$8,000,000. Combined with royalties from other studios, Fox's revenues increased by 13%. With 13,175 out of 15,783 American cinemas converting to CinemaScope, industry profits increased by 400%. Skouras later wished 'to be remembered most for having brought CinemaScope to the motion picture industry, at a time when it was sorely needed' and declared 1954 the end of the threat of television. However, Fox's 1953 \$1,788,000 average movie cost rose in 1954 to \$2,354,000 (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 153).

DeMille's last film, *The Ten Commandments* (1956), finally superseded *Gone with the Wind's* (1939) box-office record. A second version – not a remake – of his 1923 film, DeMille spent 5

²⁶ Warners abandoned WarnerScope in favour of CinemaScope in October 1953, by November only Paramount had its own VistaVision system (Behlmer, 1993, p. 235 and 238).

²⁷ See also Behlmer, 1993, p. 234-235; Solomon, 2002, p. 85-86.

²⁸ Shamroy thought the early lenses 'were hell;' because 'you couldn't even do close ups, because they'd distort so horribly.' Shamroy thought 'CinemaScope wrecked the art of film for a decade,' even though it 'saved the picture business' (Lev, 2013, p. 173).

²⁹ See also Toeplitz, 1974, p. 42-43; Lev, 2003, p. 172-173; Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 2004, p. 361; Richards, 2008, p. 68-69.

years researching and 3 years writing. The 112-day shoot included a huge city set for the 3-mile-long Exodus procession – aided by Egypt’s release of blocked funds – all of which showcased Paramount’s VistaVision process. The film’s blasphemous strapline – ‘Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Ten Commandments*’ – asserted his pre-eminence amongst Hollywood directors. Paramount promoted it as a special event, attracting audiences who would not usually attend the cinema. Its exclusive reserved-seat roadshow, followed by regular ‘pre-release’ engagements with continuous performances at advanced prices, then a general release at normal prices, sustained the film’s circulation. With several reissues, starting in 1966, it grossed \$100,000,000 worldwide.³⁰ Like many epics, its critical reaction was mixed. *Variety* and *Newsweek* praised its large-scale spectacle but questioned the script and acting. *Saturday Review* thought it ‘one-dimensional’ (Richards, 2008, p. 68-69),³¹ yet *The Ten Commandments* (1956) defined DeMille’s template which other studios then copied.

In 1957, MGM registered its first-ever corporate loss. Reasoning that *Quo Vadis?* (1951) had been a great success, and *The Robe* (1953) and *The Ten Commandments* (1956) had revived Fox and Paramount’s fortunes, MGM gambled on a blockbuster. Looking to its back-catalogue MGM chose *Ben-Hur* (1925), calculating that a \$15,175,000 budget meant a \$20,000,000 break-even, which *The Ten Commandments* (1956) had easily recouped. *Ben-Hur* (1959) began filming in Rome on 20 May 1958, produced by Sam Zimbalist.³² Aware that if he failed then so would MGM, Zimbalist spent over a year in pre-production, ensuring it was well-planned and well-executed (Bouzereau, 2011).³³ Other studios watched closely, knowing that if *Ben-Hur* (1959) succeeded, they could follow suit.

STAR SYSTEM

The star system Hollywood used to manage its talent also changed. Heston (1995, p. 305-306) recalled: ‘Actors, directors, and writers were all indentured to the studio that employed

³⁰ The 1923 film cost \$1,000,000, the 220-minute 1956 film cost \$13,500,000 (Toeplitz, 1974, p. 42-43; Edelson, 1976, p. 124-125).

³¹ See also Amalgamated Press, 1958, p. 6-7; Edelson, 1976, p. 124-125; Lev, 2003, p. 163, 168-169; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 159.

³² Zimbalist had been a cutter on the 1925 version.

³³ See also Elley, 1984, p. 17; Kaiser, 1993; Lev, 2003, p. 200; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 48, 161.

them.’ Studios regarded star contracts as a capital purchase of the monopoly of the persona owned by the star. Studios used stars as a commodity to signify the content and quality of a film. Major stars could sell films people might not immediately wish to see, containing any losses and usually guaranteeing a profit. Star fees were a significant part of a film’s budget, and a star’s popularity – their capital value to their studio – could rise or fall. Stars who retained their status formed an ‘elite, privileged group’ that defined social roles and controlled how society represented its people (Dyer, 1989, p. 48).³⁴

However, during World War II, when Olivia De Havilland ended her 7-year contract with Warners, they argued she must work 6 months more to recover the days she had not worked over the 7 years. She asked if a 7-year contract meant 7 years’ work or 7 calendar years. In 1944, the Supreme Court of the State of California found in her favour. Although she did not work for 3 years, the De Havilland Decision determined that a contract expired on the due date (Norman, 1981, p. 302). However, after the Paramount Decree, studios began divesting themselves of expensive star contracts. This, and the gap the De Havilland Decision had exposed, allowed Wasserman at MCA to change how Hollywood negotiated deals.

MCA started in 1924 in Chicago as a talent agency for live music. By 1935, it had a blanket waiver from the American Federation of Musicians to book talent and produce programmes, enabling it to package radio shows using its own bands. Bandleaders soon objected to MCA’s stranglehold on orchestras. By 1940, Wasserman had joined MCA and began signing actors and directors, by 1945 his 200 clients included Fonda, Garland, Peck, Astaire, and Hitchcock, each attracted to Wasserman’s use of innovative deals to cut taxes (Sharp, 2003, p 104).³⁵

This was evident when Wasserman negotiated with Universal for James Stewart to appear in *Winchester '73* (Mann, 1950, Universal), not for Stewart’s customary \$200,000 fee, but for 50% of net profits. While Universal earned millions, Stewart earned \$600,000 over the next few years, making him Hollywood’s biggest star. By 1955, MCA represented 60% of screenwriters, directors, and actors, negotiating ever-higher fees. Hollywood adopted

³⁴ See also Schatz, 1998, p. 6-7; Leva and Nasr, 2009, 00:03:32.

³⁵ See also Lev, 2003, p. 144; Thomson, 2006, p. 320-321.

Wasserman's package system,³⁶ setting Hollywood on course for William Holden's \$1,000,000 contract, for *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (Lean, 1957, Sony). Eventually, a female star would demand the same amount. Throughout the 1960s, as companies absorbed studios into larger conglomerates,³⁷ the horizontally integrated model emerged (Thomson, 2006, p. 320-321).³⁸

INDEPENDENTS

As the package system began to dominate, talent became increasingly independent. Independent producers had worked in Hollywood for many years, but in 1934 'an independent production' negatively described a company lacking a distributor that only produced a small number of films each year. Yet Selznick had argued that only independent companies encouraged creativity, that the factory-style studio setting could never have made *Gone with the Wind* (1939). There were 40 independent productions in 1945, 100 in 1947, because prior to the Paramount Decree – reasoning that feature films usually returned 60% of their negative cost – banks advanced independent producers 60% of a film's budget with the film as collateral (Bernstein, 1994, p. 222).³⁹ Yet following the Paramount Decree and several failed films, banks ended the '60% Rule.'

Paradoxically, independent producers now had to find studios to act as guarantors, so Hollywood began using more independent producers. As Hollywood moved towards the package system, Thalberg's central producer model faded. Now the film was the organising force, not the studio, which no longer controlled every aspect of production. By 1957, 58% of films released by majors were independent productions with studios providing finance, distribution, and oversight⁴⁰ (Lev, 2003, p. 213-216).⁴¹ As the package system emerged in the

³⁶ The package system mirrored MCA's approach to putting together a package of bands for an event when MCA was solely a music agent. Wasserman now used that same idea for an individual film, so a film was a package of talent brought together to make a single film. This made the repertory company approach of the star system redundant.

³⁷ For example, Disney broadened its commercial avenues by opening theme parks, while other studios were subsumed into larger music companies which could then release film soundtracks.

³⁸ See also Schatz, 1998, p 469; Lev, p. 25-26, 2003, 144, 213-21; Sharp, 2003, p 5-6, 10-11, 105-106; Gomery, 2008, p. 5, 199; Cashmore, 2016, p. 9.

³⁹ See also Thomson, 1988, 00:06:22.

⁴⁰ The Best Picture Oscar winners 1954-1958 were all independently produced (Lev, 2003, p. 208).

mid-1950s, creative talent became independent or wanted to be. *Cleopatra* was, on the surface, an independent production, although Fox continually failed to recognise it as such.

WANGER

In part, the box-office failure of *Joan of Arc* (Fleming, 1948, Walter Wanger Productions), Wanger's first fully independent production, ended the 60% Rule. Wanger had raised \$4,500,000 with loans and \$850,000 of his own money, then agreed a deal with MGM who instructed him to reduce the budget and renegotiate his loans. Wanger refused, so 2 weeks prior to filming, recognising the film would have a higher negative cost than *Gone with the Wind* (1939), MGM withdrew. RKO stepped in, but realising the film needed to gross \$10,000,000 to make a profit, focused on recouping its costs, putting the film on a general, not roadshow, release. Despite star Ingrid Bergman's⁴² Oscar nomination, the film failed at the box-office. Wanger had spent too much time raising money and not enough on the detail of filming.

Broken financially, while Wanger worked abroad to repay his debts, his personal life suffered. On 13 December 1951 Wanger discovered his wife's – Joan Bennett – affair with Jennings Lang, her MCA agent. Wanger shot Lang in the groin, who did not press charges, but – faced with 7 witness statements – the district attorney charged Wanger with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to commit murder. In a mark of their regard for Wanger, studio executives paid his legal costs and bail. Wanger pleaded not guilty on the grounds of temporary insanity and received a 4-month sentence, of which he served only 98 days (Carter, 2008, p. 131-132).⁴³ On his release, Wanger told the waiting press: 'the prison system is the nation's number one scandal. I want to do a film about it.' His career recovery began with *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegal, 1956, Park Circus), giving him enough standing to pitch to Zanuck, who thought Wanger's ideas dated. Skouras recalled: 'This man kept coming... he

⁴¹ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 3; Bernstein, 1994, p. 237, 239, 240-244; Bret, 2011, p. 156; *Discovering Film: Ingrid Bergman*, 2018.

⁴² Bergman's previous 4 films had collectively earned \$21,700,000.

⁴³ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 273, 275-277; Bret, 2011, p. 156

was begging me to get him with Fox' (Bret, 2011, p. 156).⁴⁴ Then Wanger heard about the Barbara Graham⁴⁵ case, another strong female character, this was his film about the prison system: *I Want to Live!* (Wise, 1958, MGM), starring Susan Hayward.

Incidentally, Bergman's experience after *Joan of Arc* (1948) illustrated how audiences connected to stars. When Bergman filmed *Stromboli* (Rossellini, 1950, Berit Films) in Italy she had an affair with its director, Rossellini. Bergman divorced her husband and married Rossellini on 18 November 1950. Soon after, Senator Edwin C. Johnson declared 'we must protect ourselves against such scourges' (Karney, 2005). Public opinion turned against Bergman, and Hollywood ignored her for several years; her career barely survived.

MONROE

Monroe first signed a Columbia contract on 9 March 1948, which Columbia dropped on 31 December. By 27 May 1949, Monroe – needing money – agreed to pose nude for \$50. Then she met agent Johnny Hyde who – falling in love with Monroe – rescued her career with a role in *A Ticket to Tomahawk* (Sale, 1950, Fox). Hyde thought Monroe 'just right for the part of Angela' in Houston's *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950, MGM) who agreed to audition her. With Hyde shaping Monroe through cosmetic surgery, dying her hair platinum blonde, and renewing her wardrobe, MGM contracted her. Hyde also represented Mankiewicz and urged him to audition Monroe for a minor role in *All About Eve* (Mankiewicz, 1950, Fox). Now cast in a Fox film, Hyde convinced Zanuck to sign Monroe for a \$500-a-week 7-year contract. Zanuck told his team to cast Monroe in any pictures requiring a sexy blonde (Victor, 1999, p. 147-148).⁴⁶ Tied to this contract, the distance between Monroe's worth and the money Fox paid her steadily grew.

⁴⁴ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 322-323; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 192-193

⁴⁵ One of only three women in California to be sentenced to death in a gas chamber. Wanger's film optimistically suggested Graham was innocent and her death a miscarriage of justice.

⁴⁶ See also Kanin, 1977, p. 284-285; Huston, 1980, p. 286-28; McCann, 1988, p. 43, 93; Guiles, F. L., 1992, p. 158; Donnelley, 2000, p. 27; Staggs, 2001, p. 93; Morgan, 2012, p. 121. Hyde died of a heart problems soon after, meaning Monroe then lacked the caring father figure overlooking her career.

As a contract player, Fox protected Monroe. On 13 March 1952, news broke about her naked photoshoot. Monroe refused the publicity department's advice to deny it, increasing her popularity with her fans who now sent her 5,000 letters a week. Less than 5 years after rejecting Bergman, the public accepted Monroe's indiscretions. Recognising her following, Fox cast her in *Niagara* (Hathaway, 1953, Fox) and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953): by the end of the year, Monroe was Hollywood's biggest female star (Shulman, 1998, p. 15).⁴⁷

How to Marry a Millionaire (1953) increased Monroe's box-office power. In August 1955, Zanuck suspended her for refusing a casting in a Fox film, but the Board – seeing her success in *The Seven Year Itch* (Wilder, 1955, Fox) – pressured Zanuck to get Monroe back at any cost. This took the shape of a new contract with Monroe's new production company, MMP,⁴⁸ that Skouras – whom Miller (1987) noted, played to Monroe's need for an 'all powerful father figure' – pushed through. On 31 December, Fox offered Monroe a new contract: 4 movies over 7 years, director approval, and freedom to work outside her Fox contract. The contract even had a specific fever clause.⁴⁹ This was her contract until just before her death. MMP pressed ahead with *Bus Stop* (Logan, 1956, Fox) and Monroe – now with more power than many actresses – purchased Terence Rattigan's *The Sleeping Prince*, which became *The Prince and the Showgirl* (Olivier, 1958, Warner Bros.) (Victor, 1999, p. 182-184).⁵⁰ Monroe had freedom to work on her own projects but was still tied to Fox, who underpaid her as the leading female star of the 1950s.

TAYLOR

While Monroe blended sexuality and innocence, embodying what Dyer (1989, p. 36), called the 'tensions that ran through the ideological life of 50s America:' Taylor's more forthright, glamorous, and expensive charisma better suited the 1960s. Both actors shared an emotional affinity with their audiences, exemplifying Dyer's definition of a star as 'the most beautiful,

⁴⁷ See also Graham, 1984, p. 122; Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 210-211.

⁴⁸ Marilyn Monroe Productions.

⁴⁹ Whereby Monroe agreed to turn up to work with a fever up to 101°F.

⁵⁰ See also Guild, 1970, p. 173, 185; Miller, 1987, p. 400-403; Guiles, 1992, p. 174; Custen, 1996, p. 325; Donnelley, 2000, p. 78; Solomon, 2002, p. 89; Lev, 2003, p. 172-173; Reid, 2009, p. 5; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 149, 154-155, 157-158; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 153; Lev, 2013, p. 168-169; Rollyson, 2014, p. 159.

the most expensive, the most sexy.’ However, Taylor – not Monroe – exemplified Dyer's definition of a superstar, someone who becomes indistinguishable from the thing at which they are superlative. In Taylor's case, her love life and sheer expensiveness made her interesting. She fulfilled the public's expectation that she would display her wealth to demonstrate she was wealthy.

Dyer (1989, p. 57-58) listed Monroe in his typology of stars, not Taylor. Monroe exemplified the pin-up, a star who challenges the audience to consider whether to pause a film's narrative to admire her, or for the narrative to progress. Dyer described the female rebels of the 1930s and 1940s, such as Davis, Crawford, or Katharine Hepburn as exemplars of the independent woman, a type that gradually became the superfemale, 'a woman who, while exceedingly feminine and flirtatious, is too ambitious and intelligent for the docile role society has decreed she play' (Dyer 1989, p. 53-62). Dyer also defined the superwoman as one with a high degree of intelligence or imagination, but instead of exploiting her femininity, adopts male characteristics to survive or enjoy male prerogative. As a role, Cleopatra drew on elements of all three types: for Wanger, only Taylor could play them all.

At the outset of *Cleopatra's* production, Taylor was contractually bound to MGM, which cast her in various films, including playing opposite Montgomery Clift in George Stevens' *A Place in the Sun* (Stevens, 1951, Paramount).⁵¹ When Wanger saw this film he instantly thought of Taylor as Cleopatra. Obsessive press coverage of Taylor's relationships began at this time too. First, she married Nicky Hilton, heir to the hotel chain, but they divorced soon after their honeymoon because Hilton – angered by Taylor's fame – beat her. Next, Taylor married the older Michael Wilding, with whom she had sons Christopher and Michael. When Taylor tired of Wilding's lack of ambition, MGM carefully managed announcements about their divorce. At the time, Taylor was making *Raintree County* (Dmytryk, 1957, MGM) with Clift, whose near-fatal road accident suspended filming for several months, during which Mike Todd⁵² courted Taylor. They married, but Taylor nearly died while giving birth to their daughter, after which she was unable to conceive again.

⁵¹ See biography in Appendix 1.

⁵² See biography in Appendix 1.

By 1957, with Todd now controlling her career, Taylor replaced Grace Kelly as the lead actor in the independent woman category. Todd orchestrated her 1957 Oscar nomination and agreed to her accepting *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Brooks, 1958, MGM). Todd also chose his poker buddy Kurt Frings⁵³ as Taylor's new agent, whom she adored because he challenged MGM. They agreed to pay her \$4,850 a week prior to production and then a flat fee of \$125,000 (plus per diems and overages⁵⁴). She would receive the same deal if she made a second film, but was allowed to work for Todd, in whom Taylor found 'her escape from MGM' (Walker, 1990, p. 191).⁵⁵

Todd merits further consideration because his career was a blueprint for the package system. On joining the widescreen Vitarama company, Todd retitled the process Cinerama, which by November 1950 every major studio had declined. Thinking Hollywood archaic, Todd was vindicated when the first Cinerama film, *This Is Cinerama* (Cooper, 1952, Cinerama Productions Corp.), premiered on 30 September and grossed over \$20,000,000. Then, to find a single camera/projector process, Todd unexpectedly left Cinerama to work with Dr O'Brien of the American Optical Corporation. They created the Todd-American Optical (Todd-AO) process with its wider and larger screen and 6-track magnetic stereo soundtrack. When CinemaScope became the first single camera process, Todd determined that Todd-AO would overcome CinemaScope's depth of field issues. Needing a major property to launch his process, Todd convinced Rodgers and Hammerstein⁵⁶ to give him the *Oklahoma!* film rights. Screening on 22 June 1955, the trailer increased Todd-AO's share price and secured Fox's distribution deal with Rodgers and Hammerstein.⁵⁷

Oklahoma! (Zinnemann, 1955, Fox) was a critical and technical success for Todd-AO – it played in New York on roadshow release for nearly a year. By 1958, thinking Todd-AO offered the

⁵³ See biography in Appendix 1.

⁵⁴ Per diems are daily living expenses, often worked out as a weekly rate. Overages are the weekly pro rata fee actors receive if the shooting schedule runs over its guaranteed period.

⁵⁵ See also Mann, 2009, p. 177, 198-200

⁵⁶ Rodgers and Hammerstein had avoided Hollywood for 20 years because when Zanuck convinced them to write and compose a musical version of *State Fair* (Lang, 1945, Fox) they took their wives across country by train to Hollywood, spent a week in LA, met Zanuck for 20 minutes, then left (Silverman, 1988, p. 117-118).

⁵⁷ Subsequently, Fox had first refusal for any Rodgers and Hammerstein title.

best film presentation quality, Fox paid \$600,000 to produce 3 films using it. Yet after *Oklahoma!* (1955) premiered, Todd sold his Magna and Todd-AO stock to invest in a film adaptation of *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Anderson, 1956, Michael Todd Company)⁵⁸ (Todd and McCarthy Todd, 1983, p. 270-271).⁵⁹ Todd wanted to be an independent producer.

Todd began shooting *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956) – his only film – on 9 August 1955, wrapping production after 75 principal shooting days. He approached United Artists for the \$6,000,000 required to complete the film in exchange for world distribution rights and 10% of the profits. Todd carefully managed the release to maximise its box-office, delaying the premiere in some cities for nearly 2 years, although each was a spectacular event. The title song was a popular hit, and the soundtrack broke all records. The film's combination of action, and location shooting appealed to family audiences, with cameo roles⁶⁰ providing extra zest. *The New York World Telegram* concluded: 'Whoever thought we'd live to see the day when tickets to a movie would be as difficult to scrounge as those to *My Fair Lady*?' *Variety* (1956), noting a trend for longer film running times since the launch of CinemaScope, commented on its 183-minute length, saying that audiences got their money's worth with the Todd-AO system and Eastmancolor being used properly.⁶¹ *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956) was a significant example of an early big box-office package system film produced by an independent.

Press coverage relished Todd and Taylor's public bickering and lavish lifestyle. Her reputation for conspicuous consumption appealed to an increasingly affluent American society. Taylor was mid-way through shooting *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) when Todd died in an air accident. MGM forced her to complete filming. Before the film's premiere, Taylor began an affair with Fisher – Todd's best friend – who was married to Debbie Reynolds, Taylor's friend during their younger days at MGM. Hopper and Parsons' fiction that Fisher and Reynolds were

⁵⁸ There were only ever 16 Todd-AO feature films.

⁵⁹ See also Cohn, 1958, p. 10, 325, 332-333, 338-340, 345; Todd and McCarthy Todd, 1983, p. 303; Lev, 2003, p. 115, 125, 175-176; Sibley, 2004a; Chapin and Fordin, 2005; Cox, 2005; Mann, 2009, p. 190-191; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 140; Allan, 2011 [1961], p. 111; Eyman, 2021, p. 182-183.

⁶⁰ Todd started casting in June 1955, including 41 stars to appear in short scenes, calling them cameo roles: 'a gem carved in celluloid by a star' (Cohn, 1958, p. 376-379).

⁶¹ See also Todd and McCarthy Todd, 1983, p. 281, 323; Sibley, 2004a; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 151; Cashmore, 2016, p. 95.

America's sweethearts, fuelled a vitriolic public reaction to the Taylor-Fisher affair. As Wanger suggested casting Taylor, and as Skouras watched her in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), she was at her lowest point in terms of negative press, yet the top box-office female star (Taylor, 1988, p. 63-65),⁶² a juxtaposition that revealed the changing relationship between stars and their audiences.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, conspicuous consumption aligned with America's post-war economy. Bataille (1991) had argued that within any consumption-based economy, society spends part of it on luxury, be that on the arts, or non-procreative sexuality, spectacle, or grand monuments, knowing there will be no gain. Or spends it on catastrophic outpouring or destructive acts that threaten the prevailing system, such as war. Taylor's marriages to Todd and Burton consolidated her status as an idol of consumption: consuming luxury. Fashion, especially jewellery, was a key signifier of her superstar status, for which her fans admired her. Conversely, at the core of Monroe's star image was the juxtaposition of her desire to be a star and her unhappiness at the way Hollywood treated her (Dyer, 1989, p. 49). Monroe – representing post-war 1950s American culture – was not an idol of consumption. Monroe and Taylor mirrored the tastes of the decade in which they were most active, and along with Audrey Hepburn revealed the changing taste of America's cinema-going audience.

PUBLICITY

Publicity was the way studios exploited⁶³ a movie and a part of the star system. Studio publicists orchestrated press campaigns prior to a film's release, 'giving' stories to syndicated gossip columns, or national fan magazines, and later, television networks. A 'discovery narrative' would herald a new star's first screen appearance, or a 'romance rumour' boosted an existing star's profile. After a movie's premiere, publicity teams devised stunts and tie-ins to re-enforce the connection between the star's stereotype image and the film on release. Studios heavily controlled publicity, but not criticism, which could either be a film's critical

⁶² See also Wald and Todd, 1968, 0:01:26, 0:21:45; Sheppard, 1975, p. 201-202.

⁶³ The term Hollywood used to denote the way it sold a film.

CONTEXT

reception on release or a later retrospective, and it could either appreciate or interpret a star's work (Dyer, 1989, p. 68-71). Such exploitation made stars ever-more accessible.

As the paparazzi emerged in the early 1960s, studios lost their control of publicity. Previously, magazines like *Photoplay* had fuelled public demand for film gossip, soon newspapers hired columnists. By 1933, Parsons and Hopper led the field, controlling public perceptions of stars. Parsons' seemingly harmless 'give it to Louella first' request, helped her to tell 'the truth about Hollywood,' but masked her use of contractual morality clauses to pressure stars' behaviour. To undercut Parsons, Hopper published more aggressive stories. She also spied for Hoover, so in the 1952 HUAC hearings named anyone she 'suspected' of being a communist. With some 32,000,000 readers, Hopper was virtually unassailable, until *Confidential* magazine launched, undercutting Hopper with revelatory articles about celebrities' private lives. *Confidential's* circulation grew to 5,000,000, until a 1957 libel suit drove it out of business. Yet *Confidential* changed the relationship between Hollywood and the public, paving the way for the paparazzi, which gained notoriety with *La Dolce Vita* (Fellini, 1960, Nouveaux Pictures). Taylor experienced an early version of this at Todd's funeral, with false reports about her throwing herself over the coffin, and genuine attempts by the crowd to tear off pieces of her clothing as souvenirs (Hollywood Gossip, 2017).⁶⁴ As Hollywood's control decreased, Taylor felt the full impact of a newly emerging, aggressive press coverage.

CRITICISM

By the time *Cleopatra* premiered, criticism was changing too. On becoming Chair of the New York Film Critics Circle in 1951, Crowther confined membership to daily newspaper reviewers. This – and Crowther's domination of film criticism – angered emerging critics like Crist and Kael who sought to elevate discussion. Film magazines, which Crowther excluded from the Critics Circle, allowed Kael to argue that the growing youth and counterculture movements demanded change. Kael headed a 'new fascination for movies' and personally attacked older, establishment critics; accusing Crowther of catering for his 'stuffy, bourgeois, New York-

⁶⁴ See also Sennett, 1998, p. 53-54, 61; Mann, 2009, p. 179-180; Cashmore, 2016, p. 71-73, 74-76, 117-118

centric, eastern-elite.’ Working in the newspaper sector, by 1957 Crist was associate drama critic for *The Herald Tribune*. Like Kael, she disliked Crowther’s approach and reacted against the ‘Hollywood Schmaltz’ evident in many epics (Roberts, 2010, p. 157-158). The battle between differing approaches to criticism became very public with *Cleopatra*’s premiere.

CLEOPATRA

Victorian ideas about the Egyptian queen reflected Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, which shared an overarching theme of the danger inherent in passion. As a young queen Cleopatra needed Caesar’s guidance and as an older woman bent on power, she seduced Antony. The fundamental problems for filmmakers were which half of the story to tell or whether to span both, and to determine Cleopatra’s character. For the Victorians, plays or novels – like Haggard’s *Cleopatra* (1889) – defined her as a femme fatale. Even in Shaw’s *Caesar and Cleopatra* – which aimed to question British imperialism – Cleopatra looked to an older Caesar for guidance. Melies’ 1899 4-minute film sequence – the first Cleopatra film – observed the Shakespearean division and the femme fatale characterisation, which Vitagraph’s *Antony and Cleopatra* (Blackton and Kent, 1908); Charles Pathé’s *Cleopatra* (Andréani and Zecca, 1910, Pathé Frères); and the Helen Gardner Players Pictures’ first feature-length *Cleopatra* (Gaskill, 1912) all repeated. Pathé produced a non-Shakespearean version in 1913, while *Marc’Antonio e Cleopatra* (Guazzoni, 1913, Società Italiana Cines) only drew loosely on Shakespeare. Its success led to Cines’ semi-documentary *Giulio Cesare* (Guazzoni, 1914), the first film to feature a procession scene, a trope of subsequent epics (Cyrino, 2005, p. 137).⁶⁵ Each film portrayed Cleopatra as a femme fatal.

Fox’s 1917 film consolidated this approach. In September 1915, when Fox first engaged Theda Bara, press-agents fused her with her onscreen persona: a vamp – a women who uses men to achieve her own ends. One press conference revealed her father was Arabic and her name was an anagram of ‘Arab death;’ she was born in an Egyptian oasis in the shadow of the Sphinx where she suckled serpent venom. Wrapped in furs and jewels, Bara arrived to confirm

⁶⁵ See also Hughes-Hallett, 1990, p. 267; Wyke, 1997, p. 17, 76, 80-82, 94; Solomon, 2001, p. 6-8, 59-60, 63; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 22; Pina Polo in Knippschild and Morcillo ed., 2015, p. 190-191.

the story. Once the press departed, this all-American Jewish girl – Theodosia Goodman from Avondale, Cincinnati, Ohio – cast off her furs and gasped ‘Give me air!’

The next edition of *Photoplay* described her as a ‘daughter of the sphinx.’ When Fox cast her as Cleopatra, Bara’s box-office reputation was failing. Clara Bow,⁶⁶ the ‘It-girl,’ had overtaken Bara with audiences joking that Bara’s brooding stare was myopia and her reticence to talk at press conferences because she lacked brains. Fox persisted, and drawing on Haggard’s novel, and Bara’s vamp reputation, *Cleopatra* (Edwards, 1917, Fox) re-enforced the femme fatale vision of the character, shaping all subsequent cinematic representations⁶⁷ (Royster, 2003, p. 71-72).⁶⁸

Also, for the first time, *Cleopatra* (1917) connected the excesses of the actor to the character, and the expense of the production to historical excess. Fox publicised Bara as Cleopatra’s reincarnation, ‘the most famous vamp in history.’ Bara added: ‘I live Cleopatra, I breathe Cleopatra, I am Cleopatra.’ Thereafter Hollywood equated Cleopatra, and the actor playing her, with excessive appetites for power and love.⁶⁹ By citing the unprecedented \$500,000 spent recreating ancient Egypt, publicity equated the film with excessive production values too. As 1917’s biggest box-office success, Bara’s film easily recovered its costs, but after, Bara faded into obscurity⁷⁰ (Knippschild and Morcillo ed., Polo 2015, p. 190-191).⁷¹

DeMille continued to make films about ancient times after the silent epic lost its popularity, including *Cleopatra* (DeMille, 1934, Eureka Entertainment Ltd.). Seeing Cleopatra as a femme fatale, DeMille asked Claudette Colbert: ‘How would you like to be the wickedest woman in

⁶⁶ Clara Bow’s career began silent films, reaching a peak with the first film to win a best picture Oscar *Wings* (Wellman, 1927, Eureka Entertainment Ltd.). Bow successfully transitioned from silents to sound, but in 1931 retired. ‘IT,’ in her ‘IT girl’ soubriquet, referred to sex – an indication of why Bow had supplanted Bara at the box-office.

⁶⁷ Bara’s film captivated a young Hermes Pan, who was so mesmerized by her face and costumes that he requested her studio photograph. A signed picture arrived a few weeks later (Franceschina, 2012, p. 16).

⁶⁸ See also Hughes-Hallett, 1990 p. 267; Wyke, 1997, p. 89; Gomery, 2008, p. 39; Miles, 2011, p 177; Pina Polo, in Knippschild and Morcillo ed., 2015, p. 190-191.

⁶⁹ One reviewer asked: ‘Do the people flock to see “Cleopatra” because of “Cleopatra” or because of Theda Bara?’ He concluded that Bara won (Royster, 2003, p. 76).

⁷⁰ By 1920 Bara was unemployable. She died 7 April 1955 in Los Angeles (Hughes-Hallett, 1990, p. 267).

⁷¹ See also Hughes-Hallett, 1990, p. 267; Wyke, 1997, p. 89; Royster, 2003, p. 76; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 45, 42; Miles, 2011, p 177, 180.

history?’ Colbert had already played Poppea in DeMille’s Ancient Roman film, *Sign of the Cross* (1932, Paramount). That film had so angered America’s League of Decency, it precipitated the introduction of the Production Code in July 1934,⁷² so *Cleopatra* (1934) was one of the last films released before the Code’s introduction. DeMille fully exploited Colbert’s star image as a sexually liberated, witty, well-dressed, wicked woman, just like the character for which she had won 1934’s Best Actress Oscar⁷³ (Wyke, 1997, p. 92-94).⁷⁴ DeMille’s 102-minute film observed Shakespeare’s Caesar and Antony halves, while Colbert nuanced Bara’s vamp interpretation.

DeMille had closely studied Bara’s version⁷⁵ but writing to his niece Agnes DeMille – convincing her to choreograph the barge scene – he explained wanting to give ‘the characters their first really human chance, they’ve always been ponderous and pompous, villains and heroes.’ DeMille’s version established tropes for many subsequent films, such as the milk bath and Tarsus barge scenes. He described Cleopatra’s seduction of Antony as her ‘putting on a show deliberately with the intention of astonishing the tough, hard soldier... this entire barge sequence should be the most seductive, erotic, beautiful, rhythmic, sensuous series of scenes ever shown.’ This overtly sexual scene, with scantily clad rows of handmaidens wafting a mass of pulsating ostrich plumes against thrusting oars is unmistakably about seduction. Colbert’s knowing and smart wit worked across both halves of *Cleopatra* (1934), with the film’s short, episodic scenes playing like a sophisticated comedy. Only Cleopatra’s realisation that Caesar is dead, her discovery of the dying Antony, and her own death scene stand out for their emotional sincerity, striking an alien note within a script that is otherwise knowing. As a sexual comedy of manners, *Cleopatra* (1934) forsakes naturalism, mirroring the sensibilities of its art deco age (Solomon, 2001, p. 11).⁷⁶

⁷² The Production Code was a industry owned and monitored series of guidelines helping studios to self-censor the content of any film.

⁷³ *It Happened One Night* (Capra, 1934, Columbia).

⁷⁴ See also Hughes-Hallett, 1990, p. 267; Feeney, F. X., 2009.

⁷⁵ He was probably one of the last people to see the Bara film before it was lost. Fires at Fox and MoMA in New York destroyed the last 2 surviving copies (Solomon, 2001, p. 64).

⁷⁶ See also Hughes-Hallett, 1990, p. 269; Wyke, 1997, p. 96; Feeney, F. X., 2009.

Depression-hit audiences enjoyed *Cleopatra's* (1934) opulence and escapism. Its art deco design resonated with American department store aesthetics, making DeMille the first director to commodify the ancient world. Tapping into the Egyptomania of the age,⁷⁷ fashion houses adapted the costume designs – gowns cut on the bias and resembling any seen at a 1930s Hollywood party – into modern evening gowns and accessories. In a contemporary response to Bara's Kohl-laden eyes, Maybelline ran a campaign for 'alluring eye makeup,' featuring the faces of a historic Cleopatra alongside a modern woman, both resembling Colbert (Maeder, 1987, p. 48-49).⁷⁸ *Cleopatra* (1934) was not an epic, but it revealed the potential for an epic subject to tie into merchandise, a key benefit for the later horizontally integrated model.

Pascal's independent production of *Caesar and Cleopatra* (Pascal, 1945, Granada Ventures) exceeded its budget. Pascal convinced Rank to invest a staggering – for Britain – £550,000 on a Technicolor production of Shaw's play⁷⁹ starring – for their international appeal – Claude Rains and Vivien Leigh. Starting at Denham Studios on 12 June 1944, the shoot was long, partly because Pascal was an inexperienced director; partly because Leigh – who miscarried 6 weeks after filming started and returned after only a few days' convalescence – needed several weeks' break later in the shoot; and partly because of 1944's bad summer weather. Such delays and Pascal's expensive production choices⁸⁰ increased the negative cost to £1,278,000, making it Britain's most expensive film to date, leading to questions in parliament, again linking a Cleopatra film to excess. It premiered on 11 December 1945, but its extravagance damaged its – and the British film industry's – reputation. Reviews were

⁷⁷ In the 12 years following Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, the treasure trove inspired the art deco movement.

⁷⁸ See also Hughes-Hallett, 1990, p. 269; Miles, 2011, p 181-182, 185-186; The Directors: Cecil B. DeMille, 2018.

⁷⁹ Shaw gave Pascal the rights to his films in 1935. The first was *Pygmalion* (Asquith, 1938. Pascal Film Productions) starring and co-directed by Leslie Howard. Next Pascal produced and directed *Major Barbara* (Pascal, 1940, Gabriel Pascal Productions) starring Wendy Hiller and Rex Harrison (Bernstein and Studlar, 1997, p. 272).

⁸⁰ Pascal had a model of the Sphinx transported to Egypt, because he thought the real one looked too damaged. He had sand transported to the locations, because he did not like the colour of the Egyptian sand. Oliver Messel's costumes were so well-researched that Egypt's Chief of the General Staff asked to buy them for use in military pageants.

negative.⁸¹ *The News Chronicle* called it 'a dismal ordeal.' *Variety* thought the spectacle swamped the story (Bernstein and Studlar, 1997, p. 272).⁸²

As Hughes-Hallett (1990, p 294) observed, publicity for Cleopatra films appealed to audiences' love of the wicked woman. Wyke (1997, p. 95) noted that each version of Cleopatra informed the next: Taylor mirrored Leigh's blend of Shaw and Colbert, who echoed Bara. Shaw's Cleopatra seduces Caesar to gain political power, but Leigh's performance of Shaw's asexual character created the least-sexual portrayal of the role. Yet as the star of *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and known for her adulterous affair with Olivier, Leigh's Cleopatra still linked her sexual appetite to the character. Leigh and Taylor's medical circumstances mirrored each other too; poor British weather led to out-of-control budgets for both films, which were so infamous by the time they premiered, they could not support the expectation loaded upon them. Fox later failed to observe the warning of Pascal's out-of-control independent production.

Later legal suits contested *Cleopatra's* origins. Skouras thought Adler suggested the film and on 21 February 1958, Adler and Brown received a letter about Haggard's 1889 novel. Three days later, Wanger signed an agreement and paid £400 for the rights of Carl Maria Franzero's book *The Life and Times of Cleopatra* (1957),⁸³ giving him a 9-month option to purchase motion picture rights for an additional £9690, which Wanger requested within 4 days. Wanger overwhelmingly felt Taylor was 'the only woman I have ever known who has the necessary youth, power, and emotion' to play Cleopatra. With the rights to Franzero's book, Wanger immediately approached Todd⁸⁴ about Taylor playing the lead. Todd refused. That same month, Adler distributed copies of the Haggard novel and by May, Wanger was working on *I Want to Live!* (1958). By July, Adler still had to approve the Cleopatra idea, but on 1 August authorised Fox's London office to buy the Haggard novel for £1,000. That month, Wanger met

⁸¹ Lord Beaverbrook liked the film, so *The Daily Express* declared it 'a tremendous achievement' (Richards, 2008, p. 151).

⁸² See also Munn, 1982, p. 77; Hughes-Hallett, 1990, p. 276; Solomon, 2001, p. 67; Richards, 2008, p. 150-151.

⁸³ Carlo Maria Franzero (1962, p. 23) published his biography on 22 February 1957. It maintained the femme fatale approach, exemplified by its preface which asserted: 'women are the most interesting creatures on Earth: men can only be judged in the light of their attitudes to women: for love may prompt some men to accomplish great deeds, but in a woman, love is the only motive of life.'

⁸⁴ This was just weeks before Todd's death on 22 March 1958,

CONTEXT

Adler to discuss a contract with Fox, which Adler refused. Then, on 15 September, *The New York Times* announced Wanger's purchase of Franzero's book. Brown's recollection was that on 24 September Skouras ordered him to search the Fox library for an idea to remake quickly and cheaply. Brown said he unearthed the *Cleopatra* (1917) script, but that nobody at Fox wanted to produce it, until Brown met Wanger (Bernstein, 1994, p. 345).⁸⁵ However, the Haggard novel purchase indicated Fox was already pursuing a *Cleopatra* film, so once again Brown's anecdote proves untrue. Wanger most likely mentioned *Cleopatra* when he met Adler in August 1958, and prompted by *The New York Times* article, Wanger and the idea of a *Cleopatra* film converged.

When Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 8-9) met Skouras, a secretary entered with a copy of the silent *Cleopatra* (1917) script. Skouras, seeing *Cleopatra* as a low-budget film about a femme fatale, suggested it just needed 'a little rewriting.' For years, Wanger thought Taylor the only actress suitable for the lead role, so imagined a big-budget epic. This mismatch of ideas dogged the production.

SKOURAS

Skouras' life was a classic emigree success story. He had come to America from Greece with his brothers, who successfully managed Fox's cinema chain so that by 1938 Fox profits nearly equalled MGM and Paramount. Skouras and Zanuck always had an uneasy relationship, but while Fox was in part Zanuck's company, Skouras was another major stockholder. Zanuck's resignation removed Fox's quality control, and for the next 6 years Fox lacked oversight. With the CinemaScope bounce waning, and close once more to bankruptcy, Fox needed a success. Having lost \$70,000,000 on a succession of flops over 5 years, with only *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), *The King and I* (1956) and *Peyton Place* (Robson, 1957, Fox) making any significant income, Skouras instigated another 10% personnel cutback. However, he failed to rebuild

⁸⁵ See also Rudman, 1958; Wanger, 1958b; Wanger, 1958c; Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:05:12; Parish, 2006, p. 2; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 29-31, 192-193.

small-town audiences or reduce annual operating costs, which by January 1959 were \$100,000,000 (*Variety* 1957).⁸⁶

With Zanuck's departure, Skouras ran the studio as he wished, but he was a distributor, not a producer. Skouras focused on giving the public films they wanted to see, tying up cinemas, blocking their financial effectiveness. Adler initially seemed to boost Fox's fortunes, with *Bus Stop* (1956), *The King and I* (1956) and *Anastasia* (Litvak, 1956, Fox),⁸⁷ but these were films Zanuck – who had suggested Adler as his replacement – had greenlighted. With Adler in post, Skouras led on production in a way Zanuck never allowed. Adler's inability to fulfil his executive role, compounded by Skouras' micromanagement, saw Zanuck's efficiency and profits decline. Adler lacked Zanuck's judgement and oversight – approving projects Zanuck never would – and his creative insight or ability to develop talent (Lev, 2013, p. 180).⁸⁸ Instead of Adler, Eyman (2021, p. 202) argued Skouras should have appointed Wald, who produced Fox's biggest successes at this time. Under Skouras' leadership, Fox most needed to produce high-quality, popular films, but failed to do so.

Skouras did not see *Cleopatra* as an epic, his focus was on a film about Christ entitled *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. As Joshel (et al, 2001, p. 15) noted, *Cleopatra* sits apart from a male-dominated cannon. Santas (2008, p. 12-14) argued that the heroes (male or female) in epic films of the 1950s and 1960s often uplifted their race or tribe, but lead female characters were few. Skouras saw the subject in the same way and, along with Adler's reticence around employing Wanger, envisioned *Cleopatra* as a low-budget film. Soon after meeting Wanger, Skouras tried to convince Stevens to direct *The Greatest Story Ever Told* on a \$10,000,000 budget. Initially Stevens refused, but eventually began his lengthy pre-production process. *Cleopatra* was the kind of strong female protagonist on which Wanger's career had focused, such as his production of Garbo's *Queen Christina* (Mamoulian, 1933, MGM), or *Joan of Arc* (1948).

⁸⁶ See also Gussow, 1971, p. 180-182; Mosley, 1985, p. 394; Silverman, 1988, p. 80-81; Parker, 1989, p. 184; Harris, 1990, p. 80-81; Behlmer, 1993, p. 259-260; Custen, 1996, p. 357; Hofferan, 2000; Zacky, Burns and Bider 2001.

⁸⁷ With this film, Bergman returned to Hollywood and won her second Oscar.

⁸⁸ See also Solomon, 2002, p. 9-10, 62-63, 120-123, 135-138; Gomery, 2008, p. 120; Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 119-120.

ZANUCK

Realising Frank Ross – *The Robe's* (1953) independent producer – had received all the film's profit, making more money on one film than Zanuck had made in 10 years, Zanuck rethought his career. This professional doubt coincided with personal issues too. In June 1951, Zanuck and his wife Virginia had met Bella Wegier⁸⁹ in Paris. Hearing of her struggles during World War II they invited her to live with them in Beverly Hills. Zanuck tested her for CinemaScope in 1953, changed her name to Bella Darvi⁹⁰ and billed her as 'the Cinderella of CinemaScope.'

On 18 January 1954, the Zanucks held a party for their daughter Susan. The décor included a trapeze, on which the 51-year-old Zanuck attempted and failed a one-handed, shirtless chin-up, detailed by *Time* magazine, with photographs in *Life*. Darvi appeared in 3 poor films, concluding with *The Egyptian* (1954) around which time, Susan – suspecting Zanuck and Darvi's growing affair – told Virginia to throw Darvi out of the house.

Darvi returned to France and the Zanucks began a very public divorce. Zanuck's daughter Darrylin observed 'he made a mess of his personal life' (Hofferman, 2000, 04:43). In March 1956, Fox drew up an agreement for Zanuck to leave in June and release pictures through DFZ Productions as an independent. Fox paid Zanuck \$150,000 annually with an obligation to distribute his films, but his principal income remained his enormous block of Fox stock (*Variety* 1957).⁹¹ Zanuck was a background figure throughout much of *Cleopatra's* production that nobody could ignore.

On his return from the War, Zanuck – the producer to Skouras' distributor – had cut production budgets by reducing production times and long-term contracts; hiring less-expensive new talent; and promoting location shoots. Television's popularity meant that B movies no longer maintained studio turnover, so Fox stopped making them, yet the average

⁸⁹ Born in Sosnowir, Poland on 28 October 1928, as an infant Wegier went to Paris. At 12 she was interned in a concentration camp but released after the liberation of Paris. She married French industrialist Alban Cavalcade in 1950 (Silverman, 1988, p. 79-80).

⁹⁰ A portmanteau of Darryl and Virginia.

⁹¹ See also Gussow, 1971, p. 180-183; Mosley, 1985, p. 394; Silverman, 1988, p. 80-81; Parker, 1989, p. 184; Harris, 1990, p. 80-81; Behlmer, 1993, p. 259-260; Custen, 1996, p. 357; Hofferman, 2000; Zacky, Burns and Bider, 2001.

cost of Fox films still increased. When Zanuck produced *Captain from Castile* (King, 1947, Twilight Time), it took \$6,000,000 at the box-office, but its excessive \$4,500,000 promotion costs meant it lost money. Yet it built Fox's prestige, leading Zanuck to conclude that audiences wanted bigger movies (Schatz, 1998, p. 435).⁹² Like DeMille, Zanuck realised that high-cost films with mass-appeal yielded stronger box-office returns. For Zanuck, such a film was *The Longest Day* and his attempts to rescue Fox were primarily motivated by his determination to save what he regarded as his finest film.

SUMMARY

On 30 September 1958 Hollywood still had to develop a horizontally integrated system, meaning that Fox made *Cleopatra* with all Hollywood amid a significant change process. Fox's struggles with such change created a febrile environment within its management, with some of the executive objecting to Skouras' presidency; stockholders objecting to *Cleopatra's* expenditure and the executive's failure to manage its star talent; and nobody making effective decisions. This coincided with American cinema audiences beginning to tire of epics, which Mankiewicz sought to combat with his adaptation of the epic form.

Simultaneously, Wasserman's package system was changing the star system by making all film talent increasingly independent. As all Hollywood tried to work out how to engage effectively with independent talent, Fox particularly struggled, evident in how it worked with Taylor, Zanuck, Wald, and Wanger. Equally, Wanger's track record suggested he struggled to manage the complexity of larger productions. His career-long interest in stories with very realistic settings about strong female characters informed his vision for *Cleopatra* but did not match Skouras'.

Fox also struggled to support its contract stars, especially Monroe. Having employed her under the old star system, Fox refused to regard Monroe as an independent talent, as Universal had done with Stewart, or as Fox would do with Taylor. Monroe's experience

⁹² See also Solomon, 2002, p. 66-67; Lev, 2013, p. 161; Eyman, 2021, p. 170.

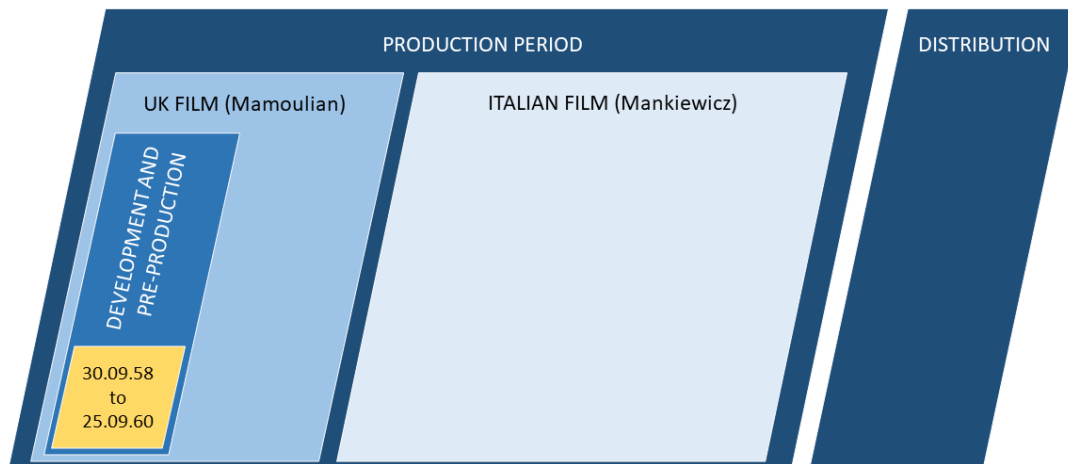
counterpointed Taylor's, and whenever Fox was under pressure, it forced Monroe to make another film. Both Taylor and Monroe were contract stars who longed for independence: Taylor achieved it and was better suited to the taste of America's new cinema audience. However, an increasingly voracious press placed Taylor and *Cleopatra* under unparalleled scrutiny. *Cleopatra's* release also coincided with the first time the American public recognised a shift in film criticism. Aware of all this change, Mankiewicz aimed to challenge previous stage and screen depictions of Cleopatra as a femme fatale, but Taylor's casting and events during filming only compounded the idea.

Throughout all this, Skouras – the distributor – could not provide the kind of product the public wanted to see when Fox most needed it. Nor did he appoint heads of production who could. Zanuck – who was working independently on *The Longest Day* – monitored Fox's health – in which he held the most shares – before deciding to stage his return. This was the background to one of the most infamous films in Hollywood's history.

A LASS UNPARALLELED

(*Antony and Cleopatra* – Act 5, Scene 2)

Figure 4.1



Parker (1989, p. 181) described 1960 as ‘the year in which old Hollywood died, but nobody noticed.’ Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson (2004, p. 10) – commenting on the gradual change to Hollywood’s system of production – argued it is ‘somewhat arbitrary to see 1960 as closing the classical period.’ Yet as the 1960s began, young single men, increasingly focused on civil rights, Vietnam, and sexual liberation (Monaco, 2003, p. 44) became cinema’s new audience. They questioned the ‘falsehood of popular films’ projecting American society as a wholly positive experience. Soon, movies began exploring ‘racism, torture, assassination, war, drugs, and unimaginable atrocities’ (Wood, 1989, p. 194-195). A disgusted Parsons concluded Hollywood was attracted to ‘cannibalism, homosexuality, incest, infidelity, shocking juvenile delinquency, racial intolerance, and contempt for law and lawmakers’ (Sennett, 1998, p. 57).

Young men did not read Parsons: they wanted to see films that dissected American society. *Psycho*¹ (Hitchcock, 1960, Universal) symbolised the kind of films to which Hollywood was transitioning, DeMille-style epics were the films from which Hollywood was transitioning,

¹ *Psycho* (1960) was not critically acclaimed, but it returned 20 times its cost. Crowther thought it awful, but at the year’s end picked it as one the best 10 pictures of the year (Bouzereau, 1997; Cousins, 2004, p. 279-280).

which that new audience rejected. *Variety* (1959c) first speculated about the epic's decline in late 1959,² meanwhile several films adapted DeMille's template: *Ben-Hur's* (1959) intelligent narrative and complex characterisations moved Hollywood towards 'greater authenticity and naturalism' (Thomson, 2006, p. 335). Copying DeMille's *Cleopatra* (1934), it also commodified the ancient world by selling toys, reflecting Hollywood's shift to horizontal integration. *Ben-Hur* (1959) topped the box-office as 1960 began. Against this background, Wanger saw *Cleopatra* as an epic: Skouras disagreed. This divergence affected the film, but when they met, neither Skouras nor Wanger foresaw any of this.

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1958

Premiering on 11 November, *I Want to Live!* (1958)³ had a strong female protagonist and a miscarriage of justice theme. Its final act, detailing the process of execution and a traumatic wait for pardon, remain harrowing. Many biographers attributed Taylor losing the Best Actress Oscar for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) to revelations about her personal life, yet Hayward's unflinching performance won fairly.

Wanger thought *Cleopatra* was also a strong female character who deserved a deeper psychological interpretation. Marginalia in Wanger's (1958a, p. 11, 60, 78, 200) copy of Volkmann's *Cleopatra*⁴ revealed his determination to give the Egyptian queen the same depth. Red and blue notes, highlighting the scale, grandeur, and political machinations of Ptolemaic Egypt, indicate Wanger read the book at least twice. At one point he noted: 'no dramatist has yet sought to draw material from the inner tensions of this period' and he underscored heavily: 'a politician of considerable stature, who employed every possible means to attain her ambition.... That led to her downfall.' As Wanger settled into his role at

² It read 'insiders are betting that "within another 6 months the public won't go to see any picture that even smells of antiquity,"' and questioned if this would affect the releases of *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Solomon and Sheba* (Vidor, 1959, Edward Small Productions) and *Spartacus* (1960).

³ An independent production released by Mankiewicz' Figaro productions, to which Wanger was signed as a producer.

⁴ In January 1961, Wanger gave this copy to Mankiewicz, hence its place in Mankiewicz' files.

Fox,⁵ Adler should have anticipated that Cleopatra would follow Queen Christina, Joan of Arc, and Barbara Graham.

Confining Wanger's independent producer role, Adler set out the rules on Wanger's first day. Wanger must: talk only to Lew Schreiber⁶ or Adler who would seek approval from New York; talk to Brown, as Fox's story editor, not to the writer; talk to the casting department, not the actors. Wanger was on loan from his own company, so not a Fox employee, yet Fox incorporated Wanger's Franzero rights into its version of the film⁷ (Johnson and Tannenbaum, 1958).⁸ Lunching with Adler a few days later, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p 10) outlined his desire to tell the whole Cleopatra story, shot in Italy, and starring Taylor. Adler assured Wanger that Fox would not control or limit his production responsibility yet outlined *Cleopatra* as a \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000 film starring Joan Collins, with a 64-day shoot on the backlot (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001).⁹

Unphased, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 10-11), at the Beverly Hills Hotel, gave Taylor a copy of Franzero's book,¹⁰ then called Frings and Martin Gang – Taylor's lawyer – requesting her for the picture. Perhaps buoyed by *I Want to Live's!* (1958) successful premiere 4 days earlier, on 15 November Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 11-12) told Schreiber about giving Taylor the book. Schreiber said Wanger had no right to approach a star directly and that 'Fox would not cast Taylor in a picture.'¹¹ Fox resisted Wanger's vision, even as Skouras saw *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) as it topped the box-office (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 31).¹²

Offended that Taylor had not personally told her about her affair with Fisher, Hopper launched her negative press campaign.¹³ Frings urged Taylor to speak to Hopper. When

⁵ Adler agreed to pay Wanger \$2,000 a week with 15% of the profits.

⁶ A Fox executive who assisted Adler.

⁷ The legal process spanned 6-13 November (Bryslawski, 1958; Fox Legal Department, 1958; Wanger, 1958b).

⁸ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 9-10; Bernstein, 1994, p. 345-346; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 29-31.

⁹ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 346; Parish, 2006, p. 21; Lev, 2013, p. 242.

¹⁰ Wanger previously sent Todd a copy for Taylor that she never read (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 10-11).

¹¹ Echoing a comment by Moskowitz – then Fox Vice-President – 'who needs a Liz Taylor? Any hundred-dollar-a-week girl can play Cleopatra.'

¹² See also *Variety* 1958b.

¹³ Taylor's mother had done much to court Hopper's support, who believed that Taylor in part owed her career to Hopper. Taylor trusted Hopper but misjudged her moral outrage at the Fisher affair.

Hopper suggested Taylor had ‘lost all control over reason,’ Taylor retorted: ‘what do you expect me to do—sleep alone?’ Hopper thought this ‘unprintable,’ so reported it as ‘Well, Mike is dead and I’m alive.’ Believing that Hopper understood she had told her off the record, Taylor cut all communication. Hopper felt justified by the thousands of letters of support she received, and the 5,000 letters of reprimand Taylor and Fisher began to receive weekly. MGM did not carefully manage the Taylor-Fisher affair publicity as it had the Taylor-Wilding divorce. Yet Taylor’s private life drew audiences to her films, indicating that as a major star she did not require studio protection. The public had rejected Bergman; forgiven Monroe; now it flocked to Taylor’s films (Hopper and Brough, 1963, p. 19-21).¹⁴ Parsons and Hopper’s power waned as Taylor’s fame grew, and her casting from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) to *The Sandpiper* (Minnelli, 1965, Warners), reflected her media portrayal as a woman who challenged social norms, just as Wanger saw *Cleopatra*.

Fox and Wanger’s ideas continued to diverge. Having not worked on a large-scale film since *Joan of Arc* (1948), Wanger relished the scale highlighted in his Volkmann copy. In December, at his own expense, he engaged John DeCuir to produce preliminary production sketches. Both men met Irene Sharaff (1976, p. 105) to discuss her designing costumes. Wanger called *Cleopatra* a ‘small, intimate picture to be made on the studio lot, with a small budget.’ Recognising that DeCuir’s designs – which Sharaff thought looked ‘like a production of Aida’ – revealed Wanger’s true vision for the film, she declined.

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Wanger thought Schreiber saw his independence as a threat to Fox, but he was not the only independent producer Fox treated this way. Wald selected, developed, and produced 15 features independently for Fox, which supplied finances and facilities. Wald argued Fox spent too little on his films, but shared the profits with Fox, who – resenting his success – withheld payment until a court found in Wald’s favour. In January, listing the biggest grossing pictures of all time – all epic in scale and mostly produced by independents – *Variety* (1959b) captured

¹⁴ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 223; Morley, 1989, p. 103-104; Spoto, 1995, p. 152-153; Mann, 2009, p. 223, 224, 235, 241-242, 244-245; Bret, 2011, p. 149; Cashmore, 2016, p. 33.

the growing status of independent producers.¹⁵ Furthermore, *Some Like it Hot* (Wilder, 1959, MGM), *Suddenly Last Summer* (Mankiewicz, 1959, Powerhouse Films), and *Anatomy of a Murder* (Preminger, 1959, Carlyle Productions), with their daring content, were independent productions with huge public appeal (Hitchcock's Shower Scene: 78/52, 2018).¹⁶ With Hollywood increasingly reliant on independent producers Fox's failure to work effectively with independents impacted its desire to release a big-budget epic.

With *Ben-Hur* (1959) in production,¹⁷ Universal agreed to a \$12,000,000 independently produced European co-production of *Spartacus* (1960)¹⁸ (Bouzereau, 2011, 0:53:57),¹⁹ while Skouras pitched *The Greatest Story Ever Told* as an epic subject. He wanted Stevens – who was completing *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959, Fox) – to direct: Stevens refused.²⁰ As Fox registered its *Cleopatra* copyright on 20 January (McIntyre, 1959), Skouras did not see it as an epic.²¹ Meanwhile, following the rules, Wanger requested Brown's approval to engage Ludi Claire to develop a scenario. On 14 February, Wanger showed Fox executives sketches and a plaster model of the Forum set,²² gambling that DeCuir's work would reveal the possibilities of a movie of size and scope: 'the last word in opulence, beauty, and art – a picture women will love for its beauty and story.' With financial pressures forcing Skouras to announce a 50% salary cut for Fox executives earning \$1,000 a week and making 1,000 workers redundant, the Fox board liked Wanger's vision but urged the release of *Cleopatra* to generate much-needed income. Unlike MGM and Universal and their independent producers, Fox's hierarchy constrained Wanger (Solomon, 2002, p. 138).²³

¹⁵ The films included: *Gone with the Wind* (1939) \$33,500,000; *The Ten Commandments* (1956) \$32,000,000; *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1958) \$18,000,000; *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956) \$17,600,00; *The Robe* (1953) \$17,500,000 (Variety, 1959b).

¹⁶ See also Solomon, 2002, p. 128-129; Lev, 2003, p. 4, 166-167, 217.

¹⁷ Following Zimbalist's fatal coronary on 4 November 1958, Wyler completed filming *Ben-Hur* (1959) as director and producer (Richards, 2008 p. 80).

¹⁸ Universal's output reduced from 35 features in 1958 to 18 in 1959, but its budget increased (Schatz, 1998, p. 479-480).

¹⁹ See also Schatz, 1998, p. 479-480; Richards, 2008 p. 80.

²⁰ Along with *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (Levin, 1959, Fox), Steven's film was the only 1959 Fox film to make a significant profit.

²¹ Receiving confirmation on 20 February (Copyright Office, 1959).

²² The model filled an entire table.

²³ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 12; Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:09:07

Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 12-13) began casting, a process where he had to prove ‘why some individuals don’t fit the picture and why certain combinations aren’t good.’ Mankiewicz (1962b) kept the only casting list in existence.²⁴ On Fox-headed paper, dated to May 1960, it notes Cleopatra as cast, then provides several names for each of the other main roles. Prior to that date, casting for the title role was deeply divided. Skouras preferred Joanne Woodward, Taylor, Brigitte Bardot, Gina Lollobrigida, and Monroe, later stating that Wanger suggested Hayward. Given her Oscar and that she was under personal contract to Wanger, he might have hoped for Taylor, but planned for other possibilities. Yet Hayward’s age restricted the film to the Antony half of the story, which was not Wanger’s aim. Skouras stated he could not remember whose idea it was to cast Taylor, but it was not his.²⁵ Wanger argued that Taylor in a major production would make huge box-office returns (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 193).²⁶ Casting Taylor along with actors of similar standing meant greater expense, nor could Fox put her in cheap costumes or on poor sets. Wanger’s epic vision for *Cleopatra* centred on Taylor’s casting.

Adler’s ‘rules’ repeatedly ostracized Wanger from his own production. In February, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 13) lunched with Carlo Ponti in Rome²⁷ to discuss Loren, Ponti’s wife, playing Cleopatra. Hearing the shoot would start in July on the Fox lot, Ponti declared: ‘You’ll never make it this summer and you’ll never make it in America. Italy is the only place to make it.’ In March, Wanger signed Nigel Balchin to develop a script from Claire’s outline. Collins (1985, p. 142-143) – having dieted, exercised, and sat in makeup for hours – tested several times, for which Wanger asked Hermes Pan²⁸ to coach her (Franceschina, 2012, p. 234). Fox rejected Collins,²⁹ leaving Taylor and Loren leading the field, later joined by Audrey Hepburn.

²⁴ Wanger gave the list to Mankiewicz in January 1961 – See appendix 2.

²⁵ He stated: ‘the first man who talked to me about Elizabeth Taylor was ... Adler. How it came about because of her great [performance] in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), ... Wanger or ... Schreiber, or ... Frings — I don’t know how.’

²⁶ See also Parish, 2006, p. 21; Carter, 2008, p. 133

²⁷ Wanger travelled with Rosemary Mathews who interpreted; she had assisted Johnny Johnston on *I Want to Live!* (1958).

²⁸ Pan was working on *Can-Can* (Lang, 1960, Fox) at the time.

²⁹ Collins (1985, p. 143) maintained she rejected Skouras’ forced attentions whenever they discussed her playing Cleopatra. The test footage, in which Collins plays opposite Leslie Nielsen, reveals a haughty characterisation like Darvi’s role in *The Egyptian* (1954).

By May, with filming now planned for October, Adler told Skouras neither Hepburn nor Taylor had signed (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 33-34). As Hollywood's biggest female stars, casting either meant increasing *Cleopatra's* budget, although Hepburn's character type would have changed the film's direction. Then in New York, Ponti met Skouras without Wanger, because the New York office thought signing Loren was too important (Parish, 2006, p. 24). Loren declined. Mid-June, Skouras dined with Mamoulian and Lollobrigida, as – respectively – a potential director and alternative to Loren (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 33). Again, Wanger was not invited.³⁰ Representing both Taylor and Hepburn, Frings received Balchin's lacklustre script for their perusal.³¹ Now listed as Production J-01, *Cleopatra* retained its 64-day shooting schedule but had a \$2,955,700 budget. Then, in passing, Wanger discovered that Fox was constructing DeCuir's sets on the backlot (Pickard, 1978, p. 474).³² Repeatedly ignored, Wanger still pushed for his vision, which by embracing DeCuir's designs, Fox partially accepted.

JULY-DECEMBER 1959

Adler resisted that vision. Lollobrigida refused \$250,000 plus 5% of the gross after breakeven.³³ Resisting the increasing demands of independent talent, Adler argued for freeing Fox 'from the bondage of the kind of deals the agents and actors are demanding.... The title is the star,' tellingly adding, 'unless I had the biggest star in the business.' Adler proposed Suzy Parker or Hayward, suggesting the script should start when Cleopatra was 35, adding Wanger 'could withdraw from the picture' if he wished. Skouras thought Hayward and Parker 'competent' performers who would 'pay off at the box-office.'

On 18 August, Schreiber told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 14-15) there was no casting news, then called an hour later saying Paramount would not release Hepburn. Wanger called Skouras, who said Taylor did not want the role, contradicting what Frings had told Wanger.

³⁰ Mamoulian told Dorothy Dandridge she would be an ideal Cleopatra. She replied Fox would talk him out of it (Luhrsen, 2013, p. 144-146) even though her casting would have been historically accurate (Rothman, 2011).

³¹ Balchin's script maintained the 1917 opening cross-dissolve from the sphinx to Cleopatra's eyes. Fisher recalled 'when I read that, in my mind I visualized Elizabeth's extraordinary violet eyes covering the entire screen.'

³² See also Parish, 2006, p. 21; Carter, 2008, p. 133.

³³ Lollobrigida's representatives requested 5% after the picture grossed \$6,000,000.

Parker declined because she was pregnant. Echoing Selznick's search for Scarlett O'Hara,³⁴ on 28 August, Skouras instructed Adler to create a 'great celebrity' to cast in several films. Thinking such a new star would arrive with instant marketing, Skouras advised that any announcement should state: 'there is no one in Hollywood to qualify for the role of "Cleopatra," the most alluring, provocative, and desirable woman of history....' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 351).³⁵ Wanger focused on a deeply psychological epic, Adler on Fox's box-office.

Struggling financially, Fox now turned to Monroe. Following her marriage to Miller and a miscarriage while shooting *Some Like it Hot* (1959), underlying patterns in her behaviour began overtaking her.³⁶ During the shoot, Monroe's agent told her Fox was actively courting 'major stars' for *Cleopatra* (Victor, 1999, p. 55, 323-324).³⁷ In August, Monroe sent Skouras a colour picture of her dressed as Bara as Cleopatra, but Skouras' casting suggestion went no further (Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 88-89).³⁸ Monroe's star type might have worked in the Caesar half of the story, but not in the Antony half. Locked into a cycle of self-doubt as an actor, compounded by substance abuse, Monroe was increasingly exhausted at the end of each shoot.

Regardless, Fox turned to Wald, who offered Monroe a property called *The Billionaire*. Monroe's growing fear of performing and her acute sense of what was right for her made her wary. She approached Adler personally to ask him not to force her to make it. Adler stated it was Skouras' decision. By late August – after refusing another film Wald suggested – co-starring with Peck in *The Billionaire* was Monroe's best option (Victor, 1999, p. 312).³⁹ Fox did not cast Monroe as *Cleopatra* and by forcing her into a sub-standard property did not develop her box-office status.

³⁴ Selznick had famously initiated a 'worldwide' search for an actress to play the lead role in his adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's best-selling novel. It was a tremendous publicity stunt, much imitated later.

³⁵ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 34-36

³⁶ She famously needed 53 takes to say the line 'where is that bourbon?' Yet the line was done with Monroe's back to the camera, so could have been dubbed. Barbara Diamond – the script writer's wife – thought it was a contest of wills that Wilder wanted to win (Thomas, 2006a).

³⁷ See also Thomas, 2006b; Thomson, 2006, p. 329; Morgan, 2012, p. 283; Banner, 2013, p. 334-335.

³⁸ Accepting the criticisms of Brown and Barham (1992), Skouras definitely suggested Monroe for the role.

³⁹ See also Leaming, 1999, p. 330.

With her MGM contract expiring Taylor sought independence. She warmed to Wanger,⁴⁰ who broke Adler's rules once more on 1 September, telephoning Taylor in London, where she was filming *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959) with Mankiewicz. Fisher answered, Wanger asked if Taylor would change her mind. Taylor (1988, p. 83) later recalled 'the screenplay was pretty mediocre,' but she 'liked the idea of playing the Egyptian queen,' so half in jest said she 'would do it if they paid me \$1,000,000 plus 10% of the absolute gross.' To avoid Hollywood for tax and publicity, Taylor requested shooting the picture in England or Europe (Spoto, 1995, p. 166). Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 15) explained that \$1,000,000 was an unheard-of price for an actress, but Taylor argued the shoot would be long and hard and – planning to put the money in trust for her children – she would accept a spread payment. Skouras thought Taylor would be 'too much trouble.' Then, although Todd and Frings had agreed MGM would end her contract after *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), MGM declared Taylor owed them one last film, delaying *Cleopatra*.

Hostage to her studio contract, like Monroe, on 4 September MGM cast Taylor as call-girl, Gloria Wandrous in an adaptation of O'Hara's *Butterfield 8* (Mann, 1960, Warners). Thinking MGM aimed to capitalise on her reputation following her affair with Fisher, Taylor vehemently objected,⁴¹ but could only submit her list of demands: it would be shot in New York; Rose would design her wardrobe and Guilaroff her hair; the script had to be revised; and Fisher had to be in the film (Walker, 1990, p. 225).⁴²

Meanwhile, Fox forced Monroe to make *The Billionaire*, which Cukor agreed to direct on 16 September. The next day, Fox instructed Monroe to report for pre-production on 2 November, and the day after stated she must fulfil her obligations to them before they would release her to make *The Misfits* (Huston, 1961, Fox), written by Miller, and to be directed by Huston.⁴³ By 20 September, with *The Billionaire* now re-titled *Let's Make Love* (Cukor, 1960,

⁴⁰ Harrison (1975, p. 191) recalled she thought Wanger 'was honest.'

⁴¹ O'Hara argued Taylor's objection to playing Gloria for \$150,000, was her desire to play Cleopatra for \$1,000,000 (Sheppard, 1975, p. 242).

⁴² See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 242-243.

⁴³ On 19 September, Skouras and Fox welcomed soviet leader Khrushchev to a luncheon on the Fox lot. This is the only documented moment when Taylor, Fisher, Reynolds, Monroe and Burton attended the same event, (Richards. 2008, p. 181; Lev, 2013, p. 184-186).

Fox), Monroe won small victories when Fox appointed Cole as choreographer and Stradling as cameraman (Leaming, 1999, p. 329-330).⁴⁴ Forced to make properties they disliked: Taylor would benefit, Monroe would not.

By late September 1959, suggesting that Fox had begun to accept Wanger's (and Hyams, 1963, p.15-16) casting idea, Adler increased the budget to \$4,500,000-\$5,000,000 and transferred production to the UK. The \$1,000,000 Eady saving on negative costs covered Taylor's fee. Adler also made Robert Goldstein Head of European production, further-restricting Wanger's control. Although Wanger was producer, Goldstein was responsible for all decisions, with Adler arbitrating any dispute. Then Skouras proposed Mamouljian as director and opposed paying Taylor \$1,000,000, arguing the difference in domestic grosses between Hayward and Taylor was only \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000. The Fox Board favoured Hayward, so ironically it was Adler who argued Taylor – 'the biggest star in the business' – had greater box-office impact.

In early October, Skouras instructed Adler to offer Taylor a \$2,100,000 3-picture deal or a \$1,500,000 2-picture deal, but with *Cleopatra* her first post-MGM film. By 7 October, Adler thought Taylor would accept the 2-film offer, but if she refused, he would proceed with Hayward. Two days later, flying to a meeting in New York, Adler told Wanger he had spent \$500,000 of the budget buying Italian producer Lionello Santi's *Cleopatra* film, to keep it off the market. In New York, Skouras told Wanger he would announce Hayward for the role, because 'he had no faith in *Cleopatra*'s potential gross, unless it was "produced at a limited cost.'" Having convinced Alder of Taylor's casting, Wanger still had to convince Skouras.

Over the next week, Fox pushed the entire industry towards a key moment: the first female star to sign a \$1,000,000 contract. Wanger called Taylor, telling her she did not have the part. Crying, Taylor lowered her salary to \$750,000 but still 10% of the gross, so Wanger agreed to reduce his profit participation from 15% to 10%.⁴⁵ The next day, Frings added weekly living

⁴⁴ See also Rollyson, 2014, p. 218.

⁴⁵ Brower (2022, p. 168) suggest that Taylor was bathing when Fisher knocked at the bathroom door to tell her Fox had accepted. However, the answer was not given so speedily, evidenced by the discussion over living expenses demonstrates.²¹¹

expenses of \$4,500 and a \$150,000 salary for Fisher to assist her. Taylor's 12 October requests included both penthouses at the Dorchester, and Guilaroff for hair. She wanted to play Cleopatra from cradle to grave, thought the opening scenes inept, but agreed to start filming the first week of January 1960.

In a volte face, Skouras expressed the executive committee's appreciation of Adler's handling of the negotiations. Movietone filmed a contract-signing in Adler's office⁴⁶ (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 18) on 15 October.⁴⁷ Taylor's deal changed Hollywood. As Leslie Caron later commented: 'the moment Elizabeth Taylor said, "I want a million dollars," was the end of studio contracts. Everybody who was under contract said, "hey I want a million dollars too"' (Hollywood Singing and Dancing Episode 9, 2008). Monroe complained: 'They're paying me a lousy \$100,000!' (Wayne, 1992, p. 133). The signing changed the relationship between studios and stars forever.

The signing was a sham – Taylor's real contract took another 9 months to agree – but it galvanised *Cleopatra's* production. Days after, Hitchcock declined to direct. Again, ignoring Wanger, Skouras signed Mamoulian, with Taylor's approval. Having worked together on *Queen Christina* (1933), Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 18)⁴⁸ feared that in a dispute, Mamoulian would go directly to Skouras, Adler, or Schreiber. Proving the point, soon after Mamoulian and Taylor stated their dislike for Balchin's script.⁴⁹ Following *Ben-Hur's* (1959) 18 November premiere, Fox began searching for new writers. Crowther, using the tone to which Kael objected, praised *Ben-Hur* (1959) for being 'more concrete to present generations, which have seen tyrants and persecutors at work, than it could have been to most of the people who read [the novel] in the nineteenth century.'

⁴⁶ The Movietone narration announced: 'The motion-picture casting achievement of the year is about to become a recorded fact as producer Walter Wanger introduces Elizabeth Taylor to 20th Century-Fox executive producer Buddy Adler. The Occasion? The Hollywood singing of the exotic Elizabeth for the most exotic role in her career and the role? Cleopatra.... What a role! And Liz is the gal to do it justice' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:12:51).

⁴⁷ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 243; Bernstein, 1994, p. 352-353; Fisher 1999, p. 179; Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:48:11; Parish, 2006, p. 24; Mann, 2009, p. 271; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 37-41, 194-195, 202-203; Cashmore, 2016, p. 57.

⁴⁸ See also Heymann, 1995, p. 216-217; Wyke, 1997, p. 22-23; Carter, 2008, p. 135; Bouzereau, 2011; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 195.

⁴⁹ Skouras later stated Adler was the first to complain, then Goldstein.

This relevance, as Fraser Heston observed, was a ‘totally different style of film’ to *The Ten Commandments* (1956). It was ‘the first modern epic. It was realistic, it was, at times, gruesome. It was not sugar-coated. It had characters with flaws in them. It was complex. It was character-driven, not event-driven.’ Seeking writers to do the same, Fox approached James Costigan and Christopher Fry, who both declined. Mamouliau agreed to Dale Wasserman, whom Wanger told to write only for Taylor, whom Wasserman never met. Rothman (2011) inaccurately argued that at this point ‘Skouras saw that large-scale period epics ... were suddenly big box-office,’ Skouras had recognised this much earlier, he just did not see *Cleopatra* as one. *Ben-Hur* (1959) changed the way studios envisioned epic films.

Wanger (and Hyams, p. 19-20, 1963)⁵⁰ continued casting and addressed the problems presented by Adler’s decision to shoot in the UK. Olivier declined Caesar; Fredric March was suggested; Coward’s agent thought the British weather would cause problems as it had for Pascal. Early December, *Variety* (1959a) announced ‘Miss Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra’ for ‘Christmas 1960.’ In London, Wanger realised Goldstein had exaggerated Pinewood’s scale and technical ability. DeCuir’s palace set was too large for any soundstage and there were insufficient soundstages for the required standing sets, and Denham was unavailable. Adler and Skouras arrived at Pinewood. Mamouliau said it was a mistake, Skouras replied: ‘Don’t you think the president of the company should make that sort of decision?’ Once back in New York, Wanger visited Taylor who was in hospital with pneumonia, which she blamed on the New York weather. Wanger wondered how she might manage the British climate. Fox’s failure to provide adequate studio facilities for DeCuir’s designs, further divided studio and producer.

Taylor and Monroe both presented production problems. *Suddenly Last Summer’s* (1959) 22 December premiere returned Taylor to the top 10 box-office stars. Reflecting the changing sensibilities of cinema audiences, despite its sexual content *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959) was 1960’s fourth highest grossing movie. The next day, MGM informed Fox Taylor’s illness had delayed *Butterfield 8* (1960) filming until 15 February, delaying Taylor’s start with Fox until 23 May. At this time, Fox paid Miller \$15,000 to rework the Monroe script: disliking the changes, Peck declined. Miller suggested casting Yves Montand, so Fox paid Miller another \$5,000 to

⁵⁰ See also Cashmore, 2016, p. 59.

re-revise the script. Adler was shocked at Monroe's appearance in her 17 December screen tests (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 42-43).⁵¹ Taylor and Monroe both frustrated Fox's income generation plans.

JANUARY-MARCH 1960

The frustration continued. Monroe first met Dr Ralph Greenson on 22 January, who aimed to reduce her reliance on drugs.⁵² By 25 February, *Let's Make Love* (1960) was already 10 days behind schedule, so Fox urged Cukor to apply pressure, but he feared pushing Monroe (Rollyson, 2014, p. 221, 222-223, 225).⁵³ The next day, Adler complained about Taylor's demands,⁵⁴ which Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 20) read as Adler's attempt to renege on her contract, but shifting public opinion made her an ever-stronger casting option.⁵⁵

Earl Wilson, observing that fan magazines once more accepted Taylor, suggested that it was now acceptable 'to create such an outlandish personality for yourself that the public had to grant your every exigency. Eventually you would get away with holy hell.' Taylor reversed the paradigm, 'her bad girl was the new ideal.' Her 'free-living/loving playgirl... notorious for her extramarital affairs' reflected an emerging sense of sexual and female liberation. Taylor later argued, it is not possible to 'tell someone what to paint; tell someone how to sing; you can't tell someone what play to act and say, "act well or else you're on suspension." You had no choice, no right to choose your subject matter and I found that very inhibiting' (Carter, 2008, p. 134).⁵⁶ Like de Havilland, Taylor fought for her rights, for which Fox, especially Adler, was unprepared.

⁵¹ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 238; Parker, 1989, p. 175; McGilligan, 1991, p. 258-259; Montand with Hamon and Rotman, 1992, p. 305-306, 312-313; Bernstein, 1994, p. 353-354; Heymann, 1995, p. 200-201; Leaming, 1999, p. 335-340, 347; Wolfe, 2006, p. 336; Mann, 2009, p. 273; Rollyson, 2014, p. 221, 222-223, 225.

⁵² Greenson began a process of 'supportive therapy' rather than deep psychoanalysis: an approach condemned by many Monroe biographers.

⁵³ See also Summers, 1985, p. 188; McGilligan, 1991, p. 258-259; Montand with Hamon and Rotman, 1992, p. 305-306, 312-313; Leaming, 1999, p. 335-340, 347; Wolfe, 2006, p. 336.

⁵⁴ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 20) thought Adler looked ill. Unaware Adler had cancer.

⁵⁵ Both men had seen a letter from a woman from Beaumont, California telling them not to cast Taylor: 'Gentlemen, you are wasting money on Liz Taylor. Nobody wants to see her after the way she treated that sweet little Debbie Reynolds. Everyone loves Debbie. She is what the teenagers call a doll' (Carter, 2008, p. 134).

⁵⁶ See also Mann, 2009, p. 286-288; Miles, 2011, p. 187-188; South bank Show Originals: Elizabeth Taylor, 2019.

Mamoulia's objections to Pinewood's lack of facilities forced Adler to rethink his decision to shoot in Britain. On 7 March, returning from Turkey location scouting, DeCuir and Johnny Johnston⁵⁷ announced it was not suitable. Two days later, Mamoulia flew to Italy for another week's scouting, but with Santi, whom Adler suggested as a co-producer, re-opening the prospect of shooting in Italy. On 14 March, Schreiber told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 21-23) that Mamoulia, DeCuir, and Johnston were to meet Skouras and Sid Rogell⁵⁸ in New York the next day to discuss location shooting. Schreiber offended Wanger saying, 'they don't want you' at the meeting. On 19 April, Mamoulia wrote to Wanger about filming in Italian studios. He found the Italian approach to filming too relaxed but thought it possible to 'correct these unfavourable circumstances.' Then on 20 April, in a full-page *Variety* ad, Santi listed *Cleopatra* directed by Mamoulia and starring Taylor, but without mentioning Fox. In fury, Adler ceased communication with Santi. On 11 April, Fox hired Lawrence Durrell to revise the *Cleopatra* script, paying him \$7,000 in Italian lire for a month's work (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 22). *Cleopatra* would be shot in the UK.

As companies began acquiring film studios, Wall Street began accumulating Fox stock, increasing Fox shares to \$35.50 per share. On 30 March 1960, Carl M. Loeb and Rhoades and Treves and Co. paid \$10,000,000 for nearly 250,000 shares. The lure was the real estate, oil, and backlot, but also – with the rise of television – the Fox library (*Variety*, 1960b).⁵⁹ This initiated a 2-year power struggle concluding at the end of *Cleopatra's* principal photography.

APRIL-JUNE 1960

Taylor now insisted on \$50,000 a week pro rata after the 16th week: a fixed period made up of 10 weeks paid and 6 'free weeks.' Schreiber and Frank Ferguson, Head of Fox Legal, resisted,⁶⁰ but agreed to pay for Frings to make only one trip to meet his client with incidental expenses. All contracts had to reflect the Eady plan requirements, including any agreements

⁵⁷ See biography in Appendix 1.

⁵⁸ Skouras' assistant.

⁵⁹ See also *Variety* 1960c.

⁶⁰ Schreiber also realised the insurance policy meant they could not suspend Taylor because of the death, disability, or disfigurement of any principal cast member. However, Gang agreed that Fox could suspend Taylor for 4 weeks in the event of death or disability of the director.

with Taylor or Wanger's corporations. By 28 April, Mamouliau, having spent 6 weeks – not the intended 1 – in Rome, returned to London to shoot tests with Peter Finch for *Caesar* (Mosley, 1985, p. 442), with whom Taylor had worked on *Elephant Walk* (Dieterle, 1954, Paramount). Simone Signoret's performance in *Room at the Top* (Clayton, 1959, Romulus Films), beat Taylor's in *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959) for the Best Actress Oscar. Signoret then returned to Europe, leaving her husband, Montand, alone in Hollywood while he filmed *Let's Make Love* (1960) (Leaming, 1999, p. 352): his affair with Monroe further delayed the film's completion.

Fox now faced several problems. *Let's Make Love* (1960) was not working because of Montand's heavy accent and Monroe's lack of energy (Leaming, 1999, p. 357-359). Maybe fearing it would not make its expected return, on 6 May Adler told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 24) the 'absolute limit' on *Cleopatra's* budget was \$4,000,000; a reduction from the earlier upper \$5,000,000 limit. Meanwhile, the lack of construction materials and plasterers exacerbated Wanger, Johnston, and DeCuir's concerns about Pinewood. By 13 May, Wanger was hoping they could get 'Denham as Goldstein promised Adler.' Skouras' response was to tell Wanger not to cast Harrison or Burton. Harrison's previous Fox films, he argued, had not worked well at the box-office and while Burton had 'been in some great pictures,' Skouras doubted his box-office potential. Ignoring Skouras, the next day, when Mamouliau returned to London, Wanger suggested Harrison and wrote a 1300-word cable to Skouras, explaining how the proposed cuts would reduce the film's glamour and colour. Voicing concern about England's poor weather and lack of suitable landscapes, Wanger again requested filming in Italy. Mamouliau agreed. Skouras ignored them. Each financial or location change forced Wanger to re-work the budget, which as *Joan of Arc* (1948) revealed was not Wanger's strongest suit.

Announcing Fox's \$5,000,000 production loss at the 17 May stockholders' annual meeting,⁶¹ Skouras accepted responsibility but announced the \$43,000,000 land sale (Canby, 1960). Fox's directors approved a regular quarterly dividend of 40c a share (*Variety*, 1960j), virtually ignoring Fox's heavy production losses. Clearly unaware of Fox's financial situation, on 19 May

⁶¹ Fox's directors were: Colby M. Chester, Robert L. Clarkson, Daniel O. Hastings, Robert Lehman, Kevin C. McCann, William C. Michel, Thomas A. Pappas, B. Earl Puckett, Spyros P. Skouras and Gen. James A. Van Fleet (*Variety*, 1960hh).

– citing the lack of studio space, cast, and script – Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 26) argued that starting on 15 August was ‘an absolute disaster.’ He urged a more realistic November start and inched the budget up to \$4,119,978 (Parish, 2006, p. 26).

Casting was still unresolved by 27 May, when Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 26-27) told Schreiber that Taylor was not too disappointed about losing Olivier⁶² but was ‘very anxious and excited’ at having Harrison as Caesar. He also mentioned the ‘Guilaroff situation:’ British unions refused to let Guilaroff work in the studio, even though Taylor insisted. Guilaroff (and Griffin, 1996, p. 210-211) attributed the problems to an incident on set, but the unions’ objection predated his arrival in Britain.⁶³ On 31 May, Fox exercised its right of first refusal for a new Rodgers and Hammerstein show and bought the film rights for *The Sound of Music* (Matessino, 1994b, p. 2).⁶⁴ Despite its financial concerns, Fox paid the highest price to date for Broadway material and a 10% share of any motion picture gross over £4,500,000. Skouras’ gamble on a stage show with lukewarm reviews proved to be one of the best decisions he ever made.

Press reports revealed the Monroe-Montand (with Hamon and Rotman, 1992, p. 327) affair, while Wanger continued fighting Fox. In Paris, on 3 June, Mamouljian and Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 27-28) worked with Durrell on the script. Wanger also met Zanuck, who refused to help, because although Fox’s management concerned him, his own work was more important. The next day, Wanger reported the budget increase to \$6,000,000, two days later it dropped to \$5,000,000, but Fox agreed to shoot the film in Todd-AO, which Taylor in part owned, so would earn royalties. She was unhappy about losing Italian locations and shooting the desert scenes in England. Meanwhile, Ferguson’s legal team engaged solicitor Charles Lewis, to

⁶² Wanger attempted to convince Olivier, but David Merrick signed him to play Becket on Broadway.

⁶³ Guilaroff (and Griffin, 1996, p. 210-211) stated that after shooting a costume-and-hair test, Taylor asked him to come to her dressing room to make a quick hairdressing change. A female hairdresser followed as swiftly as she could, but ‘once I entered the dressing room, Elizabeth quickly closed the door behind me. The hairdresser chose to believe, or was instructed to think, that I had slammed the door in her face, dishonouring her, and she reported me to the union representative who promptly ordered the production shutdown.’

⁶⁴ The show premiered on 16 November 1959. Skouras attended and ‘Swiftly’ Lazar (the authors’ agent) saw him ‘crying like a baby’ and knew he ‘had a customer’. A week later, Ernest Lehman saw the show and during the intermission told his wife: ‘I don’t care what anyone says about this show, someday it’s going to make a very successful movie’. Despite mixed reviews the show won six Tony Awards (Silverman, 1988, p. 116-118; Matessino, 1994a; Matessino, 1994b, p. 1; Maslon, 2006, p. 86-87; Bronson, 2011, p. 7).

address any tax issues for Taylor, having done the same for her during *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959) (Tillinghast, 1961).

Mid-June, Taylor stated her dislike of Stephen Boyd's casting as Antony and insisted on Harrison for Caesar. Disliking Taylor's interference, Adler told Skouras there was 'no assurance that we can deliver this production at a cost that will make it marketable. You also advised me on the phone it is your opinion that if Miss Taylor wishes her release from this project, we should give it to her because with her attitude we would find ourselves in a very disastrous financial position because of her unrealistic demands. If this is your decision, I am in full accord with it.' Adler proposed finding another Cleopatra to protect Fox's investment (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 45). On 13 June, Goldstein warned Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 28) that Taylor planned to quit the picture, Skouras astounded Wanger by accusing him of being disloyal because he had told Taylor about the loss of the Italian locations. Adler recognised Taylor's power over the film but did not accept it.

Adler was gravely ill when *Psycho* (1960) premiered on 16 June. The next day, Saul Wurtzel,⁶⁵ reported to Rogell from England, asking 'why we are still arguing points that should have been settled months ago' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 356). *Let's Make Love* (1960) finished filming 28 days behind schedule on 20 June, and was poor, yet Fox refused to authorise retakes. Three days later, Taylor completed *Butterfield 8* (1960). Although Ferguson told her she could report to London on 21 July, she could not start a new employment period until 28 July (20th Century Fox, 1960c). Taylor and Fisher met Skouras, who explained Adler's request to use Todd-AO had increased the budget to \$4,800,000, so it could go no higher. Agitated, Taylor criticised Skouras, who asked her if she would like to be relieved from the picture, then calmed her by saying they might shoot in Egypt, Syria, or Arabia (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 46-48). On 25 June, in London, lunching at Claridge's, Mamoulian and Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 28-29) shared their dossier of evidence with Skouras arguing against shooting *Cleopatra* in the UK. Skouras refused to listen, although on 28 June – as Durrell finished the script – the budget returned to \$5,000,000. With Caesar still uncast, Mamoulian and Wanger planned to meet

⁶⁵ Sid Rogell's assistant.

Ralph Richardson (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 48-49). Fox supported Taylor more than it did Monroe.

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1960

Adler's death on 12 July exposed Fox's power vacuum (Carter, 2008, p. 135). Adler had failed to replace Zanuck, replacing Adler with Goldstein was even worse. On 15 July, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 29-34) wrote to his lawyer, Gregson Bautzer, about budget revisions, stating a reasonable budget would be \$6,000,000, but that Skouras refused to listen. The next day, Goldstein asked Wanger to replace him as Head of European production. Wanger agreed, Skouras told him this was 'the greatest thing you have ever done in your life. I'll never forget it.' Yet 3 days later, when Skouras refused to renew Wanger's contract, Wanger reasoned that Fox continued to treat him in an 'arbitrary fashion' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 50-51).⁶⁶ Again, Skouras failed to address Fox's production issues.

Let's Make Love's (1960) overrun, meant Monroe completed dubbing on 18 July, then flew immediately to Nevada to begin *The Misfits* (1961). With Montand refusing to return her calls (Wayne, 1992, p. 146) and Miller aware of her infidelity, Monroe began filming physically and mentally weakened. Miller's 'cruel piece of writing' (McCann, 1988, p. 158)⁶⁷ referenced aspects of their relationship, exposing Monroe's worst fears, but knowing she would earn a \$300,000 flat fee, plus 10% of the profits – her best deal ever – Monroe pushed ahead. Yet without Greenson's intervention Monroe turned once more to drugs and alcohol.⁶⁸

As Hollywood adjusted to the impact of the paparazzi, *The Misfits* (1961) marked the first time a photo agency had exclusive coverage of a movie: 9 Magnum photographers⁶⁹ variously recorded events, starting with Inge Morath and Henrie Cartier-Bresson. As his marriage to

⁶⁶ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 355.

⁶⁷ See also Summers, 1985, p. 192; Banner, 2013, p. 349-350; Rollyson, 2014, p. 22, 232; *Discovering Film: Marilyn Monroe*, 2018

⁶⁸ Although Huston (1980, p. 287-288) changed the daily call from 09:00 to 10:00, it did not help. Gable treated Monroe with great care during the shoot, but privately complained: 'What the hell is that girl's problem? I like her, but I damn near go nuts waiting for her to show' (Wolfe, 2006, p. 433-434).

⁶⁹ Including Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ernst Haas, Inge Morath, Bruce Davidson, Elliott Erwitt, Eve Arnold.

Monroe collapsed, Miller fell in love with, and eventually married, Morath, whose photographs captured Gable's age, and Monroe's depression and torment (Cinema Through the Eye of Magnum, 2019). *The Misfits* (1961) was not a Fox production, so Fox did not protect its leading star.

Skouras was more a salesperson than a studio president. On 19 July, he met Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 35) in Athens to travel to Egypt to scout locations. In Egypt, the Minister of Education and National Guidance ordered that 'all facilities and help be extended regarding shooting *Cleopatra* location sequences.' He arranged for soldiers and cavalry to be available for filming (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 52). Reporting on Goldstein's temporary appointment, *Variety* (1960i) quoted Skouras saying Goldstein would continue the growth overseen by Schenck, Zanuck and Adler. *Variety* (1960h) also reported that Wald would produce *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. On 27 July Wanger sent extensive criticism of Durrell's script to Mamoulis: 'a bucolic, domestic, provincial picture of the nature of Our Town' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 52). Skouras chose not to replace Adler with Wald.

Finally, on 28 July, in her Park Lane⁷⁰ hotel suite, Taylor signed her real *Cleopatra* contract (see Appendix 2) (Spoto, 1995, p. 171). It did not state \$1,000,000, rather Taylor would receive \$12,500 per week for the paid 10 weeks, nothing for the free 6 weeks, but after 16 weeks, \$50,000 per week. She would earn an estimated \$750,000 to \$1,000,000. Taylor's MCL company separately signed a contract for 10% of the box-office gross. Goldstein ordered Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 39-40) to 'get her' to sign, and Schreiber flew in from California to ensure it. Taylor told Wanger she would sign the contract later in the afternoon but told him to tell Skouras she was 'still looking it over.' Wanger received the signed contract later that night and called Skouras instantly. 'Walter, you are a miracle man. How did you do it? I'll never forget it.'

Goldstein assured Schreiber the \$5,000,000 budget still worked and that sets would be ready for shooting on 15 August. However, with casting incomplete, costumes had yet to be manufactured. Goldstein argued they could not wait for Finch, so suggested testing Paul

⁷⁰ New York.

Scofield. Referring to Mamoulian's request to rent a house for 10 months, Goldstein remarked: 'If Mamoulian is thinking of the length of lease in terms of how long it's going to take to complete this picture, and if Wanger has a similar kind of thinking, I think something must be done immediately about straightening them out' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 52-54).⁷¹

Taylor promised to report for pre-production on 1 September⁷² but warned Fox to use 'reasonable efforts to obtain Peter Finch to portray the role of Julius Caesar' or she would deem her contract ineffective. On 1 August, Finch accepted Caesar, and Keith Baxter Octavian (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001).⁷³ Announcing Wanger as the 'temporary' Head of European Production, *Variety* (1960f) reported him saying the decision to shoot in Egypt would be made this week or next. He also mentioned *Justine* - written and directed by Mankiewicz – would follow *Cleopatra*. *Ben-Hur* (1959) and *Psycho* (1960) were now first second at the box-office (*Variety*, 1960e), representing cinema audiences' polarised tastes.

Taylor's signature committed Fox to a production for which it was not prepared. Fox countersigned Taylor's contract on 11 August, loaning her \$50,000 for MCL⁷⁴ to acquire the rights to Franzero's book and the Balchin/Wasserman/Durrell screenplay from Fox (Wanger, 1960). That day, Schreiber (1960) told Ferguson that according to Taylor, Adler had approved Guilaroff's appointment. Meanwhile, Fox's board approved the \$43,000,000 studio property purchase (*Variety*, 1960g).

On 21 August, fires in the Sierras cut 4 power lines, forcing Fox to cancel its *Let's Make Love* (1960) premiere, staged in Reno, so Monroe could attend (Goode, 1986, p. 115-116). Finally released on 24 August (Rollyson, 2014, p. 236), it received poor reviews. *The New Yorker*

⁷¹ Mamoulian suggested 40-week shoot would have earned Taylor \$1,350,000.

⁷² Wanger stated the start date had been put back to 25 September, as it was, but exactly when this decision was taken varies in different reports. Taylor's request of 1 August suggests the later date had been agreed by then.

⁷³ Baxter recalled: 'It was going to be eight weeks in England, and it was £2,000 a week which was a King's ransom to me then. It was a lot of money. The money that was being shelled out was absolutely unbelievable. I had a very grand robe for when I became imperial Caesar at the end. And it was embroidered with oak leaves and laurels. It was embroidered by the women who has embroidered the queen's coronation gown. And they had made four of them (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001).

⁷⁴ Taylor's three children, Michael and Christopher Wilding, and Liza Todd jointly owned MCL Films SA. Frosch set it up to avoid tax. He also advised Taylor to surrender her American citizenship, although she never did (Rubythorn, 2011, p. 481).

wrote: 'It's sad to report that although she works as hard as ever, she doesn't accomplish very much this time. Some of the blame is hers.... Her flare for comedy is more of a flicker'. *The Daily Express* declared it 'the eclipse of Marilyn Monroe' (Anderson, 1984, p. 170).⁷⁵ Crowther wrote: 'The old Monroe dynamism is lacking in the things she is given to do by the cliché-clogged script....' (Donnelley, 2000, p. 69). Fox did not earn the box-office it anticipated.

Before setting sail for Naples on 24 August on the SS Leonardo da Vinci, Taylor agreed a truce with Hopper (and Brough, 1963, p. 23). Also, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 41-42) confirmed Fox's agreement to provide suites at the Dorchester for Taylor rather than the house it had rented near Pinewood.⁷⁶ Wanger signed his agreement with Fox and MCL Films as WALWA Films. If WALWA was unable to 'deliver a substantially completed photo-play pursuant to the aforesaid agreements, with Taylor,' Fox would have the right to terminate all said agreements (20th Century Fox, 1960a).⁷⁷ A second agreement acknowledged the 3-part venture would own \$2,500,000 of the film's costs, but each partner would agree the budget. A third agreement defined the film's negative cost being 'the total cost of producing the photoplay, including the distributor's charges for general overhead.' Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 41-42) also cabled Schreiber about Guilaroff, who could not get to Pinewood before 27 August. Wanger explained Guilaroff could not work on set but could work at the hotel. Frings arranged a rate of \$1100 per week plus \$600 per week expenses for Guilaroff, who started work on 29 August, staying at the Dorchester (Guilaroff and Griffin, 1996, p. 205-206). That day, *The Motion Picture Herald* named Taylor America's number one box-office attraction (Porter, 2012, p. 451). Taylor held significant power.

The differences between Taylor and Monroe continued. On 27 August, Paula Strasberg found Monroe unconscious from an overdose. The hospital pumped her stomach, then she went to Los Angeles under Greenson's care. Production temporarily shut down while Monroe took a week's rest, resuming on 6 September, by which time Miller knew they had 'effectively

⁷⁵ See also Guiles, 1992, p. 377.

⁷⁶ The request was for a large corner suite with bathroom, dressing room, living room with two adjoining double bedrooms and two bathrooms, and a sitting room for nurse and children.

⁷⁷ See also 20th Century Fox, 1960b.

parted’ (Spoto, 1993, p. 492).⁷⁸ On 31 August, Taylor arrived in London ‘like a scene out of *La Dolce Vita*’⁷⁹ (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 42-43), but Taylor refused to pose for pictures because of the harsh treatment she had received when last there. Taylor travelled to Pinewood in a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud Wanger had hired for her, driven by her chauffeur from the previous year. The press documented Monroe’s mental struggles but were more interested in Taylor.

Wanger cast Stephen Boyd as Antony⁸⁰ and Stanley Baker as Rufio (Bret, 2011, p. 134), but *Cleopatra* lacked leadership, Pinewood was still not ready; and there was no shootable script (Amburn, 2011, p. 169). Wanger and Mamoulian were curiously passive; Goldstein was inexperienced; Skouras removed. On 6 September, travelling to Greece, Rogell showed Zanuck the script, which Zanuck disliked and called Skouras. Skouras then called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 42-43) asking why he had told Rogell to show Zanuck the script and then fired Wanger as Head of European Production.

The next day, Rogell expressed his concern to Skouras about increasing the first unit’s shooting period in Egypt to 45 days. ‘I realize we have to take full advantage of the magnificent scenery, but I thought they had scheduled too generously, and the cost would be exorbitant.’ Rogell eliminated a \$200,000 Abu Simbel shoot. Skouras then wrote to Wanger and Mamoulian about his being ‘downhearted’ with the script, which lacked: ‘intimate love scenes; real entertainment value in dialogue between Cleopatra, Caesar and Antony’. On 15 September, Mamoulian replied he was constantly working on improving the script (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 54, 57-58). Lev (2013, p. 243) suggested, Wanger’s weakness as a producer was to work hard on the concept, script, and casting but leave day-to-day decisions to others. Wanger, Mamoulian, and all Fox executives were passive as leaders, and all knew the poor-quality script was not ready.

⁷⁸ See also Goode, 1986, p. 138; Wolfe, 2006, p. 438-439.

⁷⁹ Fellini’s film premiered on 24 August, so Wanger’s comment suggests he was either one of the first people to see it, or that he and Hyams added the comment retrospectively.

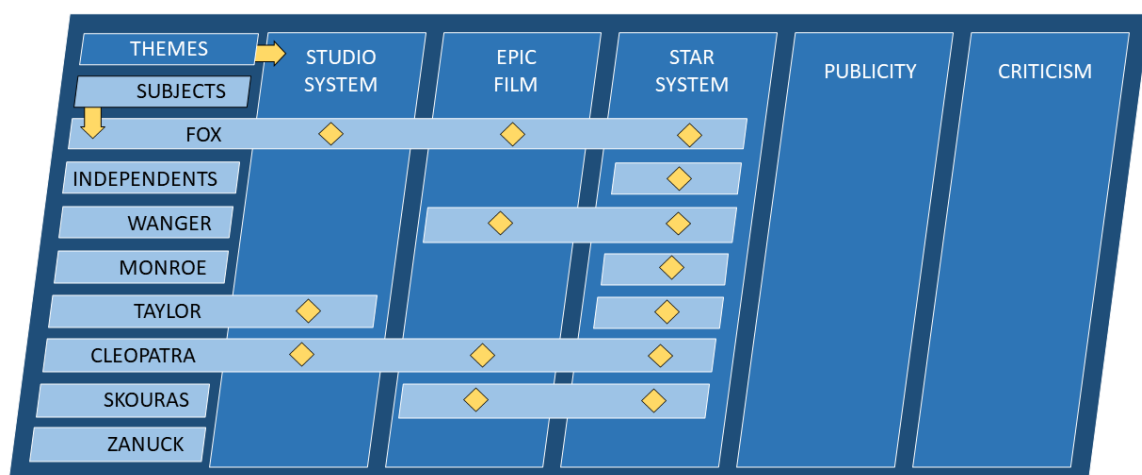
⁸⁰ Belfast-born Boyd played Massala in *Ben-Hur* (1959).

Taylor's illness, which would haunt the UK shoot, began to emerge. Taylor (1960a) completed her declaration and medical report for the Hanover Insurance Company on 19 September. She had no underlying conditions, her health was good, and she had not knowingly been exposed to disease in the last 21 days. Yet on 21 September, for the second time in 3 days, she was suffering attacks of paroxysm tachycardia. She summoned Dr Vernon, who gave her an injection of Peraldehyde. When Vernon returned at 23:30 her pulse had slowed. On his return the following day, Vernon found a boil on her buttock, so prescribed an anti-inflammatory cream, and later, Kaolin poultices 4 to 6 times a day. Taylor feared she would have further tachycardia attacks, so Vernon gave her a sodium gardinol injection. The next day, she had another attack, but Vernon – noting Taylor was inclined to hysteria – ascribed the attack to emotional upset. Meanwhile, Wanger cabled Skouras saying he did not understand his surprise at the rising costs: Wanger was dealing with delays in set construction and labour shortages; the late casting had delayed wigs, props, and costumes. Weather was already causing delays on the exterior sets, while script changes further increased cast costs (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 59-65). Then the shoot began.

SUMMARY

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Thematic Summary Chapter 4

Figure 4.2



The package system moved studios' focus to independent talent, which Fox resisted.

Cleopatra lacked sound oversight because Fox lacked strategic leadership. Studio oversight of

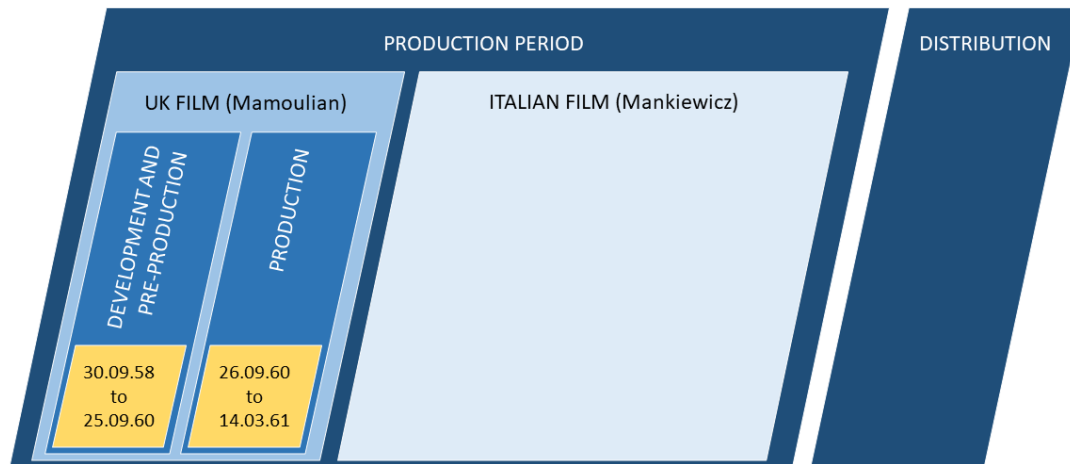
Cleopatra was adversarial, compounded by preliminary take-over manoeuvres by Wall Street investors. Fox hoped an epic film would recover its finances, but Skouras focused on *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, not on *Cleopatra*, so his and Wanger's ideas diverged. Still, Wanger pushed for Taylor, which Skouras resisted, until Taylor's box-office power became overwhelming.

Taylor's unprecedented \$1,000,000 fee changed the star system: although not for that sum, it granted Taylor – and every star that followed her – considerable power over the film and studio. Fox worked with independent and contract stars simultaneously yet worked with neither well. Fox's management of Monroe exemplified its failure to support its contract stars. Fox's hierarchy constrained and repeatedly cut out Wanger from key decisions about his own production, illustrating its failure to engage with independent talent. Constantly revising the budget exacerbated Wanger's weakness as a producer.

CRY HAVOC

(*Julius Caesar* – Act 3, Scene 1)

Figure 5.1



SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1960

On 26 September 1960, as Rogell replaced Wanger as Head of European Production, filming began. Fog shrouded Pinewood as Dr Vernon confirmed Taylor's illness, forcing Mamouliau to shoot scenes without her. Mamouliau soon ran out of scenes. Johnston had already told Wanger that Mamouliau was 'testing fabrics' and bet Wanger a pound that Mamouliau would never start the picture. Mamouliau did shoot scenes with Finch, Boyd, and later Baxter, with Skouras urging him to emphasise 'above all action and sex.'¹ While DeCuir thought Durrell's first 25 pages of script 'absolutely sensational, dazzling,' Mamouliau thought them 'absolute

¹ Finch was soon very bored. Boyd recalled that by 4pm they would 'end up at the bar.' Finch sometimes went to Taylor's Dorchester suite with his wife, where they gossiped and drank until Finch passed out. The crew feared for Finch's sanity. Boyd recalled that 'one day we drank just about as much as we could and then in walked this guy. He told us that new costumes were ready for us to try on and that we were wanted in wardrobe for fittings. Finchie and I staggered out of the bar, up to wardrobe and I doubt whether you'll ever see a funnier sight than me and Finchie trying on Roman togas!' Boyd complained about the low temperatures on set, meaning the film often captured vapor coming from the actors' mouths. Boyd also recalled reading a scene with Taylor when she was ill: 'And God! She's the most beautiful thing. This vision came out of the bedroom.' The most exciting event on set in this early phase was a lion breaking loose and running free for over an hour (Munn, 1982, p. 81; Rubython, 2011, p. 421).

crap... nothing but sensationalism,’ and refused ‘to be associated with a man who thought and wrote that way’ (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 54).² Echoing Cukor’s removal from *Gone with the Wind* (1939), doubt over Mamoulian’s ability soon grew, but Taylor’s illness delayed its impact.

On 28 September, Skouras congratulated Wanger for starting production. Mamoulian continued shooting Finch and Boyd’s entry into Alexandria with thousands of extras. He shot from above to capture the impressive set;³ a matte plate expunged the British surroundings. While completing sets for the first half of the film, DeCuir discovered the cement used to counteract the British weather was suffering weather damage, requiring more time and money for repairs. The next day, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 47)⁴ asked Wurtzel if Taylor’s insurance covered her absence for a sore throat, but Goldstein did not speak to Lloyds until 5 October.⁵ With the ‘Guilaroff situation’ causing two hairdressing stoppages, Wanger wrote to union lead Sir Tom O’Brien⁶ about the potentially serious economic fallout. On 1 October, Wanger told Skouras the first two days’ rushes were excellent, but 1 week in, the production was already struggling.

Zanuck’s obsession for *The Longest Day* and Burton’s personal magnetism shaped *Cleopatra*. Zanuck had tearfully admitted to his chief aide – Elmo Williams – that he had ruined his family’s life and lost his judgement (Zacky, Burns and Bider, 2001, 0:04:56, 0:06:40), but in October, he read Cornelius Ryan’s detailed account of the D-Day landings and saw how to restore his prestige.⁷

² See also Geist, 1978, p. 309; Mosley, 1985, p. 442-443; Silverman, 1988, p. 93-94; Bernstein, 1994, p. 345; Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:20:58, 0:25:29.

³ The \$600,000, 20-acre Alexandria set with four 52-foot-high sphinxes and palm trees from Los Angeles dwarfed the real site.

⁴ See also Parker, 1989, p. 208; Parish, 2006, p. 27; Carter, 2008, p. 136; Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:01:50; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, P. 65-66.

⁵ On 6 October, Lloyd’s insurance wrote to Goldstein, explaining Fox had \$5,000,000 insurance, with cover for 100% for fire and all risks, but a 20% no claims bonus. Based on the arrangements for Taylor to appear in *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959), a film only a quarter the size of *Cleopatra*, Fox agreed to pay the underwriters an additional \$100,000, which Lloyd’s would return in full if Taylor was not the cause of any claim (Metacalf, 1960).

⁶ Sir Thomas O’Brien was a trade unionist and labour politician, whose trade union work began as General Secretary of the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees.

⁷ French producer Raoul J. Levy had originally bought the rights, but had no finance or distribution deal with an American company (*Variety*, 1960a). Zanuck bought the rights and began working with Ryan on a script. Mirroring Todd’s cameo approach, Zanuck cast famous actors in every role, signing Wayne and Mitchum first,

Meanwhile in Toronto, on 1 October, at 00:40, the curtain fell on the 5-hour opening night of *Camelot*, the successor to Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady*.⁸ Director Moss Hart, who had worked with Burton on *Prince of Players* (Dunne, 1955, Fox), had suggested him for King Arthur.⁹ *Camelot* sold \$750,000 of tickets in a month, but the 5-hour running time revealed the excess of material Lerner and Loewe had created. Lerner later explained he 'could not tell... whether there was too much story to tell... to reach the end of the journey, or if the same story could be told with fewer incidents, or if the journey was simply too long in the first place.' McDowall – playing Arthur's illegitimate son Mordred – noted, how Burton's 'magnetic effect' and leadership sustained the show. Acquiring the soubriquet 'Costalot,' *Camelot* moved to Boston where Hart and Lerner were both hospitalised, so Burton asked his adoptive father Philip Burton to oversee an intense 3 weeks of work, cutting the running time by 90 minutes and rescuing the production (Rubython, 2011, p. 387, 391-393).¹⁰

Taylor saw Harley Street physician, Dr Goldman on 2 October. The next day Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 48)¹¹ described Messel¹² and Guilaroff complaining about their position and authority; Mamoulion complaining about the writers; and Skouras complaining about Mamoulion. 2 days later, Skouras told Wanger he still did not like the script and referred to a 3-page commentary by a friend – whose opinion was 'important because he has no axe to grind.' The commentary outlined an 'intimate story with proper characterization rather than glamour' that could be filmed in England. The friend was Mankiewicz. Given the necessary preparation time, Skouras must have approached him before Mamoulion began shooting. Skouras turned to Mankiewicz, a former Fox employee, to craft the kind of *Cleopatra* film he envisioned.

encouraging others to follow suit (Gussow, 1971, p. 217; Zacky, Burns and Bider 2001, 0:06:05; Lev, 2013, p. 233). Ryan thought Zanuck's vision dishonoured the book's hundreds of interviewees.

⁸ The following day, one critic praised the show for "helping considerably to shorten the winter" (Rubython, 2011, p. 391).

⁹ Olivier advised Burton to accept the \$4,000 a week plus an 11% share offer: the richest Broadway deal to date. Burton earned \$750,000 for 18 months' work (Rubython, 2011, p. 387).

¹⁰ See also Ferris, 1981, p. 109; Alpert, 1987, p. 91; Bragg, 1989, p. 183, 187; Lees, 1991, p. 176, 179; Lerner, 1994, p. 209, 215-216, 220-221; Andrews, 2008, p. 289; Munn, 2008, p. 110-111.

¹¹ See also Thomson, 2006, p. 344; Richards, 2008, p. 88-89; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 66.

¹² Oliver Messel, British theatre, and Film designer. Messel had designed *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1945).

On 6 October, *Spartacus* (1960) premiered. Douglas' film was based on a novel by communist Howard Fast, and its screenplay by blacklisted script-writer Dalton Trumbo. The American Legion boycotted the film, while various right-wing groups across the country picketed cinemas. Then, recently elected President Kennedy crossed the picket line in Washington, initiating *Spartacus'* (1960) \$60,000,000 worldwide gross. It received 6 Oscar nominations, with Ustinov winning Best Supporting Actor, and composer Alex North nominated for Best Score, but no other major awards. *Spartacus'* (1960) adaptation of the DeMille template saved Universal from bankruptcy but changed Mankiewicz' approach to *Cleopatra*.

Like many epics, *The Ten Commandments* (1956) was biblical in its origin; *Quo Vadis?* (1951), *The Robe* (1953) and *Ben-Hur* (1959) adapted novels connected to the life of Christ; *Spartacus* (1960) was based on a novel set before Christ's birth with no religious message. The supposed Communist overtones were really about democracy's reliance on liberty indicated in the argument between Laughton's Gracchus and Olivier's Crassus. Crassus' crucifixion of the slaves mirrored Hitler's rise to power, with the Roman encampment where Crassus meets Antoninus and Spartacus resembling a German prisoner of war camp, complete with watchtowers. The final battle scene is impressive for its scale, but although the film was the most expensive made at the time, it is an intimate story about personal relationships. *Ben-Hur's* (1959) naturalistic approach had challenged the declamatory style of *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Spartacus* (1960) was intensely personal and more character-driven. The dialogue examined the impact of events on the characters: Spartacus dies knowing his son is free, but his reaction imparts a message about every individual's right to liberty. *Spartacus* (1960) was written before *Ben-Hur's* (1959) release, both films – released a year apart – propelled epics towards greater realism.

On 11 October, while Morath photographed Monroe shooting *The Misfits'* (1961) mustang hunt scene (Rollyson, 2014, p. 237-238), *The Daily Mail* alleged that Taylor's weight-gain had delayed *Cleopatra's* shoot. Taylor subsequently filed a £2,000,000 lawsuit (Maddox, 1979, p. 160-161),¹³ one of several. The same day, *The Times* ran a photo of an empty Pinewood studio with the caption: 'This is the set that Mr. Guilaroff closed down.' At the Dorchester, Guilaroff

¹³ See also Kelly, 1981, p. p 134-135.

discussed Taylor's hair and Messel tried to fit her costumes. Later, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 49-50)¹⁴ met the English Motion Picture Producers' Association to discuss Guilaroff. The next day, Taylor accepted Guilaroff could no longer work on set. On 14 October, Skouras complemented Wanger on the excellent work of the English crew, but the next day refused Mamoulia's request to shut down the picture. Rogell insisted on shooting around Taylor, with Skouras arguing the insurance would cover it, so Lloyds sent an insurance adjuster, Mr Geddes, to check daily progress.

On 18 October, Wanger and Mamoulia told Skouras there was nothing left to shoot without Taylor. The next day Rogell told Mamoulia his work was not good, while Skouras – presumably drawing on Mankiewicz's outline – described a vision for the picture that focused on Cleopatra, Caesar, and Antony's relationships. That night, Wanger saw *The Millionairess* (Asquith, 1960, Fox) with Taylor and Fisher. Taylor described her annoyance at Fox's lack of organisation and Skouras using her as 'the scapegoat with the insurance company.' On 21 October, recognising Taylor would not return to work until 1 November, Lloyds requested a shutdown. Skouras refused, complaining instead that Finch was mis-cast and accusing Mamoulia and Wanger of not asserting their authority. Nobody controlled *Cleopatra*.

Blaming Wanger, Skouras told him to adjust the budget. On 24 October, Fox calculated *Cleopatra* had lost \$121,428 daily since 29 September.¹⁵ Skouras ordered Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 52-53)¹⁶ to reduce the 95-day shoot to 75 days to stay within the \$5,000,000 budget. Wanger argued they had already spent \$2,500,000. 'Make it' Skouras replied. The next day, Skouras told Wanger he was 'too nice as a producer' and that his insistence on Taylor had delayed the film. 'You're such a stubborn sonofabitch, you've ruined us by having that girl in the picture. We'll never finish the picture with her. I wish to hell we'd done it with Joanne Woodward or Susan Hayward—we'd be making money now.' Wanger then told Skouras that Fisher was discussing a multi-picture deal for Taylor with United Artists.¹⁷

¹⁴ See also Amburn, 2011, p. 170; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 67.

¹⁵ Therefore \$2,000,000 to date.

¹⁶ See also Heymann, 1995, p. 218

¹⁷ Fisher had also met Jack Warner, who offered Taylor films about Anna Karenina and Isadora Duncan because he thought Taylor could only play herself, 'and that's about it. She's at her best when the plot revolves around sex' (Heymann, 1995, p. 218).

Skouras instantly replied: 'I authorize you to sign Liz for two more pictures—at once.' Such contrary instructions revealed Skouras' inability to solve the problems.

Fox did not manage coverage of Taylor's illness or support Wanger to do so. On 30 October, at the London Clinic, the Queen's physician, Lord Evans, diagnosed Taylor's 103°F temperature as Malta fever caused by a tooth abscess 3 weeks earlier. Taylor was off payroll from 31 October to 2 January 1961 (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 50-51, 53-55).¹⁸ The next day, Lloyds requested suspending all other cast members and the picture's closure. Only when bad weather prevented exterior shots on 2 November, did Skouras suggest suspension. Wanger told *The Daily Mirror*, Fox would not replace Taylor: 'No Liz, no Cleo,' then spent the afternoon resisting Geddes and Rogell's recasting suggestions.¹⁹ Mamoulian complained about the script, and about Rogell pressuring him. Rogell complained about Mamoulian.

Taylor left the clinic on 7 November, but Geddes called Wanger arguing that Lloyds' doctors had not approved Taylor's discharge. At Geddes' request, the next day, Rogell asked Wanger to provide 'ridiculous detail about a conversation in which Taylor had laughingly said she had a small boil on one buttock.' On 9 November, Mamoulian told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 55) Taylor was feeling unwell. Calling the Dorchester, Wanger was told 'Mrs Fisher' would call back. A *Daily Mail* reporter then told Wanger Taylor was readmitted to the clinic. Wanger called Fisher who was so worried he could not speak. A *Daily Express* reporter told Wanger that – fearing meningitis – Lord Evans, Dr Goldman, and a neurologist had sedated Taylor. After Wanger called Goldman – who explained it was not meningitis, but a terrible headache – Wanger called the *Express* denying the meningitis rumour. Still crying and scared, Fisher called Wanger saying he had summoned Dr Kennamer²⁰ from Hollywood. Goldman called, saying Taylor was much better, but he thought it was an infected tooth. Throughout, Fox offered no support.

Fox continued to support Taylor's casting. On 14 November, promising to reinsure Taylor, Lloyds offered Skouras a \$1,750,000 pay-out: Skouras wanted more. On 17 November, *Butterfield 8* (1960) premiered to mixed reviews. Crowther hated Fisher's performance: Taylor

¹⁸ See also Guild, L. 1970; Parker, 1989, p. 190.

¹⁹ They suggested Hepburn, Monroe, Rosanna Podesta, Kim Novak, Shirley MacLaine, Loren or Lollobrigida.

²⁰ See biography in Appendix 1.

hated the picture. However, MGM's strategy of an initial run with early openings in key cities then a second wave over the Thanksgiving holiday,²¹ saw it take \$8,000,000. The directness of Taylor's character in this modern Camille story was controversial, but mirroring Hayward and Signoret, Taylor's hard contemporary edge appealed to younger cinemagoers. Kael argued that Crowther's objections proved he did not understand the younger generation.

In London, although Skouras had told Fisher not to tell Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 55-56),²² Fisher told Wanger Skouras was closing-down the picture. Then union leaders asked Wanger what to tell their teams. The next day, with nothing more to shoot, Wanger began the shutdown until 3 January. To aid her recovery Taylor, Fisher, and the children travelled to Palm Springs. Wurtzel began calculating when Taylor's guarantee period would end, concluding her 16 weeks of employment began on 19 September. Arriving in London on 21 November, Skouras blamed Mamoulion for the lack of any usable film but thought Taylor the 'perfect Cleopatra.... We cannot abandon her just because she has been ill.' Again, Fox excluded Wanger from decisions about his own film.

Returning to *The Misfits* (1961) only increased Monroe's depression. On 17 October, she attended a birthday party Huston gave for Miller and Clift.²³ The next day, back at Paramount Studios, and resuming treatment with Greenson, Monroe knew her marriage was over. On 21 October,²⁴ meeting Henry Hathaway at the studio, she complained she had spent all her life playing Marilyn Monroe and that she had hoped to get away from her through Miller but did not. On 25 October, North was moved by the three-quarter rough print for *The Misfits* (1961), but the next day, studio head Max Youngstein was disappointed. Miller agreed, so began rewriting scenes with Huston. On 3 November, Gable saw a rough cut, shooting the film's last scene the next day he told Miller (1987, p. 485-486)²⁵ he thought it the best picture he had

²¹ The first time a major studio took this approach.

²² See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 249, 254; Parker, 1989, p. 179; Heymann, 1995, p. 219; Fisher, 1999, p. 167; Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 156; Mann, 2009, p. 284-285.

²³ Cameraman Russell Metty, drunkenly shouted: 'Arthur writes scripts and John shoots ducks. First Arthur screwed up the script and now his wife is screwing it up. Why don't you wish him a happy birthday, Marilyn?... This is truly the biggest bunch of misfits I ever saw' (Goode, 1986, p. 244-245; Guiles, 1992, p. 390-391).

²⁴ Spoto cites 31 October not 21.

²⁵ See also Rosten, 1973, p. 90; Pepitone and Stadiem, 1979, p. 161; Goode, 1986, p. 244-245, 255-256, 270-272, 280, 283, 286-287, 292-294, 301; Parker, 1989, p. 189; Guiles, 1992, p. 293-294, 296, 390-391; Leaming, 1999, p.

ever made. The day after, as Monroe returned to New York, Gable suffered the first of a series of heart attacks. At 04:00 on 16 November, a reporter telephoned Monroe saying Gable had died. One press report suggested Kay Gable thought Monroe had contributed to his death.

Deeply wounded, Monroe stayed indoors rather than vote for Kennedy. She only appeared when news of her divorce broke which she tearfully announced would be friendly. On 18 November, Miller, Huston, Youngstein and producer Frank Taylor, agreed to release the film quickly, hoping Gable's performance would win a posthumous Oscar. On 21 November, the day after Gable's funeral – which Monroe thought unwise to attend – she received Cartier-Bresson and Morath's contact sheets and scratched a red cross over any showing her with Miller. Throughout this, Fox did not support Monroe.

Fox suspended *Cleopatra* on 30 November. *Variety* (1960d) described the 'large slice of London's studio space... filled with *Cleopatra* sets,' estimating a \$2,500,000 cost, with insurance costing around \$400,000 but with Lloyds losing around \$5,000,000. *Variety* did not know that on 25 November, Geddes stated Taylor's insurance was invalid, because her medical statement failed to mention she had received 'urgent medical treatment' during September (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 56). Meanwhile, on 1 December, while travelling to Palm Springs, Taylor and Fisher won a libel suit for another press item that had boasted an 'exclusive interview' they had never given.²⁶

Fox still failed to address the script problems. Andrew Marton (1960) thought his treatment for the battle of Actium bigger than *Ben-Hur's* (1959),²⁷ but thought the *Cleopatra* and Antony characterisations flawed, describing 'a feeling of lost direction... uncertainty as to what it was all about.... Caesar and Antony were big men – but not big enough for the job – neither of them was an Alexander.... I think she should state Alexander's dream (which is now hers) of one world – a world without boundaries, without frontiers to defend or attack.' In the light of

375-378; Marshall, 2005, p. 204; Wolfe, 2006, p. 361, 439, 440, 445; Taraborrelli, 2009, p. 337-338; Banner, 2013, p. 358; Rollyson, 2014, p. 239.

²⁶ Stopping-over in New York, Fisher gave an interview to Joe Hyams of the Herald Tribune stating: 'a great percentage of... things written about Elizabeth and me are fabricated' (Rice, 1962, p. 129).

²⁷ Marton also thought the film should explain *Cleopatra's* withdrawal from the Battle of Actium, suggesting that Apollodorus should convince her Antony is lost, 'this would re-frame everything that followed.'

Kennedy's election, and *Spartacus*' (1960) themes, this was very contemporary. On 29 November, writing to Wanger and Mamouliau, Skouras disliked Caesar's assassination scene (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 69). Nobody fixed the script's flaws.

However, on 7 December, Wanger requested paying Balchin for script changes, thereby re-employing the writer whose script needed re-working. The next day, Wanger confirmed Taylor would return to set on 3 January 1961. From 10 to 31 December, *Cleopatra* cost \$276,765. On 9 December, Skouras wrote to Wanger, Mamouliau and Rogell about the possibility of making 'one of the greatest pictures of all times possible artistically and box-office' but that it needed polish. Stating his certainty that Lloyds would be satisfied that Fox would reinstate Taylor, Skouras detailed his thoughts about the Antony and Cleopatra scenes (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 70). During later legal actions, Fox attorneys asked Wanger who had responsibility for the proper preparation of a script and a carefully detailed production, Wanger agreed he did, but added: 'I didn't have organization.... Mamouliau would go in and give them a lot of double-talk as directors always do and always end up winning.' Bernstein (1994, p. 355-356, 365) argued Wanger tried to be the ideal producer, but *Cleopatra's* scale was too much for one person.

The script remained a problem. On 14 December, Taylor (1960b) assured Lloyds she had not lied on her medical statement, while Skouras sought Mankiewicz' opinion again. Mankiewicz (1960) described an estimated 3-hour first cut for the Mamouliau script, which was 'shockingly barren of either scope or magnitude ... an opera without music.... A strange frustrating mixture of an American soap-opera virgin and a hysterical Slavic vamp of the type Nazimova²⁸ used to play....' The 3 central characters' relationship was 'a brilliant idea, provided that a new approach is found for the telling.' Significantly, citing *Spartacus* (1960) and *Ben-Hur* (1959) as examples of more realistic epic films, Mankiewicz now described *Cleopatra* as an epic. On 17 December, Rogell and DeCuir returned from Egypt, positive about the locations. Mamouliau requested Marc Brandel to revise the script. Taylor suggested Paddy Chayefsky.²⁹ Skouras mistakenly thought Taylor and Mamouliau were plotting, so – even

²⁸ Alla Nazimova was a Russian-American actor, known for her grand, highly flamboyant silent movies and lifestyle.

²⁹ Chayefsky thought it required 6 months' work, implying he had been approached.

though he had Mankiewicz' treatment – engaged Nunnally Johnson for \$140,000³⁰ (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 57).³¹ Skouras' determination to remove Mamoulion centred around the script.

JANUARY-MARCH 1961

As 1961 began, the 8 Fox movies in *Variety's* top-grossing films of 1960 earned \$17,700,000, compared to \$57,100,000 in 1956 – Fox's lowest income since 1945. Nor had Fox won a best picture award since 1950.³² Therefore, Fox agreed for NBC to air its post-1948 movies on primetime Saturday nights and reissued its Rodgers and Hammerstein films. When Taylor reported to the studio for final tests on 28 December, nobody had turned on the heating, delaying the start until the afternoon. Around this time, to protect their tax status, Taylor and Fisher bought the Chalet Ariel in Gstaad, Switzerland for \$280,000 (Walker, 1990. p. 224).³³

Once back on set, from 3 January 1961, Taylor now focused on the script. On 4 January, Wanger resolved the Guilaroff situation by promising the female hairdressers a bonus, while *Variety* (1961m)³⁴ ran adverts for an adaptation of Durrell's *Justine*, written and directed by Mankiewicz and produced by Wanger. Then an ad for *Cleopatra*, produced by Wanger, directed by Mamoulion with a screenplay by Durrell. Taylor told Wanger she had chills and could not shoot tests the next day. On 5 January Skouras suggested two options to Lloyds to avoid bad publicity and legal costs. Lloyds could pay \$3,750,000 and Fox would pay them 20% of *Cleopatra's* profits up to \$2,000,000. Or Lloyds could pay \$2,250,000 to settle the present loss with no share of the profits and renew the cast insurance (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 58-60).³⁵ Skouras tried to maintain Fox's cashflow.

³⁰ Earlier, in November, Johnson had told Goldstein, 'I can never understand Wanger ... Whenever I talk to him about *Cleopatra* he talks as if it were somebody else's production. Once I said to him: "Is Taylor due to work yet?" He replied, "I hear she's overdue." What the hell does that mean?' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 356). On 9 May, Goldstein replied to Skouras' 4 May enquiry about Johnson's work on *Cleopatra*, explaining that Johnson had finished work in January (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 83-84).

³¹ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 68-71, 195.

³² *All About Eve* (1950), produced, written, and directed by Mankiewicz.

³³ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 259-260; Matessino, 1994b, p. 2-3; Solomon, 2002, p. 139; Lev, 2013, p. 183.

³⁴ See also *Variety* 1961n.

³⁵ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 356; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 72.

On 10 January, rehearsing with Mamoulian and Finch, Taylor objected to the script, so called Skouras, who – through his assistant Philip Feldman – instructed Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 59-60) to shoot the script and get retakes later, ‘rather than listening to the complaints of the talents.’ Wanger saw Taylor at the Dorchester that evening, where she and Fisher lived ‘like royalty with children, dogs, cats, retainers, and supplicants for favour all over the place.’ Taylor was in bed, feeling unwell but still disliked the script. Then, on 14 January, Rogell and Wanger proposed closing-down the UK shoot immediately, starting the Egyptian shoot around 20 February, letting the first unit return to Hollywood and the second unit continue in Egypt. Feldman, phoned Wanger at 11:00 accusing him of ‘allowing Taylor to run the show’ and that ‘everything was Wanger’s fault!’ Wanger assumed Skouras was considering another producer and director. The next day, Skouras discounted shooting in Hollywood.

On 16 January, returning from a weekend trip to Paris, Taylor met Rogell, Wanger and Mamoulian, who was late, having spent the weekend celebrating his wife’s birthday. Rogell blamed Mamoulian for the delays; Mamoulian blamed the executives; Wanger took ‘some blame to pacify things;’ Rogell stated shooting would start on 19 January; Mamoulian left the meeting furious. The next day, during a costume fitting in her Dorchester Suite, Taylor told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 60),³⁶ Fisher, and Mamoulian the script was still terrible, Mamoulian agreed, blaming Wanger. Taylor feared her first independent film being ‘a second-rate B movie. If the film failed, people would blame the \$1,000,000 actress.’

On 17 January, Mankiewicz’ agent – Charles Feldman – called asking him to return to New York immediately to lunch with him and Skouras.³⁷ On 18 January, Skouras approved \$100,000 for the Egyptian unit, but instructed Rogell to place someone ‘in charge [of] expenditures and future money requests.’ Skouras requested a detailed breakdown of the estimated \$100,000 ‘budget for Egypt and purposes for which money will be spent.’ Nobody was ever appointed. Then, at lunch in New York,³⁸ Skouras told Mankiewicz: ‘Mamoulian is crazy’ (Dauth, 2008, p.

³⁶ See also Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:25:48; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 73.

³⁷ Mankiewicz was holidaying in the Bahamas with Hume Cronyn and his wife Jessica Tandy at the time, writing his *Justine* screenplay.

³⁸ This was at The Colony, Skouras’ favourite restaurant.

182-183) and Mankiewicz could 'name his price' if he would relinquish *Justine* in favour of *Cleopatra* (Bernstein, 1994, p. 358). Mankiewicz explained he was earning enough money and wanted to write *Justine*: 'Spyros, why would I want to make *Cleopatra*? I wouldn't even go see *Cleopatra*' (Carter, 2008, p. 138).³⁹ Skouras and Feldman suggested various ways of earning tax-free money including a southern French villa or big yacht. Mankiewicz agreed to discuss with his lawyer and barely slept that night considering whether to make the film (Stern, 2019, p. 317). Skouras was planning Mamoulian's exit.

Unaware, seeking her support, Taylor assured Mamoulian she would 'refuse to appear in the film unless they rehired him' (Heymann, 1995, p. 219). Mamoulian resigned, Skouras accepted (Cashmore, 2016, p. 59), Taylor remained silent.³⁹ Mamoulian's 16 weeks and 10 minutes of film had cost \$8,500,000⁴⁰ (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:25:48). Taylor called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 61) wanting to know if she too was 'in or out of the picture,' suggesting she had not expected Mamoulian to resign. Meanwhile, in Mankiewicz' New York townhouse, Bienstock – his lawyer – immediately blocked Feldman's suggested, illegal, tax-free gifts. Skouras offered to buy Mankiewicz' independent film company, Figaro, Inc. Mankiewicz still wanted to make *Justine*, Feldman said he could, once *Cleopatra* was over. The Figaro offer promised a significant income for the rest of Mankiewicz' life: 'Hold your nose for 15 weeks and get it over with.' Ironically, the success of *I Want to Live!* (1958) had increased Figaro's value to \$1,500,000, which Skouras agreed to pay. However, NBC owned half of Figaro, forcing Skouras to pay \$3,000,000 in addition to Mankiewicz' salary and expenses, driving up the budget to \$11,500,000, but still no film (Geist, 1978, p. 310-311). Skouras replaced Mamoulian with Mankiewicz, but at a cost.

Mankiewicz still had to sign. On 25 January, *Variety* (1961p) reported Mamoulian offered no reasons for his request to be released but that Skouras had accepted the resignation 'with severe regret.' Skouras called Feldman to discuss a contract. Mankiewicz had produced for MGM, so knew all three aspects of film production, but was primarily a writer of tightly written, witty dialogue and his directorial style worked best with complex female characters.

³⁹ Honouring his bet, Wanger sent Johnston an envelope containing a single pound note (Mosley, 1985, p. 442-443).

⁴⁰ Estimates vary between \$7,000,000 and \$8,500,00.

In 1947, Mankiewicz was the first to use the term 'film-author' to describe one who writes and directs a film. This was distinct from the auteur theory, which emerged simultaneously, because Mankiewicz argued that writing and directing were two parts of one process.

Dragonwyck (1946, Fox), Mankiewicz' first film as a 'film-author,' centred on character motivation rather than plot (Lower and Palmer, 2001, p. 11).

Harrison (BFI, 1971, 0:20:13) found working with Mankiewicz 'very awkward' because as author and director, 'you've got to be very accurate with the text.' Mankiewicz' sons joked that for him, 'action was opening a door and somebody walking through.' They admired his 'wonderful technique of talking to actors,' he would take them by the shoulder or around the arm 'and taking them off into a corner... speaking very softly to them when he wanted something else.... [He] always kept a certain quiet and intimacy in his relationship with his actors' (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:35:32, 1:40:30).⁴¹ Skouras wrote to Zanuck on 26 January wanting him to be among first to know about the signing. Zanuck replied: 'no matter how you look at it, this is an enormous improvement and if Joe is genuinely sincere, he is capable of doing a great job' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 75). *Cleopatra* was a clear development of Mankiewicz' film-authorship, but far removed from the Fox house-style Zanuck had developed.⁴²

Although telling Mankiewicz to name his price, Skouras still treated him like a contract employee not an independent. Mankiewicz' contract, signed on 31 January, stated Fox would 'consult with him, at reasonable times with respect to the creative elements (including major casting and editing) of the picture, but if we do not mutually agree with respect thereto, it is understood that the decision of our then Executive Head of Production shall be final and conclusive.' However, Mankiewicz had the right to make the picture's first cut. Skouras later stated, 'up to this time Joe was not considered to be an extravagant director, or an extravagant producer-director.' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29; 134-155; 201-202). Skouras wanted Mankiewicz to produce, but Mankiewicz, faithful to his Figaro colleague, insisted on

⁴¹ See also BFI, 1982, 0:09:41; Cork and Van Eyssen, 2007a, 00:00:1, 00:06:01; 00:06:35; 00:09:50; Cork and Van Eyssen, 2007b, 00:17:09; Kirgo and Del Valle, 2018, 00:06:26

⁴² As Schatz (1998, p. 6-7) explained, the central producer approach enabled all creatives to develop their personal 'style' but within the context of the studio's house-style.

Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 62), displeasing Skouras, who later stated 'we paid a lot of money to Joe - I was buying a director-producer, not the director, but it is true that Joe wanted Walter Wanger to remain.' Mankiewicz signed the 40-week guaranteed contract,⁴³ as director and not producer, but would 'supervise the re-writing of the scenario.' Skouras wanted Mankiewicz to direct and produce the vision he had outlined in October.

Skouras' now had to cover *Cleopatra's* increased costs. By 23 January, Fox reasoned that Monroe owed them one more film. Monroe's 10% share of *Some Like It Hot's* (1959) gross box-office meant she did not need to work in 1961. This was fortunate, given her mounting depression. In mid-December 1960, Signoret had phoned Monroe, begging her not to meet Montand on his visit to New York.⁴⁴ Monroe signed her final will on 14 January 1961, substituting Miller with Strasberg as her beneficiary. On 20 January, Monroe flew to Juarez for a Mexican divorce, while Miller and Morath attended Kennedy's inaugural ball. On 31 January, Clift escorted Monroe to Broadway's Capitol Theater for *The Misfits*' (1961) premiere, given in Gable's honour. Monroe hated her performance and the film, which received mixed reviews mostly because of Miller's script. On 1 February, a newspaper repeated the idea that Kay Gable thought Monroe had caused Gable's death. Distraught at the suggestion, Monroe later recalled opening her living room window and contemplating jumping out, but the thought of injuring pedestrians on the street below stopped her (Morgan, 2012, p. 295-296).⁴⁵

Fox set a completion deadline of 15 March for Mankiewicz' revised script (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 62). Given he had been thinking since October, Mankiewicz outlined his vision on 31 January. He saw Antony as always having lived in Caesar's shadow. Knowing he was not Caesar's equal drove Antony's excessive drinking and his determination to conquer Cleopatra. He then realized that she had conquered him, which ultimately fuelled his self-destruction. Wanger admired this 'entirely new, modern, psychiatrically rooted concept,' and recognised that it showed Cleopatra as a woman ruling in a man's world, 'an artist of consummate

⁴³ Due to expire on November 6, 1961.

⁴⁴ Montand later cancelled.

⁴⁵ See also Summers, 1985, p. 197-198; Guiles, 1992, p. 401; Spoto, 1993, p. 502-503; Leaming, 1999, p. 380; Victor, 1999, p. 199-200; Wolfe, 2006, p. 362-363; De La Hoz, 2010, p. 78-89; Badman, 2012, p. 23-24; Rollyson, 2014, p. 241.

femininity, a genius in the art of attracting men.’ This all aligned with Wanger’s Volkmann notes and his career-long fascination for strong female characters.

Tom Mankiewicz (and Crane, 2015, p. 61-62) recalled that rather than allow Mankiewicz to focus on taking-over the production, Skouras applied additional pressure to write the screenplay. On 1 February, as they flew to London, Mankiewicz declined Skouras' request for him to become Fox’s Head of Production. DeCuir and Wanger met them at the airport. DeCuir thought Mankiewicz ‘very dour and sad,’ this was because on seeing DeCuir’s sets Mankiewicz thought them ‘a garish disaster.... Too many sets and... overbuilt.’ Mankiewicz thought Mamoulia’s footage unusable because he did not imagine a DeMille-style film.⁴⁶

By 1 February, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 62-63)⁴⁷ assumed Mankiewicz would recast. Boyd received a cable from the production department saying, ‘Don’t cut your hair.’ Mankiewicz was pleading for more time to write a new script, but with daily overheads at \$45,000, Fox scheduled the resumption of shooting for 4 April. Mankiewicz wrote the script outline in his Connaught Hotel suite, non-stop, consulting with Taylor daily, even when she and Fisher flew to Zurich. Skouras still wanted Mankiewicz to do more than direct.

An original manuscript dated 6 February outlined the film up to the battle of Actium. Mankiewicz’ (1961a)⁴⁸ handwritten notes developed Marton’s ideas, describing Cleopatra using ‘both Caesar and Antony to further the glory of Egypt. She is the woman who almost made it.’ Having previously directed *Julius Caesar* (Mankiewicz, 1953, MGM), Mankiewicz saw him as ‘a clever and intelligent general... not a muscle man.... When he returns to Rome his character should deteriorate.’ Mankiewicz introduced the idea of Caesar’s epilepsy. Brando had played Antony in 1953, but now the character was a ‘great top sergeant catapulted into a spot and then [finds] himself riding a tiger.’ Mankiewicz described Antony as ‘a weak man’ to which Zanuck would later object. He also listed things to avoid: ‘eternal vows of love; endless

⁴⁶ Apparently, he met Mamoulia and asked what he should do with the picture. Mamoulia supposedly replied: ‘Do as I did. Resign.’

⁴⁷ See also Guild, 1970, p. 242-243; Sheppard 1975, p. 260-261; Geist, 1978, p. 311-312; Mosley, 1985, p. 443; Rubythorn, 2011, p. 422; Stern, 2019, p. 317.

⁴⁸ See also Mankiewicz 1961b and 1961c.

diner parties; orgies; conspirators' scenes; Cleopatra would never be glib until she knows she has got Caesar; never let the obvious be spoken.' Mankiewicz dismissed DeMille's conspirator scenes and wry dialogue and embraced Wyler and Kubrick's approach to character. The grand moments of spectacle – like *Ben-Hur's* (1959) chariot race or *Spartacus'* (1960) battles – informed characters' responses and decisions.

While Mankiewicz watched actor tests on 7 February, Moskowitz engaged Sidney Buchman and Durrell⁴⁹ to write up Mankiewicz' story concept. After plotting and story-line conferences, Buchman and Durrell prepared separate 'story-step outlines' for Mankiewicz to incorporate into his screenplay outline (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 62-63).⁵⁰ Mankiewicz' epic required a well-crafted, realistic script. *Variety* (1961u) also reported *The Misfits* (1961) taking \$12,000 to \$75,000 in various states in its first week. Monroe told her New York therapist, Dr Kris, about her suicide attempt. Advising her to enter a private hospital for a physical check-up and rest, Kris drove Monroe to Payne Whitney Clinic where Kris had arranged a standard room.

Monroe signed in as 'Faye Miller,' but the staff mistakenly admitted Monroe to the psychiatric ward and locked her in a padded room, taking away her clothes and limiting her phone calls, triggering Monroe's deep fear of inheriting her mother's mental instability. When Monroe protested, staff put her in a straitjacket and sedated her. Only when a nurse smuggled a message out to the Strasbergs⁵¹ did Monroe's nightmare change (Taraborrelli, 2009, p. 351).⁵² Monroe's world imploded, but Fox did nothing to aid her.

Fox's focus was elsewhere. On 8 February, Skouras wrote to Goldstein about Mankiewicz' request to transfer Johnston back to *Cleopatra* as production manager: during the shutdown, Johnston had been assigned to *Tender is the Night* (King, 1962, Fox)⁵³ (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 75-76). On 9 February, Rogell sent his budget report to Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 64),

⁴⁹ Durrell earned \$2,500 a week.

⁵⁰ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 356.

⁵¹ See Appendix 2.

⁵² See also Rosten, 1973, p. 92; Summers, 1985, p. 199; Spoto, 1993, p. 505-506; Strasberg, 1993, p. 177; Wolfe, 2006, p. 450; Badman, 2012, p. 46-47.

⁵³ Skouras urged Goldstein to explain to Henry King why he was losing Johnston.

listing the total cost to date as \$4,998,000, estimating another \$4,866,000 to complete. Given estimates on the Mamoulia shoot - and the \$3,000,000 Figaro purchase - Wanger questioned this budget.

On 11 February, Schreiber – Fox’s studio manager – died leaving another gap in Fox’s operations (Lev, 2013, p. 228-229).⁵⁴ With shooting on hold, 2 days later Taylor and Fisher travelled to Munich for a vacation (Fisher, 1981, p. 180). On 14 February, *The London Evening Standard* reported on Fox’s \$12,000,000 insurance claim and on Taylor’s libel suit victory against *The Daily Mail* (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 64).⁵⁵ Much later, Mankiewicz concluded that *Cleopatra* was ‘the toughest three pictures I ever made’ (Sheppard 1975, p. 260-261), but on 16 February began his script outline, producing new pages each day for the next month, completing it on 11 March⁵⁶ (Mankiewicz, 1961d).⁵⁷ With Buchman only available for a limited time and Durrell finding the technique of screenwriting and dramaturgy baffling, Mankiewicz wrote long passages of dialogue. Then budget and script issues became insignificant. The Taylor-Fisher marriage had problems. On 18 February, in Munich, Fisher’s chronic stomach pains forced their return to London for his appendectomy. Fisher (1981, p. 180-182) later claimed he had argued with Taylor over her heavy drinking, and she had taken an overdose. Frings, who was in another bedroom, calmed Fisher and together they walked Taylor around the bedroom until the doctor arrived, injected Taylor, and told Fisher to let her sleep. On the way to the airport, Taylor was fully recovered, so Fisher ‘magnified [his] slight case of heartburn’ into appendicitis. Meanwhile, Mankiewicz – who later argued that the ‘film was done in opposition to every basic rule of the professional filmmaker’ – tried to delay the start of filming. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 64)⁵⁸ thought Mankiewicz’ first pages excellent and later visited Fisher at the London Clinic, noting Taylor had Asian flu. Both of Fisher’s biographies make many claims that sound at least boastful, at worst deeply self-serving, but the Taylor-Fisher marriage was struggling.

⁵⁴ See also Waterbury, 1964, p. 275.

⁵⁵ *The Daily Mail* settled out of court and issued a public apology to Taylor (Allan, J. B. 2011 [1961], p. 144-145).

⁵⁶ Stern (2019, p. 317) suggested that just as Herman Mankiewicz had modelled *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941, RKO) around Welles, his younger brother modelled *Cleopatra* around Taylor.

⁵⁷ See also Mankiewicz 1961e, f, g

⁵⁸ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 262-263; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 76-77.

Meanwhile, Wall Street interest in Fox gathered momentum. In 1960, Fox lost \$15,000,000, including a \$7,000,000 *Cleopatra* write off, confirming the discrepancies in Rogell's budget. On 22 February, *Variety* (1961j) reported on the agreement to increase Fox's 10 directors to 12. Milton S. Gould, representing Treves and Co., and John Loeb representing Carl M. Loeb and Rhoades, accepted the two new roles, who – along with existing board members Robert Lehman⁵⁹ and Robert L. Clarkson⁶⁰ – collectively held 15% of Fox stock. Their appointment was a clear warning for Skouras, who the same day, announced Fox would take Monroe to court. On 13 December 1960, Fox had offered Monroe *Goodbye, Charlie* with Cukor as director but she had refused, offering no reason. Now, Monroe was reeling from her incarceration, even though DiMaggio had rescued her by taking her to another hospital (Bernstein, 1994, p. 361).⁶¹ Skouras must have known this, but he was now fighting for his own survival.

On 26 February Peter Shaffer (1961) declined Wanger's script-writing offer. Rogell told Skouras he liked the script (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 77), but Mankiewicz now realised why the Mamoulion script was over 3-hours. A script conference on 27 February, at the Connaught Hotel, attended by Wanger, Buchman, Durrell, and Mankiewicz (1961h),⁶² resulted in 136 pages of dialogue and 233 scenes, with the final scene exactly as it appears in the film (Mankiewicz, 1961j).⁶³ At the same time, as she held a birthday party for her children, Taylor's 'Asian flu' deteriorated. She 'put on a brave show' when seeing Mankiewicz later. On 28 February she was Oscar-nominated for *Butterfield 8* (1960) (Sheppard, 1975, p. 262-263).⁶⁴ On 1 March, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 65) described the writing 'going along beautifully' but Taylor's temperature reached 103°F. Fisher called Goldman who diagnosed pneumonia in Taylor's left lung and injected her with antibiotics. Ignoring medical advice, Taylor refused to go to hospital. Instead, nurses set up an oxygen tent on her bed to aid her breathing, and watched her around the clock (Rice, 1962, p. 143).⁶⁵ On 3 March, at 09:30, Mankiewicz called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 65) saying Taylor was 'quite ill.' The 11 doctors attending her,

⁵⁹ Of Lehman Brothers.

⁶⁰ Of American Express.

⁶¹ See also Leaming, 1999, p. 379; 383; Badman, 2012, p. 50, 63.

⁶² See also Mankiewicz 1961i.

⁶³ The half-completed first draft ran 674 typed, triple-spaced pages and represented only 76 pages of Mankiewicz' 151-page Treatment Outline (Geist, 1978, p. 306).

⁶⁴ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 20; Mann, 2009, p. 288-289

⁶⁵ See also Fisher, 1981, p. 182-183.

including Lord Evans, agreed it was staphylococcus pneumonia. Bacterium filled Taylor's lungs on 4 March, aided by her overuse of sedatives and alcohol. The 4 April shooting date was about to change.



Figure 5.2

Marilyn Monroe Leaving Columbia Presbyterian Hospital (Rapoport, 2016). While the photograph does not show all of the press present compare it to figure 6.3

Events on 5 March revealed the differences between Monroe and Taylor. 50 waiting photographers and reporters and 300 fans cheered Monroe's departure from hospital. Monroe never forgave Kris and made Greenson her sole therapist (Banner, 2013, p. 363). In London, shortly after midnight, Taylor's nurse woke Fisher to explain his wife was in a coma. The Dorchester's front desk knew that lung specialist J. Middleton Price was attending a stag party in the hotel. Dressed in tails, he examined Taylor; lifted her by the heels; shook her to dislodge the congestion; jammed two fingers down her throat; pounded her chest to break up the congestion; and finally, dug his thumb into one eye and then the other. The sharp pain forced Taylor to breathe, and she was rushed to the London Clinic where Terence Cawthorne performed an emergency tracheotomy. Taylor stopped breathing and had to be revived four times,⁶⁶ 15-minute bulletins updated the 100 journalists and photographers outside.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Taylor later recollected: 'I did come to on the operating table. I couldn't even whisper.... Finally, one of the nurses saw that my eyes were open and there must have been a look of such terror in my eyes, because she bent over and told me that I was in the London Clinic and that I was going to be all right. And I knew I was going to die. I gestured that I wanted to write something, because the feeling of being unable to communicate was more frightening than anything. And I wrote, 'Am I still dying?' (Sheppard, 1975, p. 264). In later years, Taylor claimed:

Back at home, hearing the false reports, Monroe called Newcombe⁶⁸ saying ‘Elizabeth is dead’ (Heymann, 1995, p. 220-221).⁶⁹ Fisher (1981, p. 184) only believed Taylor was alive when he saw her in her iron lung.⁷⁰ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 66) spent the night on the telephone, his doctor arrived at 09:00 to administer a sedative. Skouras later called Wanger: ‘My God, how did it happen?’ Joan Collins’ agent rang her in Los Angeles (Parker, 1989, p. 193), asking: ‘Can you be packed and ready to leave for London by the end of the day?... It’s Elizabeth. They think she’s dying. They want you to replace her in *Cleopatra*.... If she dies, they’ve got to start shooting with a new Cleopatra within 3 days.’ Shocked by his coldness, Collins replied: ‘I can’t—I couldn’t do it—I know Elizabeth ... I would feel too ghoulish stepping into her shoes like this.’ Still, her agent told her to standby, then called the next morning saying: ‘You’re off the hook, Liz is going to make it’ (Collins, 1985, p. 186-188). Taylor’s emergency admission was worldwide news, Monroe’s departure from hospital was a comparatively minor event.



Figure 5.3

Elizabeth Taylor leaving her London clinic with Eddie Fisher after her near death experience. Compare the volume of press in attendance to that in Figure 6.2 (Alamy, 2023).

‘I saw God, I touched God’s hand and I saw Mike. And Mike told me he loved me. And I love you more than I love God. I love you more than I love my children’ (Fisher, 1999, p. 187).

⁶⁷ Taylor’s possible death was world news, some papers even reported she was dead. Taylor (1988, p. 49) later joked she ‘got the best notices of my life!’

⁶⁸ Monroe’s press agent working for the Arthur Jacobs Press Agency but assigned specifically to Monroe.

⁶⁹ See also Fisher, 1981, p. 182-183; Bret, 2011, p. 139-140; Rubython, 2011, p. 423

⁷⁰ Nurses held a mirror for her to see him, and she scribbled a note asking: ‘Am I going to die because I feel like I am?’ Fisher shook his head (David and Robbins, 1977, p. 124).

Taylor's illness confirmed her superwoman status. On 6 March, Rogell told Skouras Taylor was improving. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 65)⁷¹ went to the hospital where Dr Goldman said the tracheotomy might leave an inch long scar. Mankiewicz visited the next day. Taylor's parents flew to be with her, while Hanley⁷² – Taylor's secretary – told reporters, 'I am more hopeful now.' Exhausted, Wanger concluded 'news about Liz is a little better.'⁷³ On 8 March, doctors began removing Taylor from her iron lung for short periods to rebuild her strength. On 10 March, *The Times* confirmed she was out of danger. The following day doctors removed the tracheotomy, but she still struggled to breathe because of the pain. On 12 March, Skouras summoned Rogell and Mankiewicz to New York but not Wanger, who visited Taylor. Skouras told Wanger he would arrive on Tuesday and urged him to 'do anything she wants to make her happy, and healthy. That's all that counts—forget about the picture.' The next day Skouras told Fisher he was unwell so unable to travel, marking the beginning of Skouras' illness, which would progressively worsen over the next year. Taylor ate her first solids on 14 March.

Taylor changed *Cleopatra's* trajectory. Goldstein told Skouras only Mankiewicz was indispensable 'until the time preproduction activities are resumed.' Rogell wrote to McLean, saying he assumed Fox had not paid Taylor because she had been unable to perform since she arrived in September 1960, but cautioned him not to discuss matters until Skouras had spoken to Taylor. He also explained that Mankiewicz and Wanger still wanted to use Finch but could not make any definite arrangements until Rogell and Mankiewicz had flown to New York the following day to discuss Finch and Boyd with Skouras. Eventually, Fox paid off Finch⁷⁴ and Boyd for £150,000 each. Fox suspended production scrapping the entire UK shoot, including

⁷¹ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 264-265; Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 158; Mann, 2009, p. 293; Allan, 2011 [1961], p. 148; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 77.

⁷² See biography in Appendix 1.

⁷³ Later, Guilaroff (and Griffin, 1996, p. 213-214) recalled suggesting to Fisher that Blackstone could fly to London with staphylococcal bacteriophage-lysate, a new drug unavailable in England (Walker, 1990, p. 230). Blackstone rushed over with the drug, running from his Boeing 707 to a waiting car. Alerted in advance, customs officials rapidly cleared the medicine (Rice, 1962, p. 145-146).

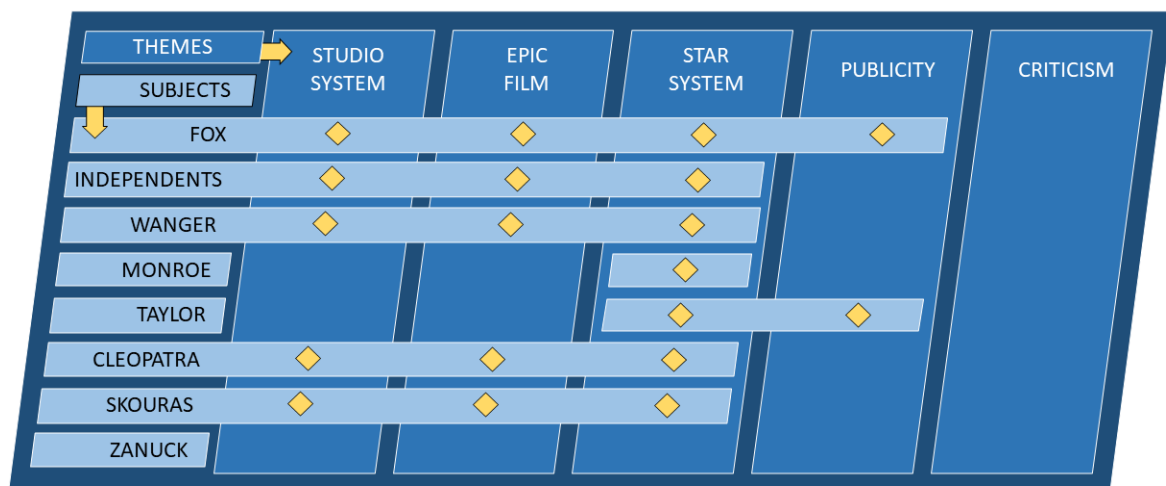
⁷⁴ Finch stated: 'I did Caesar's arrival in Alexandria—and I took a bath. In this scene I was in a chopped-off barrel, what they call a "fielder the bath," and they were supposed to cut from me to Elizabeth Taylor in her bath. You know, the Egyptians were really hot on baths. But, of course, they never got a shot of Elizabeth because she was ill at the time. Then followed her arrival in the rug and their dinner scene. After that, nothing happened.... After Cleopatra closed down, a fellow came to me and asked me if I'd like to play Pontius Pilate. I told him, 'I never want to see another toga as long as I live!' (Sheppard, 1975, p. 261).

the massive set (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 78),⁷⁵ as Mankiewicz began writing, *Cleopatra* entered a second pre-production phase.

SUMMARY

Figure 5.4

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Thematic Summary Chapter 5



Cleopatra's lack of a viable script demonstrated Skouras' failure to address problems with Fox's core production business. Blaming Wanger and telling him to adjust the budget demonstrated Skouras' failure to respond to changes in the studio system. As 1961 began, Fox needed to maintain its cashflow, but seeing the potential of incorporating Fox into a larger conglomerate, Wall Street investors began gathering Fox stock.

Wanger struggled to handle *Cleopatra's* scale alone, and found an ally in Mankiewicz, whom Skouras selected because he had described the kind of intimate film Skouras envisaged. However, Mankiewicz changed his approach, because seeing how *Ben-Hur* (1959) and *Spartacus* (1960) balanced intimacy and scale he saw how he could adapt DeMille's template. A well-crafted, realistic script, aligned with Mankiewicz' self-styled reputation as a film-author and – like Wanger – his interest in strong female characters. *Cleopatra* would develop his film-

⁷⁵ See also Parker, 1989, p. 192; Fisher, 1999, p. 189; Rothman, 2011, 0:12:49; Stern, 2019, p. 318.

author approach but move away from the Fox house-style Zanuck had developed. With no viable script, Mankiewicz came under increasing pressure to write one.

Taylor's contract consolidated the package model that powered changes to the studio and star systems, but Fox continued to resist. Taylor exerted her considerable power by objecting to the Mamoulian script because she feared failing to meet audience expectations. Her increased power made her more resilient to negative publicity: confirming her emerging superwoman status.

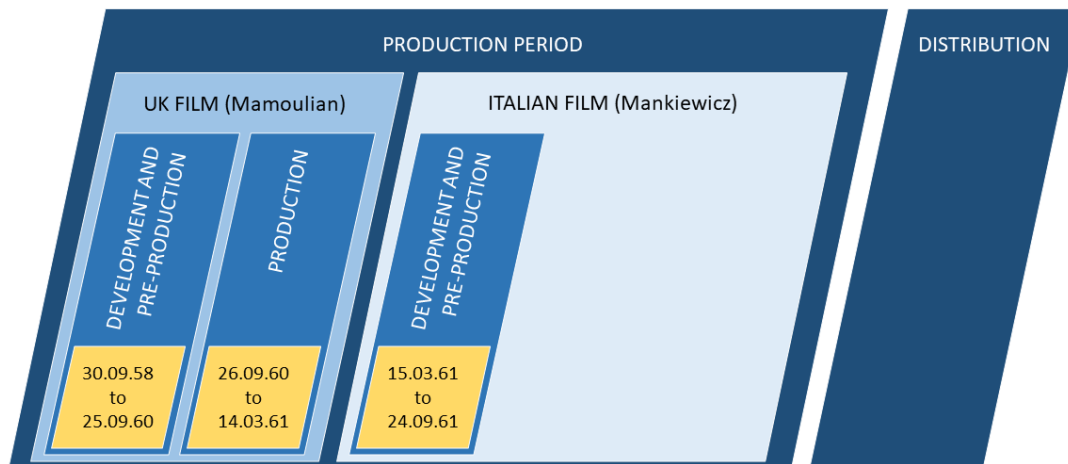
Replacing Mamoulian with Mankiewicz was clearly plotted, demonstrating that Skouras regarded independent creatives as interchangeable. Fox continued to exclude Wanger from decisions about his own film or offer him staff to oversee the budget and production. Similarly, in direct contrast to Taylor's power, Fox continued to treat Monroe, their major contract artist, as a commodity. Although *The Misfits* (1961) was not a Fox production, Fox ignored its impact on Monroe's health. With *Cleopatra* costs increasing, and under pressure from an expanded Fox board, Skouras instructed her to make the final film she owed them.

During the UK shoot, the film's engagement with publicity shifted. Again, confirming her superwoman status, Taylor retaliated against invasive publicity by launching various lawsuits. Her illness was a huge blow for Fox, but as *Cleopatra* moved to its next phase public interest in Taylor increased exponentially.

WORDS BEFORE BLOWS

(*Julius Caesar* – Act 5, Scene 1)

Figure 6.1



Fox could not afford to write-off *Cleopatra* (Solomon, 2002, p. 142-143): it had few films in production and needed to make *Cleopatra* to trade out of its debt. Writing-off the entire film would have doubled the \$7,000,000. These financial pressures reinforced internal power struggles, so Skouras denied Wanger and Mankiewicz' requests to postpone the shoot to complete the screenplay. Instead, the board chose to make *Cleopatra* its studio-saving epic production but failed to provide Wyler and Kubrick's level of preparation. As Brown argued, 'naïveté and compulsive behaviour were the order of the day... we never gave up on an obsession because we were fuelled by the idea that every obsession makes money' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:27:28). Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 73) argued that Fox was only interested in blockbuster films.

MARCH–JUNE 1961

In March, having subpoenaed Hollywood's 2 largest talent agencies, Robert Kennedy's justice

department discovered that 10-50% deals with MCA clients had generated its annual \$82,000,000 income.¹ Kennedy authorised a federal grand jury probe into MCA (Sharp, 2003, p 100-102). To celebrate *My Fair Lady's* fifth anniversary,² Ed Sullivan devoted an entire show to Lerner and Loewe with a 17-minute *Camelot* finale, featuring Andrews (2008, p. 295) and Burton. On 14 March 'there was a line halfway down the block. *Camelot* was finally a hit' locking Burton into a long run (Lerner, 1994, p. 245). That day, Taylor saw her children for the first time since entering hospital (Sheppard, 1975, p. 266).³ Rogell and Mankiewicz flew to New York, meeting Skouras the next day to discuss the shooting location. Skouras later recalled thanking God they were making the picture 'in our own Studio... but Joe opposed it... he was responsible for altering the opinion of everybody because he felt it would be the best for the picture from the artistic point of view and cost less money' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 203). Urging Skouras to meet Taylor and Fisher before tying up space in Rome, Goldstein – quoting Frings – said Taylor could return to California but would not work in Europe. Studio manager Doc Merman told Goldstein that television production and *The Greatest Story Ever Told* meant there was insufficient space on the Fox lot, but if Skouras thought *Cleopatra* pre-empted all other productions, 'they would manage' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, P. 78-79).

Location discussions continued.⁴ On 20 March, Taylor spoke of convalescence and working in a warm climate (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 67-68), not contradicting Goldstein, nor ruling out Europe. Wanger and Mankiewicz discussed the sets, props, and costumes with Pinewood staff, then departed for location scouting in Rome. On 24 March, Fisher told Rogell he was determined to protect Taylor, which Rogell relayed to Wanger as shooting in Hollywood. 3 days later, Goldstein told Skouras that Kennamer would advise 'within a week or so' about shooting in Italy. Meanwhile Johnston, DeCuir, Wanger and Mankiewicz planned to move onto

¹ Such high shares were illegal, provoking Kennedy to order the grand jury probe.

² Having taken \$17,000,000 on Broadway and \$14,650,000 nationally, *Variety* (1961h) declared *My Fair Lady* (1964) the top musical comedy of all time.

³ Taylor also allowed press to photograph her, but only after a discrete bandage covered her wound and Alexandre of Paris flew in to style her hair. She did not speak to the press, but later drank champagne with Truman Capote, who observed the 'major media event' and thought Taylor must be 'desperately ill. But when I saw her, I realized she wasn't quite as sickly as she might have wanted people to believe. She seemed pale and a trifle thin, but she looked wonderful.' Taylor gave Capote a big hug and 'gurgled' "hello. I'm so glad you came" (Heymann, 1995, p. 222-223; Mann, 2009, p. 294).

⁴ Brower (2022, p. 173) suggests that the matter was decided in response to Fisher's request they while they were back in London, but this is untrue.

Egypt before returning to Hollywood, unless Fox decided to shoot in Italy (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 80). Taylor and Fisher returned to Hollywood, reassuring Wanger they were 'rarin' to start *Cleopatra* again,' although Taylor had told the New York press she planned to do nothing for several months (Mann, 2009, p. 295). The location remained undecided.

Fox worried about costs and insurance. On 29 March, *Variety* (1961v) reported on the importance of *The Longest Day* and *Cleopatra* to Fox's fiscal future, along with *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, which Skouras had finally convinced Stevens to direct⁵ (Lev, 2013, p. 232-233). On 1 April, considering *Cleopatra*'s suspension costs, Merman and Goldstein calculated Taylor's April to 10 June living allowance was \$33,000. They also considered Frings' request for transportation to New York to see Skouras. Fox directors discussed and approved a \$125,000 payment to Taylor – on account – to cover her medical bills (Unknown, 1961a).⁶ Thinking Taylor a bad risk, Lloyds suggested recasting with Gardner, Loren, or Monroe. Skouras refused, saying Taylor had 'an aura of invulnerability' (Cashmore, 2016, p. 64). Amid these financial concerns, on 2 April, Zanuck arrived in New York to discuss *The Longest Day*. Revealing the emerging power struggle, *Variety* (1961q) noted no group of Fox stockholders had approached Zanuck – Fox's biggest single stockholder – for his support.⁷ Fox's financial concerns continued.

On 1 April Fox received Mankiewicz' *Cleopatra* treatment. On 8 April,⁸ Skouras (1961) described his plans for marketing what he now regarded as an epic production. Aiming to repeat his success with CinemaScope, Skouras requested 1250 feet of footage to show in 175 cities worldwide. Planning a 6-month advance ticket sale on a reserved seat basis, Skouras urged Mankiewicz to progress 'courageously, completely disregarding the past.... A campaign based upon Joseph L. Mankiewicz' name that will give new spirit to the production and will

⁵ Sometime in April, Fisher (1999, p. 180) stated Stevens begged Taylor to play Mary Magdalene in *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965).

⁶ Fox paid Taylor \$6,000 expenses on 4 April for the first two weeks of April, then a further cheque for \$3000 for the week of April 17.

⁷ On 3 May 1961, *Variety* (1961k) noted that in December 1960 Skouras picked up 62,000 shares of common stock, bringing his total holdings to 85,000 shares and his family own another 37,766 shares. In 1960 Skouras earned \$175,248 and his contract would expire on 31 Dec 1963.

⁸ Chrissochoidis (2013b, p. 80-83) dates the letter to 17 April 1961, but the one in the Fox Archives is dated 8 April.

convert defeat into victory.... [can you] give such a picture to the world ... a picture that will fully reach the expectations of the people?’ Indicating how he saw Mankiewicz, Skouras added ‘if you are the leader, you will be supported. Don’t expect anybody to tell you what to do, but you are going to tell them what is to be done after careful analytical approach to the project based upon the experienced assistance of the people of [Fox]. We will meet and study your plans and I assure you they will be followed.’ Skouras finally saw *Cleopatra* as an epic, and – ignoring Wanger – Mankiewicz as its director-producer. Skouras’ marketing plans mirrored Selznick’s for *Gone with the Wind* (1939).

Yul Brynner presented the Best Actress Oscar on 17 April,⁹ announcing: ‘Elizabeth Taylor—*Butterfield 8*’ (Rice, 1962, p. 155-156).¹⁰ Taylor expressed her gratitude (Oscars, 2009, 00:00),¹¹ yet Taylor (1988, p. 57-58) hated the film, later recalling ‘it was one of those instances when the Academy has a delayed reaction and awards the Oscar for a later and lesser film’ (Amburn, 2011, p. 176). Winning ‘more than a statuette,’ Parsons (1961, p. 266-267) thought Taylor ‘won a place, again, in the world of acceptability.’ Reynolds remarked, ‘Hell, even I voted for her’ (Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 162).¹² MGM did not acknowledge Taylor’s success (Sheppard, 1975, p. 250), but on 19 April Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 69)¹³ did. She told him Kennamer still had not given her permission to work. Wanger later stated that having announced a September start date in Rome, Skouras then ordered a summer start in Hollywood; the 2 boats of sets and costumes sailing through the Panama Canal suggest Fox had already made that decision. Yet Mankiewicz was scouting locations in Rome and Egypt. Wanger returned to Hollywood on 24 April, giving Taylor a carved emerald of Cleopatra from Tsar Nicholas’ collection, reasoning ‘Liz adores to have things given to her. She’s like a child with gifts.’ Deciding where to shoot *Cleopatra* incurred more cost.

⁹ Because of renovations to the usual venue, the Oscar ceremony moved to Santa Monica. A massive traffic jam delayed many nominees and presenters, including Taylor and Fisher (Mann, 2009, p. 270).

¹⁰ Taylor’s 4 competitors were Greer Garson, Deborah Kerr, Shirley MacLaine, and Melina Mercouri.

¹¹ In a soft voice she said: ‘I don’t really know how to express my gratitude [breath] for this, after everything [breath, swallow] I guess all I can do is say thank you. Thank you with all my heart’ (Oscars, 2009, 00:00). Once in the restroom, she passed out (Cashmore, 2016, p. 63), but Taylor’s illness had redeemed her and Hollywood was saying: ‘we’re sorry’ (Haley, 1975, 0:30:43).

¹² MacLaine declared she ‘lost to a tracheotomy’ (Amburn, 2011, p. 176).

¹³ See also Geist, 1978, p. 312-313.

During April, Skouras dealt with Monroe and Zanuck. Having given birth to John Clark Gable (Ramrus, 1975, 00:00:00), Kay Gable invited Monroe to visit when she returned to Hollywood, removing Monroe's fear about causing Gable's death (Guiles, 1992, p. 409). Having persisted on casting Monroe in *Goodbye, Charlie*, Cukor – one of her preferred directors – was forced to quit because of an over-run on an MGM project. By 25 April, Skouras was told that having missed *Goodbye, Charlie's* start date Fox must agree a deal with MMP seeking Monroe's approval over the project, her director, co-stars, and give her 'a lot more money.' Skouras realised Fox had until 12 May, so told Goldstein that if Monroe refused to report on 12 May, he would seek an injunction preventing her working elsewhere. Monroe must choose *Goodbye, Charlie*, or a Wald film in development, titled *Celebration* (Leaming, 1999, p. 385-386).¹⁴ On 27 April, someone told Skouras that only Zanuck could solve Fox's problems (Custen, 1996, p. 359-360). Instead, Skouras raised significant objections to *The Longest Day's* draft script (Lev, 2013, P. 237).¹⁵

Mankiewicz and Wanger assembled their production team. Having directed *The Barefoot Contessa* (Mankiewicz, 1954, Eureka Entertainment) at Cinecittá, on 29 April Mankiewicz argued Italy had a superior climate, locations, and atmosphere, and was more economical (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29). He convinced Sharaff¹⁶ to design Taylor's costumes.¹⁷ Including 40 cut from the final film, Taylor's wardrobe included 105 costumes with shoes and jewellery.¹⁸ The designs reflected an early 1960s style, especially Taylor's makeup, hair and plunging necklines. With only a breakdown of the scenes, Sharaff's research was thorough: 16 complex ceremonial costumes drew on ancient tomb paintings. Their manufacture began in

¹⁴ See also Badman, 2012, p. 24-25; Morgan, 2012, p. 304.

¹⁵ Skouras said Zanuck should focus on the Germans' lack of patriotism; the Allied forces' heroism; and on the men Skouras believed were the true heroes: Roosevelt, Churchill, Marshall, Montgomery, and – Skouras' friend – Eisenhower (Lev, 2013, p. 237).

¹⁶ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 74) described her as 'the most sensitive and most brilliant woman I ever worked with in design.... She has perfect taste, very sensible, very hard-working and she likes things finished.... She is extravagant but it is all in the interest of quality and class.' Chris Mankiewicz thought her 'not terribly delightful, but a terrific costume designer (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:20:39, 0:25:55).

¹⁷ Sharaff designed around Taylor's 'high waist, large bosom, short arms, no behind, but wide hips' and accounted for the character's aging: 'one tends to think of Cleopatra as looking the same through her relatively short life, but of course the maturing had to be indicated. I found this was easiest to handle by dividing the costumes into three groups and using various styles of wigs which were made expertly by Stanley Hall in London' (Sharaff, 1976, p. 106-107, 112-113, 115).

¹⁸ Until Madonna played Evita in the film musical, Taylor held the Guinness record for being the actor to wear the most costumes in a single film.

Hollywood, a Rome costumier made the remainder. Renié designed the handmaiden costumes and Vittorio Nino Novarese replaced Messel as male costume designer (Sharaff, 1976, p. 106-107, 112-113, 115).¹⁹ Wanger convinced Shamroy to be cameraman; 'not only a trusted friend, but his personal insight is as keen as his camera's.' On 11 April, having suggested Lillian Hellman and Paul Osborn to adapt Mankiewicz' outline, Wanger now hired Randal MacDougall for \$75,000, 'a hard and fast worker and excellent researcher,' although not in Mankiewicz' class. MacDougall began research and soon adapted Buchman's outline into a draft (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 73);²⁰ which Wanger assured him he would have enough time to polish (Lev, 2013, p. 245). Wanger worked with Mankiewicz like a co-producer.

Taylor controlled the production. On 30 April, while scheduling, Wanger wrote: 'The Old Boy [Skouras] is in a panic. He hopes and prays that *Cleopatra* will do for Fox what *Ben-Hur* did for MGM.' That night, sharing drinks in New York with Taylor, Fisher, and Mankiewicz, Skouras addressed Taylor only as Cleopatra. Convinced Skouras could not, Taylor offered him 'half the money back' if he could remember her name.²¹ Much to Fox's relief, on 2 May, Kennamer agreed Taylor could start filming in Italy in September (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 74).²² Fox needed Taylor to stay healthy to complete the film.

While Mankiewicz (1961f) and Matthews viewed various sites around Rome,²³ on 3 May *Variety* (1961l) tipped Levathes – Vice-President in Charge of Television – to head of production working under Goldstein, who could concentrate 'on the creative aspect of film making.' On 5 May, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 74-78) reassured Skouras *Cleopatra* would 'undoubtedly be the most ambitious and expensive project Fox had ever undertaken.' During

¹⁹ See also Maeder, 1987, p. 50-51; Bernstein, 1994, p. 360.

²⁰ See also Geist, 1978, p. 313-314.

²¹ 'You don't know my name, do you?' Taylor said suspiciously. 'You can't remember my name!'

'You are Cleopatra!'

'You're paying me a million dollars, and you can't remember my name. Spyros, tell me my name! I'll give you half the money back!'

'Ehh . . . ehh . . . , you are Cleopatra!'

Much to Fox's relief, on 1 May, Kennamer agreed Taylor could start filming in Italy in September (Maddox, 1979, p. 166; Carter, 2008, p. 141).

²² See also Maddox, 1979, p. 166; Carter, 2008, p. 141.

²³ They viewed the estate of Don Maria Sforza Cesarini in Fumicino, then the next day Rome's EUR Museum and in Frascati the Villa Aldobrandini (Mankiewicz, 1961f).

the layoff, having improved the concept, Wanger requested more time for Mankiewicz to redesign. Plastic surgery on Taylor's scar in early July would delay her wardrobe and make-up tests, and Wanger believed September was 'the finest month of the year in Italy; and October was 'Egypt's finest month,' after which Taylor could return to shoot interiors in Hollywood. Taylor's illness won Mankiewicz 6 months (Cronyn, 1991, p. 329), but on 5 May, Mankiewicz (1961j) pleaded for a postponement to complete the screenplay because in Taylor he saw a sexually driven love story requiring an entirely new screenplay (Cashmore, 2016, p. 64). Skouras said the board would never agree to paying Taylor \$50,000 a week plus \$3,000 for expenses to sit around doing nothing. Mankiewicz argued that paying Taylor \$500,000 outweighed the cost of entering a production unprepared (Geist, 1978, p. 314). Mankiewicz was formulating '2 separate, but closely-linked, films – Cleopatra and Caesar and Cleopatra and Antony – each to run three hours, both receiving simultaneous theatrical release,' which Mankiewicz realised he would have to write (Heymann, 1995, p. 219-220). The 2-film idea existed only in Mankiewicz' mind, it was never Fox's official approach, but it profoundly affected everything.

Skouras and Mankiewicz developed their teams. On 9 May, eager to work with Mankiewicz, especially in Rome, Pan agreed to choreograph the procession scene for \$2,000 a week and a weekly \$300 per diem, plus housing and first-class travel expenses and a guarantee of 15 consecutive weeks minimum (Franceschina, 2012, p. 241-242).²⁴ On 10 May, *Variety* (1961f) described Skouras, Goldstein and Levathes discussing plans for 3 days. On 12 May, having unsuccessfully pursued Trevor Howard and Brando (Christopher, 2000, p. 72-73), Mankiewicz told Skouras that his refusal to approve Burton's casting as Antony 'despite my most fervent urging' was disheartening.²⁵ Mankiewicz (1961k)²⁶ argued Taylor was 'perhaps the greatest pre-sold billing in the history of entertainment.' Adding, he had 'taken the most gigantic, the most difficult, and in many ways the most frightening undertaking of my career. I am only too well aware that it involves not only the creation of a great film but also the very existence of a

²⁴ His credit would be 'Choreography by Hermes Pan' on a separate card. Working on *Flower Drum Song* (Koster, 1961, Ross Hunter Productions) at the time, Pan commenced work on 15 June, although his contract amended the start to a week later (Franceschina, 2012, p. 241-242).

²⁵ Fisher (1981, p. 202) states he suggested Burton for Antony, which is unlikely, more likely, Fisher wanted to emphasise Taylor's betrayal.

²⁶ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 84-86.

great studio. I was aware of it when I accepted the responsibility in response to your urgings and to your often-reiterated trust and confidence in my creative judgment as well as your often reiterated assurance.’ Mankiewicz understood Fox’s financial peril.

On 14 May, Fox’s board approved Levathes’ appointment (Wolfe, 2006, p. 482-483).²⁷ Like Skouras, Levathes was Greek-American, but like Goldstein lacked experience of film production. Fox’s producers and directors (Lev, 2013, p. 228) despaired.²⁸ Negulesco thought him ‘a tall, dark man, with manners and the faraway look of a man with responsibilities beyond his understanding or ability’ (Victor, 1999, p. 170). Mankiewicz thought him ‘only capable, with difficulty, of ordering a ham sandwich’ (Geist, 1978, p. 308).²⁹ On 15 May, Goldstein told Skouras that having met with Mankiewicz and his unit, they could only estimate a budget if the entire production department stopped to prepare it, but after Mankiewicz, Johnston, DeCuir and cameraman Bill Mellor took another reconnaissance trip to Rome and Cairo, a budget would be more realistic (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 86-87).

That day, at a meeting with Gang, Frings, Levathes, Ferguson and Merman, Taylor agreed to an 18 September start date, but used her contractual right to request shooting in Europe. Skouras, Fisher and Kennamer favoured Hollywood, but Taylor supported Mankiewicz. Fisher (1999, p. 191) opened a sell-out run that night at the Desert Inn in Vegas earning \$25,000 a week.³⁰ Taylor sat at the front for nearly every show wearing Fisher’s wedding ring on her left hand, and Todd’s on her right (Waterbury, 1964, p. 280). The next day, Mankiewicz confirmed Goldstein’s opinion that any budget at this stage would be ‘totally worthless.’ Acknowledging Olivier had declined Caesar, he repeated his request to cast Burton (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 88-89). The Fox stockholders’ meeting discussed 1960’s failure³¹ blaming losses on *Cleopatra*’s setbacks. Skouras admitted England might not have been the best choice but regained

²⁷ Gould, Loeb, and Judge Samuel Rosenman (friend of President Kennedy) were all present.

²⁸ See also Solomon, 2002, p. 130.

²⁹ Moskowitz declared Levathes ‘was going out there to share the no authority with Goldstein.’

³⁰ Goldstein was in Vegas at the time, prompting Skouras to ask him to give Fisher ‘heartfelt good wishes’ (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 86-87).

³¹ *Variety* (1961f) described Rosenstein, a 100-shareholder and owner-editor of Hollywood periodical ‘Close-Up,’ criticising Skouras throughout the meeting. In a 5-page summary issued prior to the meeting, Rosenstein had accused Fox of nepotism and grilled Skouras and others about the \$1,900,000 cost of *Francis of Assisi* (1961), which he considered a ‘bomb’.

command of the meeting by telling stockholders of *Cleopatra's* new \$8,000,000 budget – knowing the estimate was nearer to \$14,000,000 (Solomon. 2002, p. 142).

Antony casting problems continued. On 18 May, Skouras told Wanger that after 'most serious soul-searching deliberation' he preferred Boyd – contracted to Fox – and strongly opposed Burton.³² Recalling the Stockholders' meeting Skouras added: 'We would be under the most severe criticism and accusations if we went outside to take an inferior box-office value like Burton, and besides this will cost us three times the money.' Yet Skouras then asked Mankiewicz to secure the right deal with Burton. At Mankiewicz' request, to avoid his version carrying the budget of Mamoulian's version, Fox assigned *Cleopatra* a new production number, J-04. Goldstein informed Skouras that MacDougall had completed two weeks on *Cleopatra* for WALWA on 12 May, so they had until 19 May to option a screenplay with compensation of \$72,500 for 16 weeks' services. The next day, Skouras urged Goldstein to 'do everything possible to make the right deal in securing' Burton (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 89-93), which was underway by 5 June (Wanger, 1961a). Skouras had promised to market the film under Mankiewicz' name,³³ so on 22 May, Frank L. Davis wrote to Philip Einfeld about some *Cleopatra* advertising that credited Mankiewicz, but not in line with Fox's contractual obligations (Davis, 1961).³⁴

Meanwhile, Fox's board targeted Zanuck's *The Longest Day*. On 24 May, Zanuck arrived in New York to meet Richard Zanuck, Jose Ferrer, and Fox executives to discuss *The Chapman Report* (Cukor, 1962, Darryl F. Zanuck Productions). Denying he was there to talk about *The Longest Day*, *Variety* (1961o) reported that its budget worried important Fox stockholders. Richard Zanuck warned his father that some board members wanted to scapegoat Zanuck for Fox's disastrous finances, that Skouras had threatened to cancel it and 'take the loss up till now.' Zanuck reasoned Skouras did not want to stop the picture, but 'had lost all control.'

³² Burton led the *Camelot* company lead, for instance when a fire broke out backstage in June 1961, he doused it with a fire hose and subsequently became an honorary fire chief for the New York Fire Service. Burton had stopped chasing Andrews, but still pursued the chorus girls, who were often heard singing: 'I wonder who the King is screwing tonight.' Burton began an affair with a Copacabana Club dancer he met soon after he arrived in New York, called Pat Tunder (Rubythron, 2011, p. 397-398).

³³ Mankiewicz was to receive a credit 75% of the largest size of type used in connection to the film. Fox was to note this for all future advertisements.

³⁴ See also Einfeld, 1961.

Gould and Loeb led the attack. ‘Who wants this kind of picture? Let’s take a \$3,000,000 loss and get out.’

Richard Zanuck watched his furious father deliver a 4-hour talk about the world-wide interest in D-Day. ‘I’ve never seen a performance like it. He kept circling the table, and he sat down. At the end of this long, long thing, [he] looked at them all, and said: “And then the picture starts.”’ Zanuck waited outside, while General James van Fleet called his fellow board members idiots: ‘this picture will make more than any other picture.’ The board’s World War II veterans – Clarkson first and then Lehman – swung the vote in Zanuck’s favour, he estimated 6 to 5. Zanuck could continue, but if he spent over \$8,000,000, they would shut down production (Mosley, 1985, p. 449).³⁵ On 2 June Wald told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 79-80) about the frustration other producers on the lot felt as the bankers took over. Wall Street board members did not understand filmmaking.

On 6 June, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 80-82) told Mankiewicz of his plan to go to New York with MacDougall’s completed outline to offer Burton \$250,000 for 30 weeks. Taylor was excited by Burton’s casting. Wanger and Mankiewicz discussed the rumour that Skouras would move to Hollywood to help Goldstein run the studio, because the Wall Street faction thought ‘Skouras was so efficient in production.’ Adding, Skouras would ultimately ‘outwit the whole crowd,’ because he was secretly negotiating a 4-picture deal with Taylor.³⁶ Having been told to ‘spare no expense but make it the most spectacular thing ever seen in movies,’ Pan’s choreography impressed Wanger (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:15:52). Pan wanted ‘400 horses, chariots, girls on elephants tossing coins, cobras, pole-vaulters, and African warriors,’ for his pageant/ballet (Franceschina, 2012, p. 234-235). With daily production costs nearing \$70,000, *Cleopatra* already cost \$3,000,000 more than *Ben-Hur* (1959) (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:39:06). Wanger could not manage its scale alone.

³⁵ See also Gussow, 1971, p. 228-229; Hofferma, 2000, 0:07:59; Custen, 1996, p. 364.

³⁶ On 1 June, Fisher had told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 80) about a deal Taylor, Frings and Warner were working on. ‘It’s the biggest deal ever made, and if Fox doesn’t handle the rest of *Cleopatra* properly, we won’t finish it.’ Wanger supposedly told Levathes, who told Wanger, Fox was about to sign Liz to a four-picture deal to follow *Cleopatra*. On 21 June, *Variety* (1961I) revealed Fisher’s plans to produce 4 features, 2 with Taylor, in association with Warners, under the banner of Fisher’s newly formed New Frontier Pictures Inc. Frings negotiated with Warners for both of his clients.

Fisher (1981, p. 193) sang at Kirk and Ann Douglas' seventh wedding anniversary party in Vegas on 7 June. Also in Vegas, Fisher and Taylor went to see Sinatra with Dean and Jeannie Martin and Monroe: one of the few times Taylor and Monroe met.³⁷ The next day in New York, after seeing *Camelot*, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 82)³⁸ met Burton at the 21 who entered, like a 'football hero', with chorus-girl Pat Tunder. Offering him \$250,000 for 30 weeks, Wanger asked about Burton's availability for late September. Saying he would not be available, Burton called for the bill, winking at Tunder. 'We'll buy you out' Wanger replied, Burton suggested starting in January and requested \$20,000 a week for any overages.³⁹ On 12 June, an angry Levathes suggested Wanger should reduce Burton's contract to \$200,000 for 30 weeks. Hearing nothing for two weeks, Burton assumed Wanger and Skouras had changed their minds, but they replied to Hugh French, Burton's Hollywood agent, leaving only the question of the cost of buying-out Burton's *Camelot* contract, adding more expense.

Skouras and Levathes continued to exclude Wanger. On 12 June, back in Hollywood, Mankiewicz was enthusiastic about the Rome locations, but not Egypt. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 83) complained that Skouras spoke to Mankiewicz, then called Wanger to reprimand him for not attending meetings. Wanger maintained his duty was to oversee the writing of the script as he and Mankiewicz planned it. That afternoon, a meeting in Levathes' New York office, without Wanger, discussed Taylor's contract revisions. Levathes said due consideration would be given and he would advise Frings and Gang 'in due course.' Sharaff met Taylor that day, and the next signed her contract, working for just over a year.⁴⁰ Her fee was \$1,500 for 10 weeks with carry-over at the same rate (Unknown 1961b).⁴¹ Fox excluded Wanger from key decisions.

³⁷ Fisher recalled Monroe being drunk and her breasts falling out of her low-cut dress, and Sinatra's anger. Taylor, equally under the influence, told one photojournalist 'Oh, my God, that Marilyn Monroe is a mess, isn't she? How she keeps her beauty, I'll never know. She simply shouldn't drink if she can't hold her liquor. Now, me, I know how to hold my liquor.' She then 'flashed her famous violet eyes, threw back a martini, and laughed giddily.' Seeing the reporter writing this down, she snatched his note pad, smacked him with it playfully on the back of the head saying: 'Now, that was strictly off the record, buster.' The journalist recalled the alcohol on Taylor's breath was so strong he found himself backing away from her reflexively (Taraborrelli, 2009, p. 334-335).

³⁸ See also Ferris, 1981, p. 115; Rubythorn, 2011, p. 425-427; Cashmore 2016, p. 121

³⁹ This ultimately earned him an extra \$750,000.

⁴⁰ 19 June 1961 to 29 June 1962.

⁴¹ \$30 expenses per day and \$25 per week for automobile rental. Her credit would read: Elizabeth Taylor's Costumes Designed by Irene Sharaff (Unknown, 1961b).

On 14 June, Green (1961) mentioned persistent requests for Zanuck to return to Fox. In Paris, Zanuck stated 'there are no foreseeable circumstances which could induce me to reassume the entire production load.' In New York, Fox's executive committee, now chaired by Gould, agreed to Skouras' recommendation for Goldstein to resume charge of European film production and Rogell his Hollywood studio-manager role. Skouras introduced his 'new production cabinet' on 19 June: Levathes was temporary production chief, Merman executive studio-manager, Ted Strauss story head, Owen McLean casting head, Cyril Landau studio executive, and John Healy assistant to Levathes. Rogell reported to Skouras only (*Variety*, 1961k).

On 21 June, considering Taylor's availability during the UK shoot, Levathes and Ferguson agreed she was unavailable for 4 pay-weeks and 6 free-weeks. On 23 June, Fox told Frings and Gang, Taylor had contributed to the film's \$25,000,000 breakeven point. The board suggested filing a suit against her; Skouras resisted; Gang welcomed the idea (Unknown 1961c). Skouras' reorganised team still lacked leadership.

Cleopatra's development and pre-production continued in tandem. Development was evident in the 19-24 June first draft screenplay conference (Mankiewicz, 1961l).⁴² Without a script, pre-production was limited, even though Skouras told Levathes to impress the starting date upon Mankiewicz and Wanger: 'not to lose even one hour.' On 25 June, Wanger again requested 'Ascarelli to handle publicity for *Cleopatra* in Italy' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 94). On 30 June, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 84) recorded the decision to shoot in Italy, giving DeCuir and Johnston barely 3 months to organize, staff, and construct the Italian production,⁴³ not *Ben-Hur's* (1959) year of preproduction (Geist, 1978, p. 313).

Taylor's concern was where to live in Rome. Wanger offered to look for her. He and Mankiewicz also agreed to offer a role to McDowall, Taylor's great friend. Without a finished script, the crew constructed the Roman Forum and Alexandria sets, 'just in case' (Gussow, 1971, p. 240). Later, reporting on significant instances of excessive spending, Rogell argued

⁴² See also Mankiewicz 1961m.

⁴³ The subsequent demand for scaffolding caused a national shortage (Cronyn, 1991, p. 340).

Fox threw away \$5,000,000: Wanger accepted 'DeCuir got away from me.... If he puts up a tower, he wants to put something on top of the tower... somebody has to know how to handle him and if he can run between 3 or 4 people, he's got you licked' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 362-366). As with the UK shoot, failure to rush pre-production caused an overspend.

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Fox still wrangled with Lloyds and Taylor. On 7 July Skouras (1961) and Koegel discussed Lloyds \$1,750,000 offer, which covered only half the loss. On 11 July, with her guarantee period over, Fox revised Taylor's (1961) employment agreement. She acknowledged the \$125,000 already paid and agreed to now render her services in Italy starting on 18 September 1961. She would work for 8 free weeks until 12 November 1961, thereafter her weekly carry-over rate was £50,000 or pro rata thereof,⁴⁴ with retakes \$8333.33 per day. Her transport – including a Rolls-Royce – remained unchanged, but for the 18-week period 28 August-31 December 1961, Fox reduced her weekly expense allowance to \$1,500; for the week following (7 January 1962) it was \$2600; thereafter returning to \$3000. Frings was no longer limited to a single trip. Taylor would receive \$750,000 against 10% of the gross (the first \$7,500,000), with Fox agreeing to pay \$500,000 on 1 September 1965 or three years after the general release of the picture, whichever was the earlier. Thereafter, no further sums were payable until the picture grossed \$7,500,000. Taylor acknowledged amendments and receipt of payments to date. Taylor also returned to public life, giving a speech⁴⁵ at a \$3,000-a-ticket fund-raising banquet for Cedars of Lebanon Hospital (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 84). For the first time she gave her account of her near-death experience in London and her vision of Todd, one she gave in subsequent interviews (Spoto, 1995, p. 180-181).⁴⁶ With her new contract, Fox agreed to pay Taylor more than \$1,000,000, but still had no agreement with Lloyds.

⁴⁴ This was based on 1 day equalling 1 sixth of a week.

⁴⁵ Written by Mankiewicz.

⁴⁶ Cashmore (2016, p. 62) noted, as an actor, Taylor developed her telling of this experience: 'I went to that tunnel, saw the white light, and Mike. I said, Oh Mike, you're where I want to be. And he said, "No, Baby. You have to turn around and go back because there is something very important for you to do. You cannot give up now." It was Mike's strength and love that brought me back.'

Pre-production continued while plastic surgeon Dr Michael Gurdin operated on Taylor's tracheotomy scar on 18 July. Maria Schell placed an ad in a German magazine, stating that a wealthy, childless [sic] foreign couple wished to adopt a baby. Soon, a poor family offered their 8-month-old daughter whose serious medical complications they could not afford to support (Spoto, 1995, p. 182, 184). The adoption process continued for over a year. The same day, Zanuck began shooting *The Longest Day*, continuing until March 1962 (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:01:15).⁴⁷ On 20 July, McLean (1961a) told Mankiewicz Frings had confirmed Trevor Howard as Caesar. The next day, Franz Waxman (1961) rejected Wanger's offer of \$20,000 to compose. By 25 July, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 85-86) thought Fox's involvement had complicated the Burton casting deal. 3 days later, he saw Sharaff's ceremonial costumes for Taylor at Western Costume, thinking them 'marvellous' and Sharaff a genius. Mankiewicz arrived in Rome (Luce Cinecittà, 2021), staying at the Excelsior Hotel (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 1:29:15)⁴⁸ where he received Skouras' recommendation to remove Sam Williams, the film's British accountant, whose 'continuous doubtful operations ... [and] snobbish attitude towards Egyptians [would] lead to uncooperative attitude with officials' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 96). Fox now managed *Cleopatra* across two continents.

Casting was incomplete. On 28 July, Mankiewicz wired McLean (1961b) about Cronyn⁴⁹ working a minimum of 20 weeks. Admitting he had been concentrating on Taylor, he could not pinpoint working times for some roles, so 'lengthy spread contracts' should protect them. Mankiewicz expressed his bitter disappointment that 7 weeks before shooting they had only a 'grand total of 6 actors [cast] out of roughly 40 principal roles.'⁵⁰ Cronyn (1991, p. 324) recalled Mankiewicz asking him "'how I'd like to play an Egyptian Polonius.'" The role was that of Cleopatra's prime minister, Sosigenes... known eventually to the company as Old Sausage Knees. There was no script for me to see, Joe having decided on an entirely new attack for the

⁴⁷ Zanuck directed over half of the film, although nominally it had 4 directors including Ken Annakin (Gussow, 1971, p. 234-235) who later recalled: 'money was always a big problem. The star actors worked for very low money, because their agents recognised it was a good thing for them to be in' (Annakin, 2006, 0:03:33,1:50:09). Steiger agreed: 'you just had to be in this picture, even if you didn't feel that it was your sort of part'. Given his \$8,000,000 limit, Zanuck invested \$2,000,000 of his own money (Zacky, Burns and Bider 2001, 0:09:50).

⁴⁸ Goldstein joined him there on 31 July (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 95).

⁴⁹ See biography in Appendix 1.

⁵⁰ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 86) records this the following day as 'only 6 of approximately 46 principal roles had been cast.'

screenplay he would write, so I had to accept on faith.’⁵¹ Without a script, casting increased salary costs.

Confirming Cronyn’s statement, 7 weeks before filming started, Mankiewicz (1961n) ⁵²decided to re-write the screenplay. Knowing Mankiewicz planned to cover Cleopatra’s life from her introduction to Caesar to her suicide, Fox had not asked him to reduce his rough draft (Geist, 1978, p. 315). On 2 August, responding to Mankiewicz’ casting criticisms, McLean (1961c) wrote of Cesare Danova, John Doucette, Herbert Berghof,⁵³ Martin Landau,⁵⁴ Carroll O’Connor, John Hoyt, McDowall and Cronyn. McLean assumed Eduardo Defilippo and Pamela Brown were set and that Harry Andrews had accepted, pending reading a script. McLean suggested Robert Stephens for Rufio and relayed Burton’s request to delay his start, arguing the \$50,000 buyout fee for Burton to leave *Camelot* in September would reduce if he left later. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 86) struggled with finding a suitable villa for Taylor and Fisher; Levathes’ objections to Kennamer’s fee;⁵⁵ and Shariff’s refusing to do costume fittings at Taylor’s bungalow. Mankiewicz confirmed his flight to London on 9 August and his request for Andrews to play Agrippa and Stephens as Rufio, but wanted further thoughts on the casting for Germanicus, Iras, Cicero, Calpurnia, Octavia, Cinna, Cimber, and Brutus. Mankiewicz, Johnston, and Fred Simpson⁵⁶ requested a list of possible assistant directors. Mankiewicz’ decision to re-write the screenplay prevented detailed planning, increasing production costs.

Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 86-87) still fought for support, describing on 4 August that Fox publicity head Charles Einfeld was reluctant to spend money, because the new board members were ‘trying to eliminate him.’ Fox already knew *Cleopatra’s* real cost, so Wanger

⁵¹ Fisher (1999, p. 204) recalled, Cronyn was in Rome four months at \$5,000 a week before his first day of work.

⁵² See also Mankiewicz 1961o, 1961p, 1961q, 1961r, 1961s, 1961t, 1961u, 1961v, 1961w.

⁵³ Berghof had 9 lines and worked on the film for 9 months (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:14:05).

⁵⁴ See biography in Appendix 1.

⁵⁵ Kennamer requested \$25,000 plus expenses for 6 weeks.

⁵⁶ As first assistant director, Simpson began as Mankiewicz’ prop man, who grew to like his ‘gruff, funny, no-nonsense’ approach (Mankiewicz and Crane, 2015, p. 63-64). Tom Mankiewicz recalled that Simpson ‘had been with dad for years as a prop man, as a second assistant ... I say with great love, because I adored Freddie Simpson, the picture was probably too big for him. He was not that experienced as a first assistant and most of Dad’s pictures are very intimate dramas.... Freddie had never tried to handle a picture this large (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:48:54).

(1961b) trying to convince Fox to increase the budget to \$8,000,000 suggested Fox was applying pressure to reduce expenditure. On 7 August, Goldstein assured Skouras Rome preparations were progressing 'very well' and that Mankiewicz would finalise casting in London on 9 August but urged Skouras to insure Mankiewicz, because the entire production was in his head (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 96). Evident when that day's shooting script described the text as indicative content only, with dialogue 'to be rewritten' (Mankiewicz 1961x).⁵⁷ Wanger was effectively Mankiewicz' assistant.

Casting continued as the Fox board changed. On 8 August, W. C. Michel became chairman of Fox's 9-strong executive committee, strengthening Skouras' authority in New York, when he was in Hollywood, reducing Gould and Loeb's power (Canby, 1961b). From Rome, on 11 August, Mankiewicz told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 87-88):⁵⁸ 'England all over again: we do not have a script, the sets aren't ready, costumes aren't ready. The props are not ready either and we need more than a million dollars' worth. We are being forced to begin shooting next month so Skouras can keep the Board of Directors quiet and because of the starting date on Liz's contract.' Having agreed to compose, North told Wanger he was happy to advise on diegetic music sequences before scoring the film.⁵⁹ North's jazz score for *The Misfits* (1961) or his epic score for *Spartacus* (1960) were very different to Waxman's old school approach. Wanger suggested Harrison when Howard's Caesar casting fell through on 15 August,⁶⁰ having worked with him previously, Mankiewicz agreed. The next day, Levathes requested Skouras send a 'top studio representative without delay to Rome to administer expenditure of funds:' nobody went. Then, having already spent millions, Fox indefinitely postponed *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. Stevens' *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959),⁶¹ shot largely on 1 set and in black and white, had cost nearly \$4,000,000 with poor returns, so Fox thought his proposed

⁵⁷ See also Mankiewicz 1961y; Mankiewicz 1961z.

⁵⁸ See also Henderson, 2009, p. 63; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 96-97

⁵⁹ Mankiewicz' sons admired North's *Spartacus* score and advised their father to use him. Years later, Chris Mankiewicz recalled North thanking him, saying: 'it was great I made so much money on *Cleopatra*, more than I've ever made on any other movie because I had to keep waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting and I could never do the score because the film wasn't finished and so I made so much extra money than I would with any other film. I couldn't be happier that you chose me to do this film" (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:21:49).

⁶⁰ At the time, Harrison was playing Sir Augustus Thwaites in Nigel Dennis's play, *August for the People*. Starring with his then lover Rachel Roberts, playing his mistress, put great strain on their relationship. The play had previewed in Newcastle before going to the Edinburgh Festival, where *The Times* thought Harrison's performance 'light and forceful,' in a heavy-handed play (Wapshott, 1991, p. 229-231).

⁶¹ The film cost of \$21,000,000 but grossed only \$12,100,000 in its first year (Lev, 2013, p. 232-233).

\$15,000,000-\$20,000,000 budget impossible (Eyman, 2021, p 204). The board did not consult Skouras about his 'dream' project,' but recognised that Fox would never survive both Stevens and Mankiewicz' films. *Cleopatra* became Fox's blockbuster epic by default.

Also, against Skouras' wishes, Mankiewicz cast Harrison as Caesar. On 21 August, Mankiewicz (1961r) revised the procession scene, while Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 88) paid Fisher's friend – Rob Abrams – to find Taylor a villa. In Edinburgh, Laurie Evans, Harrison's agent, showed him his Fox contract (Wapshott, 1991, p. 229-231).⁶² Harrison (1975, p. 184-185) asked for an early release from his Royal Court contract. Though angry, Harrison's director, George Devine, asked for Harrison to complete his contract in London on 7 Oct. The final agreement was for Harrison to complete the first 2 weeks of the London run, with Fox paying the actors for a full 5 weeks and financing the return of the Royal Court's previous production of *The Kitchen*⁶³ (Wapshott, 1991, p. 231). On 23 August, in his *Camelot* dressing-room, Burton signed his contract for \$250,000 and \$12,000 expenses, plus \$20,000 a week overage, his biggest contract to date (Rubython, 2011, p. 426).⁶⁴ In letter form, it followed the pattern of Taylor's contract, with his employment beginning on 25 September 1961. The guarantee period included 6 free weeks – so 26 weeks in total – with Fox paying \$25,000 upon execution of the agreement. Again, casting incurred more expense.

Cleopatra was not ready. Arriving in Rome on 27 August, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 19, 88) found 'no sets, no script, and no proper administrative organization.' Looking sick, Johnston faced problems 'too big for one man.' The Italian staff increased the crew to over 1,000 (Zischang, 1964, 0:00:56), so on 28 August Mankiewicz gave the 100-strong American and British crew a pep-talk about relations with Italian workers.⁶⁵ DeCuir complained about the lack of stage space. Wanger noted: 'He will take all the abuse in the world without listening to

⁶² Calling Harrison, Mankiewicz described his fight to cast him: 'The studios came up with all sorts of names, but I held out, and finally, I told them to fuck themselves, and that if they wouldn't accept you in the part, they should start finding themselves a new director. I put myself on the line for you, Rex, old boy, and they finally gave in. Isn't that great news! See you in Rome, old boy!' (Garland, 1998, p. 112).

⁶³ Ironically *The kitchen*, which replaced *August for the People*, was the show Stephens was appearing in when he was cast.

⁶⁴ On 31 August, Hart (1961) thanked Mankiewicz for giving Burton more time in *Camelot*.

⁶⁵ Mankiewicz said: 'Please bear in mind that if it is difficult to communicate with the Italians, the reason is that you do not speak their language. Not that they do not speak yours.'

anyone; he just goes on building and building. He has a great imagination combined with a terrible habit of elevating everything on platforms, which makes his sets difficult to light and photograph.’ When Wanger refused to hire the DePaulis Studio, ‘DeCuir went away unhappily, muttering that there wasn’t room enough here for his throne room, but he’d try to cram it someplace.’⁶⁶ Abrams continued the villa search. The production was prepared hastily.

Levathes set a 25 September start date and a \$10,000,000 budget – not the \$14,000,000 Skouras knew it would cost (Bernstein, 1994, p. 361-362). Cast and crew arrived in Rome during September. Angela Douglas (1985, p. 92-93)⁶⁷ – one of 12 actors⁶⁸ hired as a stock company under contract to Fox for 4 months to play any small parts as required – earned £50 a week plus expenses (More, 1979, p. 218). While the world’s media clamoured to interview Taylor or photograph the sets, *La Dolce Vita* (1960) revealed how impossible it was to control Rome’s paparazzi, which relished in depicting stars’ flaws (Cashmore, 2016, p. 116). Again, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 90-91) requested Ascarelli – who knew the press in Rome, Paris, and London – but having worked for Fox for many years was easy for Skouras to manipulate. *Cleopatra* was unprepared for the press.

Cleopatra lacked oversight. Arriving on 1 September, Taylor and Fisher⁶⁹ immediately boarded producer Sam Spiegel’s yacht for a secluded holiday before shooting (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 89-90).⁷⁰ The next day, Skouras arrived with Rogell (*Variety*, 1961t), the first Fox manager to examine the finances. Rogell admired Johnston as a production manager but insisted on approving all expenditure. For several days they discussed all known commitments. Mankiewicz instructed all department heads to provide slightly increased expenditure estimates, which totalled the \$14,057,992.22 Skouras had already estimated (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29). DeCuir was already over-budget, with the Roman Forum set covering 12 acres of Cinecittà’s backlot, but to enable easy access for the Todd-AO cameras,

⁶⁶ Eventually, the set was built in the film school studio across the road from Cinecittà.

⁶⁷ Douglas (1985, p. 92-93) recalls that Joan Sims advised her to talk to Lyons.

⁶⁸ Mankiewicz (1961z) listed: Tony Doonan, Peter Wayne, Prudence Hyman, Angela Douglas, Stephen Dartnell, Eric Corrie, Desmond Llewellyn, John Colin, Rex Garner, Dorothy Gordon, Bruce Beeby, Alan Browning.

⁶⁹ Kennamer was with them, his fee had been agreed (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 89).

⁷⁰ On 4 September, Abrams called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 90-91) from Naples saying that the Fishers had fallen in love with a 70-year-old Greek cook on their yacht and that they wanted to bring him to Rome.

DeCuir only replicated 10 original buildings that tripled the size of the real Forum.⁷¹ Taylor concluded: ‘it’s almost like a bowl of rice that never empties. I see the same things happening all over again. I hear about the same problems and see the same mistakes being made, and yet it’s a year later’ (Sheppard, 1975, p. 288).



Figure 6.2

An aerial view of DeCuir’s Roman Forum set constructed at Cinecittà Studios. The set was 10 times the size of the real forum (Alamy, 2023).

When Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 91) visited Cinecittà on 7 September, only 1 of 47 interior sets⁷² was ready and some costumes had been ripped (Solomon 2001, p. 69). Meanwhile, the land sale and increased rentals boosted Fox’s half-yearly net profit from operations, but expenditure had increased from \$53,742,416 to \$62,113,462 (*Variety*, 1961s). *Variety* (1961g) reported on Fox agreeing to Stevens producing *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) with United Artists.⁷³ Fox controlled none of this.

Taylor began adopting her daughter. Schell’s secretary, Frau Konigsbauer had met Petra Heisig – an unresponsive baby with a congenitally deformed hip – on 1 September, in Augsburg, near Munich (Spoto, 1995, p. 176, 184). German officials wanted Taylor to adopt a ‘perfect baby’

⁷¹ Mankiewicz concluded: ‘if you ask [DeCuir] to design you a toilet he comes back with a chateau. And you say “what, I didn’t ask for a chateau.” And he says: “No, here’s the toilet but here’s the house around it”’ (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:03:25, 0:03:37).

⁷² There were also 32 exterior sets.

⁷³ In the early 1950s, UA had pioneered the package system, by financing independent productions in return for a share of the profits; these deals, or ‘packages,’ mirrored MCA’s approach and, as a model of production, worked (Monaco, 2003, p. 25-26).

but on meeting Petra, who instantly said ‘Mama,’ Taylor’s instinct was to fight ‘like a tiger to get her.’ Taylor offered money and arranged necessary surgeries with clinics in Germany and Switzerland. She named her Maria, after Schell (Spoto, 1995, p. 185).⁷⁴

On 7 September, Rogell (1961a) told Levathes about struggling to budget without a script, Mankiewicz knew the 212-page version he issued to all departments that day lacked additional dialogue that would increase it to 275 pages. Neither Rogell nor Levathes intervened. Skouras said he had never seen such breath-taking sets ‘in my whole life,’ yet knowing Mankiewicz’ decision to send a second unit to Egypt and keep Taylor in Rome would prolong artists’ shooting times, Skouras described Mankiewicz’ ‘full realization’ of the problems and of Taylor needing to ‘complete her part as soon as possible.’ Rogell ordered future flights must be in economy or tourist class, telephone calls kept to a minimum and nobody working directly with tradespeople to avoid confusion and demoralisation. Johnston therefore had to do his complex job, then report to Rogell (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 97-99). Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 92) focused on Taylor’s unfinished dressing room – for which they had redesigned an entire building. Rogell did not control the expenditure.

Finally, Mankiewicz cast Harrison. On 8 September, McLean (1961d) drew up the contract, loaning Harrison from Columbine productions, for \$200,000 for 20 weeks with carry over at \$10,000 per week and expenses \$500 per week. Harrison could take 2 roundtrips from London, would have a car and chauffeur, and not have to work more than 6 days without giving consent. His 25 September starting day changed to 2 October. Fox agreed to pay the English Stage Company £6,870 for Harrison’s release and pay any loss arising from *The Kitchen* during the 4-week period commencing 25 September 1961. As co-stars, Burton and Harrison’s names must appear ‘in not less than second position of the entire cast of the photoplay.’ Only Taylor’s name would be larger. Their names would appear ‘on the same line... and the name of no other person shall appear on such line.’ Critically, in the overall advertising campaign, Burton or Harrison’s portrait likeness must appear together (Ferguson, 1961a). Negotiations concluded over the weekend (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 92).

⁷⁴ See also Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 177.

Slowly the company gathered.⁷⁵ On 11 September, transportation problems meant some were not met at the airport, while others struggled with mistakes by the housing team (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 92-93).⁷⁶ Taylor arrived at the studio at 08:12 to test 5 costumes, leaving at 16:20. Rogell was the first Fox executive to advise on the ‘terribly over-length’ and ‘too talky and [lacking] action’ script. Rogell suggested ‘keeping the bright dialogue but injecting movement and action.’ The first 30 pages were confusing because ‘we meet too many people and hear too many strange names.’ He thought audiences would not understand the Pompey element, concluding: ‘I know full well, Joe, that you intend to cut deeply into these scenes but perhaps some of my suggestions will spark an idea.... You can always file ‘em in the waste basket.’ This was not Zanuck’s level of critique. On 12 September, Taylor arrived on time for tests, but wardrobe found more ripped costume seams, so Rogell summoned studio wardrobe chief, Courtney Haslem, to reorganize the operation. The slave girls went on strike about their skimpy costumes, Magli – the Italian production manager – pointed to the male extras wearing even less.⁷⁷

Taylor arrived at the studio at 08:00 the next day to test 6 costumes, leaving at 12:15. ‘My God, isn’t this a bit too much?’ she said on seeing ‘Casa Taylor’ her now completed dressing-building.⁷⁸ Skouras’ attempt to pare the budget to \$10,000,000 had failed, so Johnston produced a \$14,000,000 version, knowing the first scene alone would cost \$67,000. Wanger recalled making the picture on two budgets: the unrealistic New York budget, and the actual costs. On 16 September Taylor arrived at 14:00 for makeup tests and left at 17:40. The production still lacked control.

⁷⁵ The on-set badge system for non-performance company members featured silver-dollar-sized badges in 3 colours: blue for production, yellow for construction, and red for visitors. Wanger’s (and Hyams, 1963, p. 92) was badge 11.

⁷⁶ See also Guild, 1970, p. 214; Fisher, 1981, p. 202-203; Kelly, 1981, p. 147.

⁷⁷ Sheppard (1975, p. 287) ascribed the strike to ‘la mano morta’ – a lifeless hand would fall innocently on a breast or thigh and if it felt no resistance, resurrect itself.

⁷⁸ It included a custom-designed California-redwood chair and her script bound in Moroccan leather. Fisher’s offices adjoined.

On 16 September, Burton and McDowell closed their *Camelot* run.⁷⁹ Toasting Burton, Hart said: 'Great actors like you are born once in a lifetime. You are as big a personality off the stage as on the stage and you are, in every sense, larger than life. I beg you not to waste your wonderful gifts. You must know you have it in you to be one of the greatest stage actors of this century' (Jenkins, 1988, p. 157-158). Someone joked about playing love scenes with Taylor: 'Nonsense' Burton retorted. 'You know how well I can take care of myself.... I must don my armour once more to play against Miss Tits' (Walker, 1990, p. 237). On 18 September, at Idlewood Airport, he told the press: 'I've known Liz for twelve years. I realise it is a little ridiculous to say that she is a dear friend of mine. Let's say we know one another and respect one another. And we will, I'm sure, find it very interesting to play together.' As Mankiewicz (1961x)⁸⁰ revised the first 134 pages of the working script, the Burtons flew to Geneva and Celigny before going to Rome (Rubythorn, 2011, p. 428-429). Burton insisted that McDowall and his boyfriend, John Valva,⁸¹ stay at his Rome villa (Bret, 2011, p. 147). Cronyn and Burton arrived in Rome on 19 September, with Sybil and Ifor – Burton's older brother – arriving soon after (Jenkins 1988, p. 160).⁸²

Press coverage of *Cleopatra* began to emerge. Hakins (1961c) described the preparedness for the restart and the 'no expense spared' determination. Explaining that no budget was set, but it would be upwards of \$12,000,000 for a slated 26-week production, and with *The Greatest Story Ever Told* cancelled, much was riding on *Cleopatra*. Echoing *Quo Vadis?* (1951) 'colossal' marketing campaign, the item described Taylor's \$6,500 gold dress, the 22,000 pairs of shoes, 26,000 costumes, the 8 armies, 4 navies and 62 [sic] sets occupying Cinecittá's 30 massive buildings and 7 sound studios. Taylor was not called that day but attended makeup and wardrobe tests at 08:00 and was dismissed 11:00, then left for Munich. Already *Cleopatra* was being sold on its scale.

⁷⁹ Andrews (2008, p. 300) recalled the shows were much harder without them and that Harrison, Burton and McDowall later sent her a photograph of them on location in their Roman costumes.

⁸⁰ See also Mankiewicz 1961y.

⁸¹ For Valva, Mankiewicz created a minor role as a Roman soldier named Valvus (Heymann, 1995, p. 232).

⁸² See also Ferris, 1981, p. 115-116.

Transporting Taylor and her entourage⁸³ to Rome cost \$3150 (20th Century Fox 1961a). On 21 September the English Stage Company acknowledged Harrison's buyout, he left the play that day (Wapshott, 1991, p. 233). In Rome, Skouras spent 'a difficult day' with Mankiewicz and Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 94) discussing budget. Despite *Variety's* \$12,000,000 estimate and Johnston's \$14,000,000 budget, Skouras warned the board would cancel if the budget was not under \$8,000,000. Mankiewicz told him to tell the board the cost would exceed \$10,000,000, asking: 'shall I put the call through for you?' Later that afternoon, at a department heads meeting, Skouras announced the budget was cut to \$10,000,000. They had already spent at least that much, so Skouras ordered the production accountant draw up a smaller budget so 'he could take it back to the Fox shareholders in New York.' The accountant refused; Skouras fired him. Someone 'more flexible' provided a \$10,413,872.60 budget, which Mankiewicz dutifully instructed each department not to exceed and agreed to inform New York if figures changed. Skouras pressured Mankiewicz to begin filming immediately and for footage to show the board. Instead, Mankiewicz pleaded for more time to write, which Skouras refused, pointing out that on 17 November, Taylor would earn \$50,000 per week. On his return to New York on 22 September, Skouras presented the new budget to the Board (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:39:42, 0:40:28).⁸⁴ Skouras was either fearful of the board or thought that cutting costs was the only way to rescue Fox, possibly both.

On 23 September, Hanley moved Taylor from Rome's Intercontinental Hotel⁸⁵ to the Villa Papa. Costing \$3,000 a month, this California-style ranch house, 7 minutes from the studio, had 8 acres of grounds, pools, and tall trees⁸⁶ (Heymann, 1995, p. 230).⁸⁷ The next day, Weiss arrived in Rome, representing the Fox publicity team, because 'the powers that be... thought the picture wasn't getting enough publicity' (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 1:21:16, 1:22:20). Yet

⁸³ Fisher, their children, their governess, Hanley, and John Lee.

⁸⁴ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29.

⁸⁵ Tom Mankiewicz recalled that when she first arrived in Rome she stayed for a brief time at the Grand Hotel, until they got a villa (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:53:44). Austin (2020) stated the Intercontinental, which being near the Via Veneto makes far more sense. Critically, both men agree that Taylor had a hotel room.

⁸⁶ Villa Papa had 7 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, huge living room, small salon, and dining room, its staff comprised a butler, 3 manservants, 4 maids, a chef, a kitchen boy, a laundry woman, and a part-time ironing lady. Taylor remembered it as 'a filthy house,' she ordered the staff to place a nylon cover over the pool so that her dogs would not drown and rip out the master bedroom carpet and replace it with a 3-inch sheepskin shag. There was a daily change of each bed, so a laundry bill of \$160 every 10 days. The food bill was \$150 a day, the alcohol bill \$450 a week (Sheppard, 1975, p. 286-287; Kelly, 1981, p. 151-152; Heymann, 1995, p. 230).

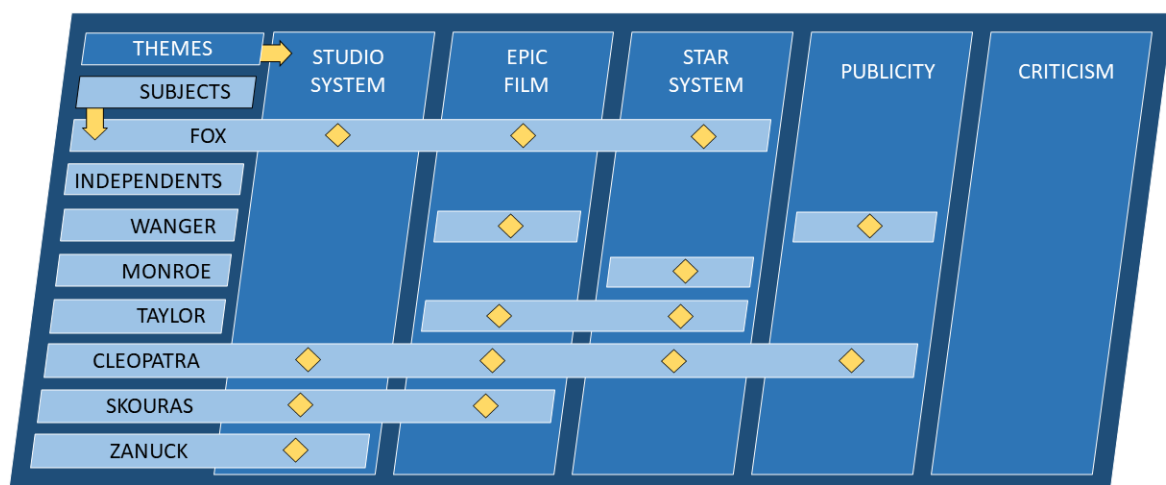
⁸⁷ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 94-95; Sheppard, 1975, p. 286-287; Kelly, 1981, p. 151-152.

that day, Communist daily paper *L'Unita* called *Cleopatra* an Italian Little Rock. Blaming Taylor, Fox – it stated – separated white and Black dancers in the canteen and dressing rooms. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 94) denied the story and a letter co-signed by over 60 members from both races denounced the false charges, the Italian Parliament discussed the matter, but there was no retraction. Wanger's other issues included the horses and elephants failing to work together in the procession rehearsals. Magli hired his relative's elephant troupe, which Pan and Cinecittà ordered off the lot after they caused damage. Fox hired new elephants from England. Also, Santi filed a lawsuit claiming \$1,000,000 damages because Fox had not fulfilled its 1959 agreement. 'We are in the papers every day without any assistance from the entertainment editor,' Wanger wrote, 'something newsworthy always seems to be happening.' Filming on *Cleopatra* began again.

SUMMARY

Figure 6.3

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Thematic Summary Chapter 6



Changes to the studio system continued, Kennedy's scrutiny of MCA and increased Wall Street investment accelerated greater horizontal integration. The Fox board's failure to recognise *The Longest Day's* box-office potential exemplified Wall Street's inability to understand filmmaking. Powershifts in New York meant that *Cleopatra* lacked oversight and viable solutions. Levathes' appointment failed to calm stockholders, who thought Skouras lacked control. Managed over two continents and lacking a proper shooting script, *Cleopatra*

continued to hinder Fox's financial recovery. Fearful of the board, Skouras even provided a false budget. With *The Greatest Story Ever Told* cancelled, Fox had to shoot *Cleopatra* to trade out of its debt.

Cleopatra became Fox's blockbuster epic by default but did not receive the development and pre-production an epic film required, stifling Mankiewicz's attempts to change the epic form. Mankiewicz's 2-film idea – to which Fox never agreed – was a radical shift, but profoundly affected everything that followed. Without a script, *Cleopatra* repeated the casting, shooting location, and budget issues of Mamoulian's production. Skouras and Levathes continued to exclude Wanger and failed to offer him essential support staff: *Cleopatra's* scale proved too much for Wanger. Mankiewicz's decision to re-write the working screenplay 7 weeks before filming started prevented detailed planning, driving up production costs. With the script in Mankiewicz's mind only, *Cleopatra's* power balance changed radically.

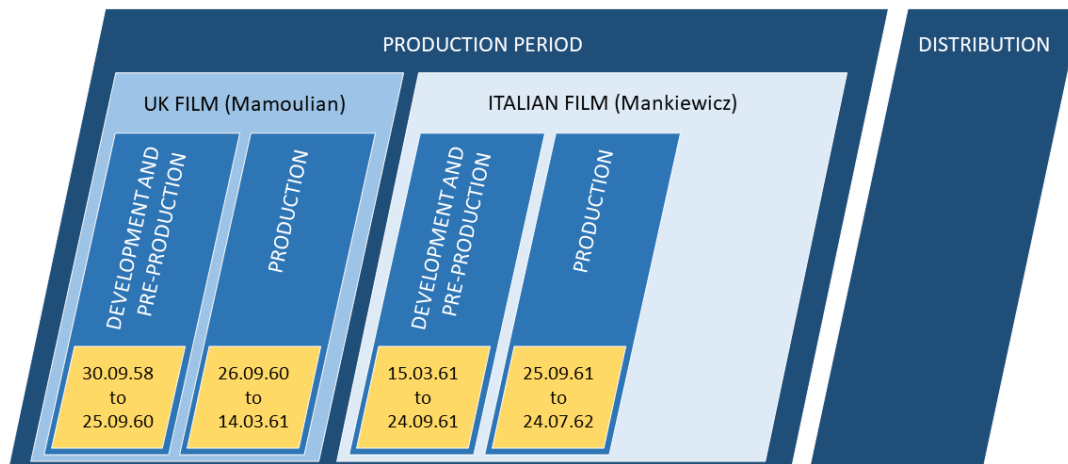
Fox still regarded Monroe as a money-making asset. Taylor's Oscar affirmed her status as Hollywood's top female actor, but she now controlled the production. Taylor's adoption of Maria and her occupancy of Villa Papa were further symbols of that power and of her conspicuous consumption. Mankiewicz knew he needed to surround Taylor with talented actors, so he fought for Burton and Harrison, incurring extras costs.

Fox began to sell *Cleopatra* on its scale, mirroring MGM's approach to *Quo Vadis?* (1951), but that was old-style publicity. Wanger, sensing the difference in Rome's press, requested support from Ascarelli, but nobody was prepared for the coverage *Cleopatra* was about to receive.

A PAIR SO FAMOUS

(*Antony and Cleopatra* – Act 5, Scene 2)

Figure 7.1



As *Cleopatra* entered its second production phase, the failure of the first one gave some Fox board members an opportunity to seize control. Fox was unprepared for the way media coverage of the Taylor-Burton affair supercharge the film's worldwide interest. Alberoni (McCann, 1988, p. 18) argued, publicity proposed stars for 'election' through carefully constructed publicity and the public's belief that each star's roles and performances revealed his or her personality. The period of *Cleopatra*'s Italian production was the antithesis of that, heralding a change in how the public consumed news about stars.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1961

Filming began, without a finished script, on 25 September 1961. Chris Mankiewicz explained 'you end up shooting tonnes of stuff that you are never going to use and... spending so much money in the process. We shot, and we shot, and we shot endlessly' (Cork and Van Eyssen, 2007a, 00:19:24). Shooting was largely sequential and – as Rogell described – always 'three

weeks behind,’ (Bernstein, 1994, p. 362).¹ Merman joined Johnston and Rogell to oversee the production, but nobody co-ordinated expenditure, enabling one Italian unit manager to overcharge Fox for car, truck, and property rentals and insurance. Initially, the company enjoyed nights along the Via Veneto, but as actors realised *Cleopatra’s* slow progress, they began to return home and fly back to Rome at their own expense. Austin (2020) noted this was often at short notice if somebody in the production team realised: ‘He should be in the background.... Stupid decisions were made day after day.’

Sets filled 19 of Cinecittà’s 20 soundstages,² with the throne room in the larger Centro Sperimentale across the road.³ Landau described the detail as ‘astonishing.’ Hand props were often ‘costly works of art,’ but many were thrown aside. Berghof, as Theodotos, had a walking stick, but when he and Mankiewicz agreed it was unnecessary, Berghof threw it away. ‘That’s what’s wrong with this picture’ Berghof told Landau. ‘This picture is full of such sticks’ (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:22:19, 0:45:28, 0:56:06, 0:58:09).⁴ Mankiewicz’ warning of shooting without a finished script increasing costs proved true.

To encourage her performance, Mankiewicz deliberately surrounded Taylor with great actors,⁵ casting several key roles late. Mankiewicz rejected Stanley Baker as Rufio in favour of Landau,⁶ then Stephens as Germanicus, who described ‘7 soul-destroying months’ during which he only worked 14 days and most of his performance was cut. Tom Mankiewicz (and Crane, 2015, p. 62)⁷ recalled: ‘Dad wanted the family with him.’ Matthews was production

¹ See also Spoto, 1995, p. 185; Lev, 2013, p. 245.

² Cinecittà always kept 1 studio free, the 79 sets used more cement than Italy’s new Olympic stadium (Zischang, 1964, 0:00:34, 0:01:56).

³ The cast prepared at the studio then crossed the street.

⁴ See also Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001; Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:02:31, 0:03:01.

⁵ He had done much the same in *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959). On 27 October, Lyons (1961) wrote to a Miss Kareen who had written to Mankiewicz about her being in the film. Lyons thanked her for letter but concluded: ‘Mr Mankiewicz has also asked me to thank you for your kind compliments about his work, but to point out that he would have been rather more receptive to your letter had it not been addressed to his brother Mr. Herman Mankiewicz, who died ten years ago.’

⁶ Mankiewicz and his son Tom (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:07:07; 0:09:10) had both admired Landau in *North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1959, MGM).

⁷ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 326; Geist, 1978, p. 334; Bernstein, 1994, p. 363-364; Stephens with Coveney, 1995, p. 55-56; Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:07:07; 0:09:10, 1:08:05, 1:49:56

assistant and – with her sister, Pamela Danova – ‘gathered intelligence... about the company.’⁸ Recently graduated, Chris Mankiewicz was second assistant director; Tom – still at Yale – travelled over on his study breaks. Mankiewicz continued to write.

Taraborrelli’s (2006, p. 163-167)⁹ account of the first day of filming was inaccurate. Harrison was moving into his suite in Rome’s Grand Hotel that day. If Taylor ‘dropped her mink to the floor,’ she was not wearing her gold dress; she wore a revealing costume, because Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 98) closed the set to steady her first-day nerves. Wanger simply wrote: ‘after years of work and headaches they shot the first scene of *Cleopatra*.’ Treves had organised for 11 US Congressmen to visit the set, whom Taylor invited with their wives to her dressing room. Her work card noted a 10:00 call, she arrived at 11:35, and because of photographs was dismissed at 19:30 (20th Century Fox 1961b).¹⁰ During the first week, Taylor was no more than 15-25 minutes late on set (20th Century Fox 1961b). Finally, Taylor shot her first *Cleopatra* scene.

On 26 September, Skouras congratulated Wanger for starting production. Publicity issued a press release about the congressmen meeting Taylor. The next day, the English Stage Company invoiced Fox for £6870, as Rachel Roberts¹¹ joined Harrison in Rome. Being unmarried, she occupied a single room near his suite. The day after, thanking Skouras for the previous day’s cable, Wanger stated Lehman was impressed with the production. Arriving at 11:50 for her 11:30 call, Taylor was on set by 13:10 and dismissed at 17:20 to attend the Maschera d’Argento¹² awards. Photographed by the paparazzi, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 99)¹³ thought her ‘truly Queen of Rome.’ On Friday, *Lo Specchio* printed the first of many false reports, saying Kennamer had left Rome, warning Taylor she would not finish the picture if

⁸ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 22) called them ‘The Dolly Sisters.’ Pamela was the head of the Fox talent school and married Italian actor Cesare Danova in 1955, who was also cast in the film.

⁹ See also Walker, 2002, p. 98-99.

¹⁰ Sheppard (1975, p. 291-292) describes Taylor’s daily routine during the shoot. Her alarm was at 06:00, she bathed, eat breakfast; travelled to Cinecittà for a 2-hour wardrobe and makeup session. At the end of the day, she went home to the children, bathed, ate and went to bed at 21:00. The servants called this ‘The Nine o’clock Retreat,’ and was rarely broken, although this did change later. Taylor applied her self-devised eye makeup (Walker, 1990, p. 225).

¹¹ With whom Harrison was having a relationship at the time, and would later marry during the production.

¹² Taylor won for *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959) (Gatabella3, 2012).

¹³ See also Wapshott, 1991, p. 233; Walker, 2002, p. 252; Carter, 2008, p. 155; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 100.

she did not obey him.¹⁴ Meanwhile, circus owner, Ennio Togni,¹⁵ sued Fox for \$112,000 for breaking his contract to supply elephants and for slandering them by describing them as wild. Skouras asked, 'How do you slander an elephant?'

As October began, Mankiewicz wrote scenes at night and shot the next day. Waking at 05:30 or 06:00 he 'gulped down a Dexedrine.' Another shot after lunch kept him 'going through the afternoon. Then I was given a shot after dinner so I could write till 02:00 in the morning, and then I got a final shot at 02:00 so I could go to sleep.' Chris Mankiewicz thought this the lowest point of his father's 'otherwise formidable career' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 364).¹⁶ Mankiewicz' workload combined both Selznick's and Fleming's on *Gone with the Wind* (1939), and he was addicted to amphetamines for years after.¹⁷

Burton filmed very little for the first 6-months (BFI, 1971, 0:48:47). Tom Mankiewicz found him 'the most captivating guy in the world... irresistible... funny... [a] very hard drinker – terribly bright' (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:35:22). Fisher (1981, p. 204)¹⁸ initially admired Burton's attractiveness and virility, thinking him a fine actor and a gentleman, but also described Fisher and Taylor laughing at Burton's frayed shirt and crumpled suit. Aware of Burton's affair with Tunder, Fisher discounted him as a rival.

Fisher disliked being in Rome but on set tried to behave like a producer. One day shouting to Mankiewicz, 'O.K., Joe, let's make this one!' Brodsky recalled 'No one reacted. It cast a pall.' The Burtons first dined at Villa Papa soon after filming started: Burton fascinated Taylor and Fisher by reciting Shakespeare (Kelly, 1981, p. 152). Most accounts date the start of the

¹⁴ Taylor gave Kennamer an affectionately engraved gold wristwatch.

¹⁵ *Variety* (1961b) reported on the suit, Togni claimed \$28,000 for expenses incurred and \$84,000 in damages. He had been asked to provide 10 elephants, 20 camels, 30 lions, 12 tigers, 50 horses, 2 giraffes, a leopard, and a snake. Togni sourced these at great expense. Fox cut the number of animals required, so only 10 elephants at \$250 dollars a day for rehearsals and \$300 on shooting days. On September 13, Fox reduced the request to 4 elephants at \$300 a rehearsal day and \$400 for shooting days. The animals arrived on 18 September but were considered unfit after a few days rehearsal and left the lot on 3 October.

¹⁶ See also Heymann, 1995, p. 236-237; Spoto, 1995, p. 185; Lev, 2013, p. 245.

¹⁷ Sheppard (1975, p. 288-289) describes Mankiewicz wearing white gloves, not to treat the psoriasis he had suffered on *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959), but to stop him biting his nails. One day, Taylor told him not to do so, Mankiewicz replied he was biting his knuckles, 'I finished the fingernails months ago.'

¹⁸ See also Carter, 2008, p. 146; Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 1:04:26; 1:47:16.

Taylor-Burton affair to early 1962. Austin (2020) placed it much earlier at the Intercontinental Hotel, where Taylor retained the presidential suite for when she wanted to stay in the city. Valva thought Harrison a little slighted by Taylor's star power. Harrison (1975, p. 196) described working with her being like 'a very well-trained hundred-yard sprinter, waiting in the starting position for the gun to go off. Sometimes one had to wait in that position for several hours... Finally, she would show up, and there would be loud cries of "Lights!" The sets had to be lit.' The scene prepared the night before was hastily re-rehearsed, and then 'shot as soon as possible.' Nor did Harrison believe that 'Caesar, with all the political and military problems on his mind at the time, was so absolutely obsessed with Cleopatra.' Therefore, Harrison resisted the 'pressure to play it that way' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:42:35).¹⁹ Throughout the production, Harrison maintained his detachment.

However, the mood on set began positively. On 1 October – as Sybil and the children joined Burton – Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. 3) began exchanging letters. Weiss described the 'magnificent Roman sets' not done as 'in dear old Hollywood.' He thought the 130 pages of script 'the most truly brilliant treatment of history in terms of people and not merely in terms of spectacle that the movies have ever attempted.' Weiss, having already secured the film's first *Life* article, wrote 'salvation lies ahead.' Soon, Weiss and Brodsky agreed to swap roles because Weiss's wife was pregnant.

Unseasonably, during the first 8 days of October, it rained (Sheppard, 1975, p. 289-290), taking *Cleopatra's* daily overhead to \$135,000 (Bernstein, 1994, p. 362). Realising the shoot would take longer than expected, many principal actors – all still on weekly pay²⁰ – moved into apartments (Carter, 2008, p. 145). Inadequate planning dogged the production. Bad weather ruined a location shoot at Lavinia on 2 October and with Mankiewicz in bed with a cold (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 101), Rogell (1961b) listed various production problems and cost savings.

¹⁹ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 290-291; Wapshott, 1991, p. 233.

²⁰ For example, Cronyn at \$5,000; McDowall at \$2,500; Landau at \$850 a week.

As Harrison started work (20th Century Fox 1961c) on 2 October, Ferguson sent his agent a revised contract (Bernstein, 1994, p. 362). With no Todd-AO processing facilities in Italy, on 4 October the first reels of film went to America, returning to Rome 10 days later. Writing about increased spending on costume, *Variety* (1961p) described Berman's of London completing an \$80,000 job for *Cleopatra*. Ornstein (1961a) reported on Fox wrecking its backlot and Hakins (1961b) on a suit filed by Galatea Films against Fox for moving to Cinecittà, voiding their deal to make films in the UK. In Rome, a real-estate agent sued Taylor, alleging he had found a villa for her but had not received his \$1750 fee. On 6 October, Skouras – though 'greatly impressed' with the footage – urged Wanger to eliminate any non-essential scenes to reduce the budget from \$10,400,000 to \$9,400,000, and suggested script revisions to Mankiewicz' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 101-103) script.²¹

Planning could not prevent rain flooding the forum set on 7 October. Mankiewicz shot an alternative scene, while Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 100) discovered the Tarsus location – the rocky and barren island of Ponza – was impossible. An assistant suggested Ischia. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 100-101)²² took Harrison to lunch at the Villa Borghese to discuss his Caesar research. Harrison had read 'every available piece on the man and the character and his extraordinary qualities.' Roberts visited Rome's museums selecting ones for Harrison to see (Walker, 2002, p. 253).²³ De Rossi – Harrison's makeup artist – experimented with makeup and wigs. Seeing Harrison's smooth face in the screen tests, Mankiewicz declared: 'I want all of those lines.' Harrison refused to wear Novarese's designs,²⁴ so at Wagner's request Sharaff (Mankiewicz and Crane, 2015, p. 64)²⁵ designed Harrison's costumes, including a foam rubber

²¹ Mankiewicz' personal copy of this script included sketches of blocking and ideas for music (Mankiewicz, 1961cc).

²² See also Christopher, 2000, p. 74-75.

²³ See also BFI, 1971, 0:47:24.

²⁴ The crew called him 'Birdlegs.' One day Fred Simpson yelled 'we're ready. Get Birdlegs in here!' He turned around to see Harrison looking at him and asked, 'Should I just take a cab to the airport now, or . . .?' Harrison 'shook his head in disgust and walked past him' (Mankiewicz and Crane, 2015, p. 64).

²⁵ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 363.

torso and leg pieces covered in bright pink silk to structure Harrison's physique.²⁶ Harrison's late casting created more cost.²⁷

Cleopatra's scale created problems. Pan mapped out his sequence,²⁸ including zebras, of which there were not enough in Italy, so the crew painted donkeys with stripes. Austin (2020) described extras signing into the studio in the morning, sneaking out through a hole in the fence, going to work, returning later to collect their pay. Stopping the procession scene took 7 or 8 minutes and then 'a day, day and a half' to reset. In Rome, on 10 October, Levathes – demanding cost savings – accused Wanger and Mankiewicz of 'ruining the studio.' Mankiewicz recalled his July warning, adding it was 'absolutely unconscionable that a company of Fox's experience would expect [him] to write a screenplay and direct a picture of the scope of *Cleopatra* and still load him down with all the other problems.' Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 101)²⁹ considered Levathes 'in over his head.' Mankiewicz' (1961aa) final shooting script, printed that day, placed the film's intermission at *Cleopatra's* departure from Rome after the assassination. The script still did not record the 2-film idea.

On 14 October, celebrating *Spartacus'* (1960) first anniversary at Rome's Grand Hotel,³⁰ Dino Di Laurentis told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 103) Italian production men were manipulating him into making decisions that economically benefited them, not the film. Having swapped

²⁶ Although, when shooting the assassination scene, the rubber daggers filled with fake blood, bounced off his torso until they changed it (Harrison, 1975, p. 195).

²⁷ When Burton complained about his boots, which had been made for Boyd, Harrison (1975, p. 195-196) explained his were made in Rome and was astounded that Burton had not requested his own.

²⁸ That sequence was: 40 trumpeters mounted on Arabian stallions; 8 chariots driven by teams of horses; 100 archers firing golden arrows with coloured streamers in the air; a troupe of Egyptian dancing girls carrying long poles with streamers; a model of the Lighthouse of Alexandria drawn by royal oxen; Zebras ridden by dwarfs painted black-and-white throwing sweets to into the crowd; a human pyramid ahead of 4 elephants with acrobats and scantily clothed women riding 2 of the elephants, throwing coins at the crowd – Mark Antony would lift one girl from her elephant and place her on the next; 12 dancers entered throwing green smoke; a 100-foot cobra, with 'Cobra Girls' waving their arms like snakes; 75 witch doctors with yellow smoke unfurling from their staffs; pole-vaulters dressed as bird men; fan dancers; a golden pyramid to open and release 2,000 doves; Roman trumpeters; an Egyptian guard of honour; 300 gold-covered men, 16-abreast, hauling a huge black marble Sphinx. Between its paws sat *Cleopatra* and *Caesarion*. A bas-relief of Nubians would 'come to life' to carry *Cleopatra* and *Caesarion* on a palanquin down to the feet of Caesar and the Senate all seen by 6,000 spectators.

²⁹ See also Franceschina, 2012, p. 238.

³⁰ Taylor danced with Mankiewicz at the party. When he stepped on some matches dropped on the floor, they ignited and caught the ostrich feather trim on Taylor's white gown, some observant musicians leapt off the bandstand to extinguish the fire.

with Weiss, Brodsky (1963, p. 4) explained that on 16 October they would shoot the procession scene, after which ‘we can relax a bit.’ Noting Mankiewicz was a ‘true perfectionist,’ Brodsky concluded the shoot would extend. They also discussed Skouras relying on *Cleopatra* to ‘save him.’ An anonymous source Weiss called ‘the Boat’ – later revealed to be Treves – thought Skouras was through. Brodsky also noted Taylor’s repeated refusals – throughout the shoot in Rome – to talk to columnist Sheilah Graham (1984, p. 173).³¹

The procession scene began shooting as Levathes departed Rome. Wanger thought the Italian extras – each earning \$10 a day – marvellous. In New York, Fox assigned Monroe to *Something’s Got to Give* with Cukor as director, honouring his *Let’s Make Love* (1960) 2-picture deal (Badman, 2012, p. 35). Monroe was to report for work on 15 November (Rollyson, 2014, p. 251). *Cleopatra* was not the only film that required better planning.

On 18 October, confirming Levathes had been of ‘enormous help in coordinating some of our problems,’ Wanger assured Skouras *Cleopatra* would be a ‘tremendous attraction’ (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 103). The next day, Lloyds agreed a \$2,037,750 out-of-court settlement, failing to cover the UK losses. Rain allowed Mankiewicz to finish the first half of the script, now 197 pages long, but Shamroy thought it lacked a visual style better suited to Todd-AO.³² Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 103) thought the budget did not count ‘on a picture like this.’ On 20 October, further weather delays extended exterior shooting beyond November, and Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 7) mentioned the 2-picture rumour, the first person other than Mankiewicz to do so.³³ ‘You’re kidding’ Brodsky replied, ‘we are having enough trouble getting one.’ Skouras and Levathes had asked if Burton would mind if they finished the picture with Caesar’s death. Burton said he would sue them ‘until they’re puce.’ Fox panicked about *Cleopatra*’s cost.

³¹ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 294-295.

³² During rushes Shamroy talked over the dialogue about the images he had captured, ignoring Mankiewicz’ nuanced script. Wanger thought they complemented each other.

³³ Treves later said it was his idea to make two films, because Fox expected a \$20,000,000 budget, so 2 blockbusters, costing \$10,000,000 each appealed.

Rome's press was relentless. As procession rehearsals resumed on 22 October, *Il Giorno* printed: 'Miss Taylor must have her children and husband around her every free moment.... She treats Eddie like a slave but acts madly in love with him.' Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 104) thought the ubiquitous paparazzi, 'like the cats of Rome, hiding on rafters, hiding under beds, always screaming for a morsel.' The problem was not getting people to write about the film but getting them to 'leave us alone.' Long-lens cameras filled the trees surrounding Taylor's swimming pool or paparazzi climbed over the walls using ladders. One photographer came in drag as a washerwoman. One female photographer hid a camera in her hairdo but was caught when touching the control mechanism – strapped to her bra's left breast – like a bell push. One photographer punched Taylor in the stomach, hoping to get an unusual shot, so Fox increased security tenfold, placing 12 guards on each gate at Cinecittà (Jenkins, 1988, p. 166).³⁴ Fox struggled to protect Taylor.



Figure 7.2

One of many paparazzi that attempted to get shots of Taylor at the Villa Papa (Getty Images 2023).

Now Mankiewicz came under fire. On 23 October, Fergusson (1961b) and Di Muro – appointed to manage events in Rome – discussed Gang opening a separate venture bank account for Fox to pay Taylor. Fergusson suggested that 'as a means of flattering Mankiewicz' Di Muro should talk to him occasionally in Italian... 'he is quite vain about his ability in this language.' The next day, Mankiewicz argued his credit should read: 'Elizabeth Taylor in Joseph

³⁴ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 295; Heymann, 1995, p. 230-231.

L Mankiewicz' *Cleopatra*,' Frings told Levathes not to allow Mankiewicz' name to appear above the title. Wanger feared this could spoil Mankiewicz and Taylor's relationship. Di Muro (1961d) instructed Ascarelli not to use Mankiewicz' preferred credit until the issue was resolved. Thinking Mankiewicz premature in his demands, Ferguson (1961c) confirmed the credit should only be used once Mankiewicz 'completed all his services.' Levathes thought the credit grandiose, until Ferguson (1961e) confirmed the film's title was 'Joseph L. Mankiewicz' *Cleopatra*.' Skouras' assurances to Mankiewicz were forgotten.

Harrison and Burton's first worked together on the procession scene (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 104). Schedule changes left Harrison struggling to recall the lines (Hordern with England, 1993, p. 119) compounded by rocket signals indicating when filming started and when Harrison (1975, p. 186-189) should speak. Surrounded by Kenneth Haigh, McDowall, Hordern, Cronyn and Stephens, Harrison 'fluffed the majestic words' several times.³⁵ Then Shamroy declared the light had gone. Later in the bar, Taylor, Burton, and Roberts joined Harrison. Wilmer (2009, p. 154) witnessed Hordern 'claim Harrison's attention.' Hordern recalled he and Harrison had once been rivals for a girl called Nina, they began talking, Harrison was 'very rude' about Nina, so Hordern punched him. Wilmer recalled the argument was about when Harrison had directed Hordern in a play and 'ruined' Hordern's life for months and months. 'And d'you know, when I was watching you today, being carried along, with all those bloody animals and when you got to the top of the stairs and then made a bloody arse of yourself in front of all those people, d'you know what I felt? I was bloody DELIGHTED!' Harrison slapped Hordern's face.

The next day, Harrison got the speech right on the first take. *Variety* (196iii) stated Taylor's scenes were being 'rushed for completion by the end of the year' and reported Levathes' election as Executive Vice-President in Charge of Production, giving him greater authority to

³⁵ Harrison then discussed the procession zebras, with Mankiewicz who explained they were donkeys painted with stripes, adding 'they forgot their lines.' Mankiewicz and Harrison shared several such exchanges with Mankiewicz usually gaining the upper hand, much to Harrison's chagrin. Tom Mankiewicz recalled that one day, Harrison had to say the line: 'the army is arriving on schedule [US pronunciation]' but said: 'The army is arriving on Schedule [UK pronunciation].' After the first take, Mankiewicz suggested Harrison should use the American pronunciation because the British pronunciation stood out. Harrison replied: 'well it is Schedule [UK], it can't be anything else but Schedule [UK].' The script supervisor asks which it would be, and Mankiewicz replied, 'let him say whatever he learned in schule' (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:37:40).

make production decisions. Skouras, Loeb, and Gould all favoured Levathes, temporarily aligning their interests.³⁶

On 26 October, the Procession Scene continued, now with British elephants (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 104).³⁷ Taylor and Fisher watched Burton lift a girl off one elephant, kiss her, and put her on another. In the rehearsals, the girls riding the elephants threw candies rather than coins. Before the crowd could pick them up, having vacuumed up the sweets through its trunk, one elephant increased its pace. When its handler forced it to stop, the girl slid off, scraping the skin from her bottom and the back of her legs ‘with all the efficiency of a vegetable grater.’ The sweets were cut, and the girl replaced, but when Burton lifted her, she was heavier, so he staggered backward and ‘fell on his ass into a bed of azaleas’ (Cronyn, 1991, p. 339-343).

In Hollywood, Greenson convinced Monroe to engage his brother-in-law, Milton Rudin, to lead her legal discussions with Fox. Assuring her that *Something's Got to Give* would finally free her from her contract, Rudin advised Fox executives, including Levathes, to respect Monroe's opinions, not just honour her contract (Rollyson, 2014, p. 251).³⁸ With *Cleopatra's* costs increasing, Fox pressured Monroe.

On 30 October, Shamroy declared the late October light impaired the procession scene, so – only 25% shot – it was postponed for 6 months, costing a further \$250,000 (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:44:36).³⁹ On 31 October, New York complained about ‘camera noise’ on some rushes, but Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 105) in Rome, had to call the Todd-AO team, in America, to find a solution. The next day Di Muro (1961e)⁴⁰ described Johnston as ‘burdened with administrative details in addition to production matters.’ Wanger wanted Rogell to oversee these to support Johnston. Mankiewicz shot scenes in the Interior Secret Passageway, while Skouras commented on the next portion of the script (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 103).

³⁶ Also, that day, *Camelot* recovered its \$673,000 production budget and was in net profit by \$9,500 (*Variety*, 1961r).

³⁷ See also Cronyn, 1991, p. 339-343.

³⁸ See also Leaming, 1999, p. 394.

³⁹ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 288; Sharaff, 1976, p. 114.

⁴⁰ See also DiMuro 1961a.

Realising they would not conclude filming by March, Rogell estimated a \$17,000,000 budget, discounting the studio overhead (Bernstein, 1994, p. 365) or lack of financial oversight.⁴¹ In Hollywood, Fox threatened Monroe with an injunction if she did not make *Something's Got to Give* (Badman, 2012, p. 32). Fox struggled to manage its productions on two continents.

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Dining one night with the Burtons and McDowall, Burton's ribald humour reminded Taylor (1967, p. 124-125) of Todd. She recalled Fisher saying, around 21:30, 'I better take you home; you have to get to bed early.' Burton distracted Fisher while swapping his full glass with Taylor's empty one (Hughes-Hallett, 1990, 290). On set, the Italian crew – used to films being dubbed – annoyed the English-speaking crew by talking during shots. The American crew, not used to drinking wine at lunchtime, were often intoxicated by the afternoon (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:34:28, 0:37:22, 1:03:48). Mankiewicz reminded the English-speaking crew they were guests in Italy.

If Taylor required a last-minute change, Harrison started deliberately missing his call (Geist, 1978, p. 318-319).⁴² Cole (with Hawkins, 2013, p. 117) found him 'a bit prickly to deal with.' Ignoring that they had worked together previously, Harrison referred to Cole as 'this little man with the beard and the tin tray.' When Cole accidentally trod on Harrison's train, Harrison hurled abuse.⁴³ Nunnally Johnson commented he could never understand Wanger. 'Whenever I talk to him about *Cleopatra* he talks as if it were somebody else's production'

⁴¹ Tom Mankiewicz recalled: 'If you wanted to buy some new dinnerware or a set of glasses for your house, it was the easiest thing to put it on the budget of *Cleopatra*' (Carter, 2008, p. 144-145). When someone requested horses, they were told horses were 'expensive at this time of the year' and paid 'substantially inflated prices' but if they then tried to sell back the horses 'they were told the bottom had fallen out of the market' (Hernu, 1999, p. 74).

⁴² On one occasion, Chris Mankiewicz went to his villa to collect him to find Harrison in his bathrobe and lying about not having been told he was required (Geist, 1978, p. 319).

⁴³ Cole (with Hawkins, 2013, p. 116-117) recalled that as Flavius he had a full beard and went to make up every morning 05:00 to have it applied. After 3 months he asked his make-up man why he went to so much trouble, why didn't he just make up a removable beard? His reply was that he knew how actors liked the lace to move when they speak. Cole pointed out he was playing a deaf mute. However, the process did not change. Ironically, later, when Cole shot retakes in London, the English make-up team used a removable beard, and nobody noticed the difference.

(Bernstein, 1994, p. 385). Burton was unimpressed too (Rubython, 2011, p. 438). November began with cast and crew settling into their patterns of behaviour.

Cronyn worried the pressure might kill Mankiewicz (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:53:12), who on 1 November requested a 5-day working week, freeing his weekends to write. Taylor, Burton, and Harrison agreed to a cut in salary, but Fox preferred a 6-day week (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 105). *Variety* (1961d) reported Fox was 'systematically but realistically' reducing operating costs and would complete its 1962 schedule by February. Each film would cost a minimum of \$2,000,000-\$4,000,000, with *Cleopatra* and *The Longest Day* costing more. With Levathes announcing Fox would no longer produce 'B' pictures, *Variety* (1961e) thought him 'one step closer to becoming Fox president.' *Variety* (1961a) also described Wall Street speculation about MCA acquiring a major film company, raising its stock by \$4.50.

On 2 November, Harrison struggled to remember the carpet scene, so the actors worked with Danova to ease his nerves (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:44:36).⁴⁴ The next day, Ferguson (1961d) reaffirmed that Mankiewicz had not 'earned' his billing and that constant reference in publicity to Mankiewicz' *Cleopatra* might upset Taylor. Fergusson asked Levathes and Rogell to advise a local solution. Einfeld then insisted Mankiewicz should receive the credit contained in the agreement, because his contract made no reference to publicity prior to completion.⁴⁵ Still, nobody supported Mankiewicz.

On 4 November, with *Cleopatra* costing \$500,000 weekly, Levathes refused Mankiewicz' 5-day week request, arguing Fox was already the 'laughing-stock of the industry; this is the greatest disaster in show business!' (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 106).⁴⁶ Wanger warned that 'any heavy-handed direction from the studio would end the picture.' Mankiewicz declared 'we'll just give them the best damned picture they ever saw, and they'll quiet down.' The next day,

⁴⁴ See also Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:18:27.

⁴⁵ Also, that day the cast lunched with President Sukarno of Indonesia who met Taylor on set. Finding her attractive, he tried to pin some costume jewellery on her bodice, but Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 107) interjected for fear of 'damaging' the dress.

⁴⁶ See also Maddox, 1979, p. 165.

in a 40-minute call, Wanger and Levathes discussed costs,⁴⁷ while Di Muro (1961b) and Fergusson – debating Mankiewicz’ billing – realised any change would require Wanger to sign a waiver. Following criticism about the lack of publicity, Brodsky asked Weiss (1963, p. 11) to show Skouras the material he had produced, boasting *Cleopatra*’s publicity would make *Francis of Assisi* (Curtiz, 1961, Fox) and *The Longest Day* look like minor pictures: adding ‘Mark my words, this will be the most publicized picture of all time.’ Panic predominated *Cleopatra*’s production.

On 6 November, rain prevented shooting an exterior *Cleopatra* scene (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:44:36). On 7 November, Feldman (1961) told Mankiewicz that Levathes and Skouras were coming to Rome to reduce costs: ‘Get it over with as quickly as you possibly can. Don’t try to make the greatest film that was ever made!’ In Paris, emulating Todd, Zanuck began casting names in *The Longest Day*.⁴⁸ Having barely worked, McDowall called Zanuck: ‘Please, give me anything. Anything. I have to work’ (Hofferma, 2000, 0:09:41), Zanuck – who controlled his production tightly – did (Gussow, 1971, p. 226-228).

On 8 November, *Variety* (1961d) named 3 movies⁴⁹ helping Fox’s recovery, allowing Skouras to end 50% salary cuts for Fox senior managers. *Variety* (1961e) also reported on Fox’s new ideas for selling *Cleopatra*, which ‘it had yet to formulate.’ The next day, Mankiewicz (1961bb) issued a 313-page screenplay. Fergusson advised Di Muro (1961c) to tell Ascarelli to use his discretion around Mankiewicz’ billing. Levathes told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 107) Skouras thought the \$10,000,000 budget with overhead possible, then lunched with Monroe and Rudin, urging her to make *Something’s Got to Give* (Leaming, 1999, p. 395). Without a script, Monroe refused.⁵⁰ Despite her not having script approval, Levathes promised to send

⁴⁷ Wanger noted the irony of Levathes being ‘unconcerned’ by the cost of the call and of his and Skouras’ flights to Rome.

⁴⁸ Wanting ‘the audience to have a kick every time a door opened,’ Zanuck cast John Wayne as General Cota and a younger soldiers cast pop stars like Tommy Sands, Paul Anka, Sal Mineo, and Fabian. For the British characters, he cast Sean Connery, Patrick McGeehan and John Gregson. Connery was already committed to filming for *Dr No* (1962) in Jamaica on 7 November, so Zanuck worked around his schedule.

⁴⁹ *The Hustler* (Rossen, 1961, Fox); *The Comancheros* (Curtiz, 1961, Fox); *Second Time Around* (Sherman, 1961, Fox).

⁵⁰ The Tashlin screenplay was not written for Monroe, so Cukor had suggested Schulman should refashion the script for her.

Monroe a finished copy (Rollyson, 2014, p. 251)⁵¹ and announced a 15 November start date the next day.

New York urged Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 13) to arrange an interview between Taylor and Graham. Brodsky thought Skouras and Levathes were 'intent upon screwing Mankiewicz up' and that asking him to cut scenes was 'preposterous.' Regarding the 5-day week, Taylor told Mankiewicz, 'Let's just not show up. What can they do, fire us?' Brodsky concluded Taylor did not understand her own power. The next day, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 108)⁵² estimated a \$15,214,348.21 budget⁵³ without a 35% overhead, noting transport costs were already \$1,070,000.00. That night, Cinerama head, Nicholas Reisini called Wanger about taking-over *Cleopatra* from Fox and transferring the existing footage to Cinerama. *Cleopatra's* problems were known.

From Monday 13 November, while filming the exterior Moongate scene (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:44:36), Taylor began earning \$50,000 per week (20th Century Fox, 1961). In Hollywood, Monroe had still not agreed to film *Something's Got to Give*, due to start in 2 days, (Badman, 2012, p. 37). On 14 November, Rudin once more requested a script, none arrived (Leaming, 1999, p. 395). *Variety* (1961i) reported on 15 November, that various snags had delayed studio technical department heads 'sent to Rome to work on *Cleo*' returning until January and that Levathes would meet Skouras in Rome to discuss plans with Wanger and Mankiewicz.

Skouras later recalled that 'much to his surprise' they realised the film was exceeding its \$10,413,872 budget and would reach \$20,000,000. He and Levathes had to 'correct the situation.' Skouras' discussion notes for Mankiewicz stated Fox had not set any conditions about money and facilities and had complied with Mankiewicz' conditions and requests concerning the script. Given the 'many writers' they had engaged, Skouras was 'rather bewildered' the script was incomplete. Mankiewicz had insisted on Rome to 'substantially reduce the cost of the picture' and had full power to choose his personnel, sets, costumes,

⁵¹ See also Badman, 2012, p. 32, 36 -37.

⁵² See also Solomon, 2002, p. 142.

⁵³ See Appendix 2.

and even the cast. Fox had sent heads of department to Rome, taking them away from the studio. Skouras was 'at a loss to understand what [had] happened with this production.' Arguing Mankiewicz had agreed to start shooting on 18 September and to reduce Taylor's filming weeks, Fox had agreed 8 weeks at a fixed salary, before she received \$50,000 per week. The new version had cost \$7,000,000, but Fox did not have 15 minutes of film. Mankiewicz must accelerate production, using at least 2 additional units, and complete by the end of January. Skouras wanted a maximum 195-minute running time. Referring to Mankiewicz' criticism of the lack of intimacy in Mamoulian's version, Skouras cited Mankiewicz not wanting big Italian mob scenes, yet had 'assembled the greatest number of people... than any other picture ever made' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29, 103-105). Skouras started blaming Mankiewicz.

On 15 November, Hakins (1961a) described a resurgent Italian film industry releasing a record 200 features in 1961, proving 'Hollywood-on-the-Tiber'⁵⁴ was more than press hyperbole. Hakins estimated *Cleopatra's* 'mammoth' production would last until spring, causing problems for other films. Weiss assured Brodsky (1963, p. 13) that although he had shown the executive that week's press coverage, they still bemoaned the lack of publicity. Monroe did not report for work, so Fox suspended her (Rollyson, 2014, p. 251). Rudin argued Cukor's failure to sign by the agreed date invalidated her contract (Badman, 2012, p. 37). The next day, Skouras and Levathes arrived in Rome. A 6-hour conference with Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 108-109)⁵⁵ agreed a \$12,500,000 budget without overhead, even though Wanger argued they had already spent that. Wanger mentioned Reisini's offer, infuriating Skouras, who said it would ruin Fox if people knew. Wanger asked why, if *Cleopatra* was ruining Fox as Skouras had said, then would they not sell it? Skouras told him to keep making the picture, it wasn't for sale. On set, Skouras told Wanger to take charge with 'Zanuck-like tyranny,' then told Mankiewicz 'You're in charge. You can do anything you want to do.' He insisted on seeing rushes, but his snoring soon swamped the soundtrack (Heymann, 1995, p. 238). Skouras failed to resolve or understand *Cleopatra's* problems.

⁵⁴ This was the name given to Rome's film industry around this time.

⁵⁵ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 365.

With all major production leads⁵⁶ summoned to a Sunday meeting with Levathes and Rogell on 19 November, Skouras 'harangued' them for nearly an hour, and 'shellacked' Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 109)⁵⁷ for 15 minutes. Rogell's meeting notes - later used to disprove Wanger's statement that Skouras shouted at him - described 'a thorough discussion of costs, delays, etc., and future plans.' Wanger saw 'no reason for anyone to get hysterical.' Angry, Levathes said 'it was time for someone to get hysterical, or at least show some real interest in the huge costs and many problems facing us.' Levathes thought Wanger too complacent under the circumstances, and 'certainly didn't intend to apologize for being upset with conditions.' Rogell stated it was Levathes, not Skouras, that shouted. Shamroy and Di Muro concurred, saying that Levathes objected when Wanger mentioned 'hysteria' or hysterical attitudes.' Shamroy added he had spoken to Wanger often about the unnecessary sets and scenes in the script, some of which were too large or should not be shot, but nothing came of his suggestions.

Somebody complained there was no script. Mankiewicz stated they could use MacDougall's version as a guide, because he was only changing the dialogue: if he added scenes, he would notify them. He thought the \$20,000,000 budget ridiculous, arguing an additional \$5,000,000 on what had been spent to date would suffice. Skouras then addressed his prepared points to Mankiewicz, adding that Johnston and DeCuir had, at Mankiewicz' request, 'made commitments for the... leasing of locations.' Mankiewicz had requested Magli as the Italian Unit Manager, therefore Mankiewicz supervised all 'negotiations and contracts with Cinecittà and Italian suppliers.' Mankiewicz had vouched for Magli's honesty, but he 'proved to be completely untrustworthy.' Knowing the job was too big, Skouras told a very ill Johnston he had 'full authority to make all arrangements in Italy.' Afterwards, all the union members claimed double-time for the meeting.

⁵⁶ Wanger, Mankiewicz, Rogell, Di Muro, Johnson, Fred Simpson, Assistant Director, Second Unit Manager Joe Popkin, Mathews, Italian Unit Manager Frank Maglia, Head Art Director Jack Smith, De Cuir, Art Director Herman Blumenthal, Art Director Paul Fox, Shamroy, Head of Props Joe La Bella, Head of Wardrobe Ed Winigar and Di Muro.

⁵⁷ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29, 106-108.

Skouras, Wanger, and Mankiewicz then dined with Taylor and Fisher, she asked Skouras, 'What do you care how much *Cleopatra* costs? Fox pictures have been lousy. At least this one will be great—though expensive.' Skouras took this in good humour. By 20 November, the suspension of the procession scene left Pan's contract in limbo (Franceschina, 2012, p. 238). Nobody was offering viable solutions.

Back in New York, on 23 November, Levathes conceded the 5-day week.⁵⁸ Brodsky told Weiss (1963, p. 15) that Mankiewicz could now work 12:00 to 20:00, allowing him time for production meetings and script writing in the mornings, losing the lunch break ensured a sober cast and crew (Parker, 1989, p. 208). Seriously ill, Johnston told Mankiewicz he had to quit, adding that his doctor was more concerned about Mankiewicz (Stern, 2019, p. 323). The next day, the Italian stage technicians went on strike. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 110)⁵⁹ visited his daughter at the clinic, following her appendectomy the previous day, and wrote to Skouras about unfavourable publicity, arguing this came from Hollywood columnists that 'we financed to come over and really tell about the film.' Wanger urged not 'spending money to get bad publicity.' Skouras replied on 28 November, arguing columnists should not be 'side-tracked' because their favourable reports were valuable (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 108).

On 29 November,⁶⁰ believing Fox was preparing Levathes' to replace Skouras, *Variety* (1961w) speculated the board would that day vote against increasing its size: if Levathes was to join, somebody would have to resign. At the meeting, Skouras calmed hostility with 20 minutes of *Cleopatra* footage and an assurance filming would complete in March (Bernstein, 1994, p. 369-370). The next day Weiss told Brodsky (1963, p. 17) 'whopping losses' might force Skouras to resign in January or May, hoping by then, Fox would be 'in better shape, and it won't look as if he's been fired.' Weiss thought the Board would prefer a 'peaceful May 1 settlement rather than get out the tar and feathers.' Skouras and Levathes convinced the board *Cleopatra's* problems were solved.

⁵⁸ In fact, Levathes (1961b) wrote to Mankiewicz on 29 November stating he could choose whether to work 5 or 6 days.

⁵⁹ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 108.

⁶⁰ That day, in Rome, Sam Marx met Wanger and Mankiewicz on the Via Veneto, 'I can't get over how happy you two guys are' he said, aware of their problems. Mankiewicz replied 'Why shouldn't we be? We are probably the only two men in the world who will ever have \$25 million to make a movie' (Geist, 1978, p. 319-320).

That day, Burton and Monroe enacted their plans. Burton staged a big welcome for Philip Burton,⁶¹ who had come from New York to coach his adopted son. Philip thought the sets ‘unbelievably impressive’ and the script better than expected (Rubythron, 2011, p. 437). Aware Cukor had agreed to direct *Something’s Got to Give* for \$300,000, plus 10% of the net profits (Rollyson, 2014, p. 252),⁶² Rudin sent Fox Monroe’s demands. They must replace Brown as producer; make the script sexier; offer Monroe a substantial bonus when she completed the film; give her publicity stills approval; approval of her leading man and supporting cast; her choice of cameramen; Jean Louis for costume; Guilaroff for hair. Greenson argued that replacing Brown with Henry Weinstein would guarantee Monroe’s punctuality (Badman, 2012, p. 33), Fox agreed, infuriating Cukor who wanted an experienced producer (Wolfe, 2006, p. 389). Greenson began to control Monroe’s life, trying to end her relationships with Sinatra and the Strasbergs, and convincing her to hire 59-year-old Eunice Murray⁶³ as ‘housekeeper.’ Murray was with Monroe nearly every night until Monroe’s death (Wolfe, 2006, p. 389).⁶⁴ Burton looked to his adopted father for support; Greenson controlled Monroe.

DECEMBER 1961

Arguing, on 4 December, that Hollywood was the only industry in America that financed ‘its own blackmail,’ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 111)⁶⁵ complained to Skouras about ‘catering to these scandalmongers,’ who were only interested in ‘increasing their own power by printing destructive items.’ In New York, the board asked Loeb and Gould to investigate Fox’s problems – eventually they replaced Goldstein with Gould, who lacked any experience whatsoever (Spoto, 1993, p. 525). That night, Samuel Bronston’s production of *El Cid* (1961) premiered to uncharacteristically unanimous critical praise. Shot in Spain, its deeply human story played against a spectacular setting (McIntosh, Mizrahi and Rodriguez, 1993a, 0:00:34, 0:20:45). 1961’s fourth highest earning film developed *Ben-Hur’s* (1959) balance of realism

⁶¹ Harrison, Roberts, Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, and Ricardo Montalban were there to meet him.

⁶² This happened on 25 November 1961.

⁶³ See biography in Appendix 1.

⁶⁴ See also Spoto, 1993, p. 530-531; Leaming, 1999, p. 397; Wolfe, 2006, p. 469-470; Badman, 2012, p. 56; Banner, 2013, p. 384.

⁶⁵ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 108.

and spectacle. Its tagline – ‘The motion picture the world has been waiting for!’ – revealed Bronston’s requirement for cinemas to commit in advance to his films, generating audience interest (Monteith, 2012, p. 79).

El Cid (1961) financed Bronston’s next epic, but this ‘Ponziesque’ approach was his downfall, Bronston spent excessively on ever-higher production values. Wood (1989, p. 181) argued that even though American audiences were by nature thrifty and practical, they regarded ‘planned prodigality, spectacular waste, waste as a way of life as far more American.’ Richards (2008, p. 55) concurred, audiences watched epic films wondering how much money they cost: ‘Every gesture, every set piece bespeaks fantastic excess.’ Yet the emerging package system, which had always favoured experimentation, soon favoured the formulaic (Monaco, 2003, p. 27-28), the very opposite of what Mankiewicz was trying to achieve. Building on Wyler and Kubrick, *El Cid* (1961) was a mature epic, that *Cleopatra* would struggle to match.

Cleopatra embodied ‘prodigality.’ On 5 December, Rogell outlined Fox’s \$11,544,007 loss in 1961, including \$9,200,000 in write-offs, largely for *Cleopatra*’s UK shoot. Overheads had risen to \$99,253,247. Only that year’s \$25,735,917 payment for the backlot enabled a \$5.69 dividend per share, not a \$4.62 loss (*Variety*, 1961c). Finally, Levathes promised to grant Wanger’s repeated request for expenditure control by sending Lawrence Rice to Rome (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p 109). Reporting his weekend phone conversations with Treves, Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 18) said ‘The Boat’ ruled out Wald as Head of Production in favour of Zanuck returning: at the last board meeting Gould and Michel had argued, reducing the likelihood that Michel would get the role. Treves argued Levathes could not ‘muster enough support,’ while Skouras hoped *Cleopatra* footage would save his presidency.

With the William Morris agency claiming a cut of the Figaro sale, Mankiewicz (1961dd) wrote to Bienstock on 6 December. Working 7, 16-hour days a week and surviving on stimulants and describing periods when his brain ‘simply [did] not function,’ Mankiewicz had been too exhausted to telephone or write. He described Skouras – making and unmaking decisions from one moment to the next, without listening to the truth – as ‘mentally and emotionally seriously disturbed.’ Driven by ‘nothing but a frenzy to maintain, at all costs, title of President,’ Mankiewicz thought Levathes Skouras’ stooge, and blamed ‘the wasted millions’ on a lack of

‘executive guidance.’ *Cleopatra* was ‘the most ambitious [film] ever undertaken,’ what they had so far was very good but having not written the second half, Mankiewicz feared choosing between his ‘physical well-being’ and saving Fox. The prodigality was unplanned.

For instance, one of Rogell’s economy drives changed Harrison’s trailer and cut his Cadillac (Stern, 2019, p. 323). Tom Mankiewicz recalled: ‘you were nothing if you didn’t have a car and driver’ (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:46:28). Harrison refused to report for work until Fox reinstated his trailer and car and paid his driver. Summoning Rogell to his dressing room, Harrison said he was a star, ‘and Rogell [was] a production man: “I treat my servants very well, and you’re my servant.”’ Harrison then gave Rogell ‘the worst lacing I have ever heard,’ before imperiously dismissing him (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 112).⁶⁶ Rogell agreed to reinstate things and Harrison later received a round of applause on set. Harrison (1975, p. 197-198) thought Rogell one of Skouras’ innumerable ‘Vice-Presidents and Heads of Studio.’ Rogell’s \$15,000 saving cost \$75,000 (Rubython, 2011, p. 439).

Mankiewicz’ stress was not unique. When Kellogg suffered a heart attack on 7 December, Marton replaced him. Austin (2020) then assumed control of the procession scene rehearsals. C. O. ‘Doc’ Erickson replaced Johnston. Doc Merman returned as executive production manager to control the budget. ‘Neither Doc succeeded in controlling Mankiewicz,’ but ‘tried to soothe him.’ Merman exposed the thieves on the production, but nobody was fired, then returned to Hollywood: nobody stayed ‘to learn and understand why and how everything was going on’ (Mankiewicz, Landau and Brodsky, 2011b, 0:21:02, 0:38:54).⁶⁷ As they filmed the Coronation scene, Marton began his work as second unit director,⁶⁸ relieving Mankiewicz who was shooting material usually reserved for the second unit (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 113). Fox provided insufficient support.

⁶⁶ Heymann (1995, p. 234-235) records Harrison saying, ‘just because Elizabeth’s tits are bigger than mine doesn’t entitle her to be driven around in a mile-long limo, while you restrict me to the backseat of a two-bit Fiat sedan.’

⁶⁷ See also Geist, 1978, p. 320-321.

⁶⁸ He had done the same on *Ben-Hur* (1959).

Nor did Fox control *Cleopatra's* publicity. On 10 December, writing to Einfeld, Zanuck described *The Longest Day* publicity as '3-to-1 ahead of Cleo in England and Europe.' Einfeld blamed Brodsky for failing to arrange meetings for Graham and the cast. With Taylor refusing to see Graham, Mankiewicz busy, and Harrison only doing what he thought important, Brodsky asked Weiss (1963, p. 20-21) for help. Regarding Hollywood columnists, Skouras told Wanger 'They should be treated with the proper courtesy and not with hostility' to create best publicity (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 110).

Such publicity happened on 13 December when Taylor shot *Cleopatra's* 'nude' scene. With tight security on the heated Stage 5, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 113-114) left, instructing stills photographer Bob Penn to return the negatives directly to him. Taylor asked McDowall to photograph the scene. Fisher (1981, p. 205), there at Taylor's request, stated there was brandy in her 'coke.' Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 23) – who claimed he strolled in and stood next to Penn – declared: 'today was the kind of day that makes some of these trials and tribulations seem worth it.' After Wanger received the negatives, Brodsky stated he delivered them to Taylor and Fisher next day – as required of her contract. Taylor allowed only one photograph to appear on one page in *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar*. Junor (1986, p. 108-109) states Burton watched the scene, and 'came back like a man possessed, raving about her beauty.' No other account supports this, and Fisher would undoubtedly have mentioned Burton's presence. If the Taylor-Burton affair had already begun, and Burton did rave about Taylor's beauty, it was more likely subterfuge. However, Monroe heard of the scene.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Hughes-Hallett (1990, p. 278) suggests the scene was a cliché reminiscent of DeMille's bath scene, but Taylor subtly challenged Bara's vamp approach, making the scene more about Taylor than Cleopatra.



Figure 7.3

Taylor's nude scene from *Cleopatra* (Alamy, 2023).

New York registered none of this. On 16 December, Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 25) explained that Treves thought Skouras would be 'out in a matter of time.' Weiss urged Brodsky to get Taylor to pose for *McColl's* to counteract the 'not enough publicity line.' Meanwhile, thinking the nude scene stills as 'artistic as we hoped,' and contradicting Brodsky's account, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 114) gave the negatives to Fisher to avoid accusations of exploiting them. Wanger assured Skouras he had treated all visitors courteously, but insisted Graham exemplified the 'kind of person who should not be sent here.' Having seen three-quarters of the first part of the film, Wanger thought it 'absolutely out of this world' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 110-111). Fox still feared *Cleopatra* lacked publicity.

Focusing on finances, Rice arrived in Rome on 19 December to co-ordinate figures and estimated a \$24,000,000 budget with overhead, no second unit and without certain locations. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 114) agreed. Expenses like the weekly \$100,000 San Pellegrino bill (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:40:09) was not visible on screen (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:45:10), and Rice 'uncovered' a 'serious' discrepancy of 'the mysterious disappearance, of over 1,500 paper drinking cups.' Levathes and Rogell requested an explanation. Wanger restrained his laughter: 'a pair of Fox's top honchos lamenting the disappearance of a few paper cups but who had nothing to say about any of the other irregularities.' For Mankiewicz,

these included 20,000 shields and spears, a herd of African elephants, a dozen Bengal tigers, a two-hundred-foot yacht, and a half-dozen studio-owned vehicles (Heymann, 1995, p. 238).

On 20 December, Mankiewicz shot Sosigenes explaining epilepsy to Cleopatra (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017), while Bautzer and Grant drew up a Taylor-Fisher-Fox multi-picture memorandum. Countering Warners, Fox offered to finance and distribute 4 films produced by the Taylor-Fisher corporation. Then, stating they had met all Monroe's conditions, Fox told her Cukor's failure to commit to the movie did not invalidate her contract – she had to make the film. Monroe reluctantly accepted (Badman, 2012, p. 37, 39). Once again, Fox treated Taylor and Monroe differently.

Fox continued to blame Wanger. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963 p. 114) flew to New York on 21 December, telling the press *Cleopatra* would be great, and gross \$100,000,000. The next day, Skouras was sceptical about Wanger's (and Hyams, 1963, p. 115) estimate, even though Skouras had cited the same gross for *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. In Rome, Taylor shot the poisoning scene and Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 28-29)⁷⁰ convinced her to do a *McColl* photo shoot. Brodsky thought the first 50 pages of the second half excellent, noting 'Fisher was already jealous of Burton's lines.' At a late-night dinner party for the cast at Bricktop's,⁷¹ after Taylor and Burton danced, he took her back to her seat, kissed her on the cheek and wished her happy Christmas (Heymann, 1995, p. 240). On Christmas Eve, Mankiewicz (1961j) worked on the second-half screenplay, handwriting 'Shooting' instead of 'working' in his notebooks.

Highlighting the contrast in their lives, Monroe spent a quiet Christmas day with DiMaggio at Greenson's (Guiles, 1992, p. 414), while Fisher gave Taylor a white Maserati⁷² (Heymann, 1995, p. 240-241). In New York, Wanger told Skouras, Michel, Koegel, Levathes, and Moskowitz of the \$20,000,000 budget. Skouras asked how it had increased without their

⁷⁰ See also Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017.

⁷¹ An underground jazz club in Rome.

⁷² Heymann (1995, p. 240-241) stated she drove it for 15 minutes then announced she 'hated' it. Fisher eventually sold the car to Anthony Quinn.

knowledge. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 115)⁷³ said the executives blamed him, but he blamed the lack of a proper fiscal, legal, and production organisation and that they knew this was so 'obviously right... for once they didn't argue.' Wanger argued \$5,000,000 of the budget was because Skouras had given Mankiewicz full authority not him, and they started filming too early. Skouras argued Levathes, Wanger, and Mankiewicz had set the starting date and that Wanger was acting as an observer not a producer. Fox had given them everything they had requested, but they had made commitments without consultation. Wanger explained Mankiewicz was not responsible for running the production, as well as writing and directing it. Again, nobody offered solutions.

In Rome on 26 December, the poisoning scene continued (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017), Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 115) thought the rushes excellent. Struggling with phlebitis, Taylor did not attend the Christmas Party (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963. P. 28-29). Skouras commented on Mankiewicz' next portion of script and aware of the budget discussions, Mankiewicz offered his 'complete understanding' if Skouras considered replacing him as director (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 111, 115). On 27 December, *Variety* (1961s) printed its 21 December interview with Wanger – looking 'remarkably calm and collected for a man... guiding the financial fortunes of almost as many Roman citizens as Julius Caesar ever did, to say nothing of American citizens and 20th stockholders.' Wanger speculated *Cleopatra* 'may eventually turn out to be one of the most expensive pictures ever made.' Drawing parallels with *El Cid* (1961) he described it as a 'witty' spectacle, 'intimate and romantic as it is big' with a 195/210-minute running time. Wanger praised Taylor's performance, who on 29 December, the *Motion Picture Herald* named Top Box-office Star of 1961 (Sheppard, 1975, p.287, 296).⁷⁴

On New Year's Eve, back in Rome, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963. p. 116) described Taylor and Fisher as guests of honour at the Burtons' party at Bricktop's. Wanger spoke to Taylor, who said her Christmas was the best she had ever had. Burton kept topping up her champagne, when Fisher suggested leaving the party, Taylor resisted (Stern, 2019, p. 325). Bernstein (1994, p. 368) is the only author to state the affair had started quietly in December. Austin

⁷³ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29.

⁷⁴ Outranking Rock Hudson, Doris Day, John Wayne, and Cary Grant.

(2020) recalled discussing the start of the affair with McDowell, who believed Taylor organised for Burton to have a suite next to hers in the Intercontinental. When Mankiewicz found out about the affair is unknown, but Matthews and Danova likely told him. Taylor's comment to Wanger makes perfect sense if the affair had already begun.

JANUARY 1962

Parish (2006, p. 16) described *Cleopatra* as: 'a stupefying example' of a film out of control. Examining the expenditure later, Nathan Frankel blamed poor planning, friction between American and Italian Heads of Department, corruption, and Taylor's increasingly erratic work habits, which emerged as 1962 began. Although Wanger, Mankiewicz, Skouras and Levathes complained about Taylor, they never challenged her (Carter, 2008, p. 141-142), but Taylor's financial excess, and by extension – when he later bought her diamonds or a private plane so they 'could fly to Nice for lunch' – Burton's, fuelled public interest.⁷⁵ Taylor and Burton's affair changed public notions of 'conspicuous consumption and sexual power' once more equating *Cleopatra's* excess with the actor playing her (Malamud, 2009, p. 232). Bergman's excommunication from Hollywood was of another age.

Everybody believed they were making a great movie (Rothman, 2011, 0:20:00). McDowall thought it 'the most fantastic epic ever filmed.... Just in the sense of time, it took a year (Haley, 1975, 0:38:50). Austin (2020) concurred: 'All the things, and the bits and pieces that went with it, the art department and the sets that were built and the costumes.... You had to feel that you were going to be proud of this.'⁷⁶ Mankiewicz' (1962a) incomplete and heavily annotated draft shooting script explored Cleopatra's 'vivid and many-sided personality' (Wyke, 1997, p. 73). Unfortunately, the final cut did not, Burton described it as 'infinitely forgettable' but praised Mankiewicz for dealing with three actors of massive temperament and 'the studio's executive hounds baying behind him.... A weaker man would have gone mad'

⁷⁵ For example, stories such as the 300 dresses Taylor supposedly took to Rome but threw away after the first wearing.

⁷⁶ Jean Marsh described the 'tremendous sense of being in the right place at the right time, Fellini was there, and Italy was the capital of film. And the film was so extravagant, so louche, it affected everyone's lives. It was a hotbed of romance— Richard and Elizabeth weren't the only people who had an affair' (Carter, 2008, p. 147).

(Geist, 1978, p. xiii, 319). Chris Mankiewicz thought his usually strong-willed and precise father – determined ‘to pacify everybody and not to do battle with the considerable egos of Rex and Elizabeth’ – was unusually ‘non-decisive,’⁷⁷ yet Matthews had ‘never seen a man work harder.... He was so determined to make this a good movie.’ Mankiewicz declared: ‘I was down in the hold of this ship shovelling coal like an s.o.b., but there was no one on top steering’ (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:50:30). On set, belief in *Cleopatra* sustained it throughout 1962.

Wanger, whom Mankiewicz thought ‘a very tasteful, wasteful gentleman who knew little about the economy of producing’ (Geist, 1978, p. 321) ignored the mounting production problems. Tom Mankiewicz (and Crane, 2015, p. 63) called him: the ‘nominal producer,’ Chris Mankiewicz (Mankiewicz, Landau and Brodsky, 2011b, 0:42:35), ‘an elegant old fop who came on the set, told a couple of jokes and then left... [but] did nothing whatever to control this huge production with rampant stealing and delay.’ Austin (2020) agreed: ‘He didn’t want the problems of what was going on there. He wanted the accolade of it.’ Mankiewicz became the de facto producer, further slowing down production (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:24:28), so as Cole (with Hawkins, 2013, p. 118) recalled, the cast on ‘permanent standby’ soon called it ‘house arrest.’⁷⁸ Wanger did not drive *Cleopatra*.

This would explain why Fox knew nothing of the affair. Taylor embodied Helen Gurley Brown’s⁷⁹ *Sex and the Single Girl*, published on New Year’s Day 1962. It encouraged women to seek physical gratification and an independent career (Cashmore, 2016, p. 6). Skouras wished Wanger a Happy New Year and advised Mankiewicz that Levathes would soon visit Rome (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 115-116). At a January dinner party, Burton amused Taylor, Frings, Abrams, and Robert Wagner with stories until around 01:00. Feeling excluded, Fisher began playing and singing loudly at the piano. Taylor told him to ‘shut up.’ Slamming down the piano lid, Fisher went to the next room and blasted out his own records on the stereo, infuriating

⁷⁷ Landau recalled knowing what happened after one scene, but not before it and asking Mankiewicz what to do. He explained it was one thing or another and that Landau should make a choice ‘that works for both. I know you can.’ Landau appreciated that Mankiewicz would trust him to do that, but still felt he was flying blind (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:25:17).

⁷⁸ Cole found it doubly difficult because his character had no lines.

⁷⁹ David Brown’s wife.

Taylor (Sheppard, 1975, p. 298-299). Fisher's (1999, p. 207) autobiographies stated he became aware of being cuckolded in February, but first realized Taylor and Burton were 'friendly' in January. The affair was emerging.

Casillo (2018, p.247) argued that *Cleopatra* meant Fox became more impatient with Monroe. On 2 January, Levathes launched *Something's Got to Give* (Rollyson, 2014, p. 254).⁸⁰ Cukor instructed Walter Bernstein to rewrite the script entirely: Weinstein said not to make too many changes. Fox paid \$300,000 to 7 writers to revise the script, still Monroe disliked it, but knew once completed she could 'name my own price like Elizabeth Taylor.' The next day, *Variety* (1962l) saluted Skouras' 20th Anniversary 13-week celebration and Levathes announced Fox would make fewer films in 1962 but place greater emphasis on international box-office appeal. He stated *Something's Got to Give* was scheduled to start 'depending on the star and when she reports at the studio' (*Variety*, 1962k). On 5 January, because the original actor now 'looked like Jack Dempsey next to Elizabeth' and Fox sent no replacement, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 116) recast Caesarion with a Roman child. Taylor and Monroe's increasingly erratic behaviour impeded Fox's financial recovery.

Steff Wanger thought her father tried to 'play psychiatrist' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 368). On 8 January,⁸¹ knowing Taylor's chauffeur received expenses, Harrison refused to work the following day if Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 116) did not agree to pay his chauffeur too – Wanger agreed. Shamroy wanted to quit because his wife had flown home after a family death. Cronyn described how Wanger would ask him what people really thought about Mankiewicz, or what Taylor had said. Cronyn knew but declined to say; Wanger called him 'the bearded hypocrite' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:49:59).

On 10 January, Taylor's illness prevented filming. Now in Rome, Levathes anticipated becoming executive vice-president at the next board meeting, although Fox had just cancelled all his television shows, emptying the lot. Fox's entire overhead therefore rested on the few projects in production. Then, Parsons (1961, p. 267) published a front-page article claiming

⁸⁰ See also Badman, 2012, p. 69.

⁸¹ Also, this day, 7 months after starting, Pan finally signed his contract (Franceschina, 2012, p. 234).

the Taylor-Fisher marriage was floundering. She was ‘planting’ a fabricated romance rumour to hype interest, but the foreign – especially Italian – press seized upon it. The next day, with both Taylor and Mankiewicz unwell, and possibly because he knew the lot was now dormant, Rogell suggested returning to shoot in Hollywood (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 116-117).⁸² Parson’s story now tested Wanger’s people management skills.

On 15 January, Fox agreed with Monroe’s suggestion of casting Dean Martin to co-star (Freedland, 2005, p. 125).⁸³ In Rome, Ascarelli called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 117)⁸⁴ about Italian press coverage of Parsons’ article. Wanger issued a denial, but Maria’s Munich orphanage contacted Rome’s German Embassy to verify if her new home was secure. Taylor told Hanley: ‘They mustn’t take her back... I won’t let them. Maria’s mine. She’s my family now.’ The next day, Taylor shot a scene, later cut from the film, while Fox announced it was delaying *Something’s Got to Give* until 15 March. On 20 January, Fisher cancelled a trip to New York, Wanger wondered whether it was Maria’s arrival or the Parsons story. Fox’s problems were about to multiply.

Taylor and Burton shot their first scene on Monday 22 January 1962, changing *Cleopatra’s* trajectory. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 120) recorded: ‘there comes a time during the making of a movie when the actors become the characters they play.... That happened today.’ When the cameras turned, Wanger wrote, ‘the current was literally turned on. It was quiet, and you could almost feel the electricity between Liz and Burton.’ Taylor’s (1967, p. 161-162)⁸⁵ memoir and subsequent interviews cultivated this myth. She saw Burton in the makeup room, hung over. ‘He was kind of quivering from head to foot.... He ordered a cup of coffee to... still his trembling fist, and I had to help it to his mouth, and that just endeared him so to me.... He was so vulnerable and sweet and shaky and terribly giggly that with my heart I “cwtched”⁸⁶ him.’ When Burton later ‘blew a line.’ Taylor recalled: ‘If it had been a planned

⁸² On 13 January, recalling *Cleopatra’s* (1934) commercialisation, Ceil Chapman announced her fall collection ‘Daughters of the Nile’ was inspired by Taylor’s film (Cashmore, 2016, p. 126) notes this was either premature or prescient.

⁸³ See also Tosches, 1999, p. 342.

⁸⁴ See also Badman, 2012, p. 62; Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017.

⁸⁵ See also Cashmore, 2016, p. 129.

⁸⁶ Welsh for ‘hug.’

strategic campaign, Caesar couldn't have planned it better.' Kashner and Schoenberger (2011, p. 25) suggested the affair was consummated in Burton's dressing room, and later at Hanley's flat near Villa Papa. Chris Mankiewicz says Burton walked in the next day announcing 'well I did it guys. I fucked Elizabeth in the back of my Cadillac' (Hollywood Couples: Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, 2019). However, Austin (2020) – maintaining the affair began much earlier at the Intercontinental – argued Burton would never have done that... 'they tried to... keep it a secret... why would they do that?... They were still playing the innocent. If she was late and Mankiewicz said, were you with Richard – in a nice way ... She would say he does his own thing.' Neither ever disclosed when they became lovers (Bernstein, 1994, p. 368). Saying they fell in love filming their first scene admitted their adultery but disguised their deceit to date.⁸⁷

Fox was unaware of this. On 24 January, Levathes signed Martin (Levy, 1994, p. 271) for \$300,000 plus 7.5% of the profits, triple Monroe's fee (Tosches, 1999, p. 342). Mankiewicz shot the Senate scene and on 26 January, the 'Take a little, then a little more' scene (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017). After which (Stern, 2019, p. 325-326), Taylor invited Mankiewicz to her dressing room to tell him she was in love with Burton and had already told Fisher. She did not return after lunch, so Mankiewicz rehearsed with Harrison.⁸⁸ Then Mankiewicz told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 121) 'I have been sitting on a volcano all alone for too long... Liz and Burton are not just playing Antony and Cleopatra!' This comment confirms the affair had started before January.

Cashmore (2016, p. 131) states Fisher was on set on 26 January around 11:00, with Sybil arriving 30 minutes later because the affair was no longer a secret. Harrison (1975, p. 198) recalled 'as everybody knows, the balloon went up.'⁸⁹ However, Fisher stated he only found

⁸⁷ Hughes-Hallett (1990, p. 282) concluded, Burton was a man of 'enormous talent but weak will, too easily tempted by booze and women.' Taylor's real-life Caesar was Todd, so although married to Fisher, once Taylor and Burton met, like the meeting at Tarsus, they moved beyond their professional function, and brazenly flaunted 'their impropriety.'

⁸⁸ Stern (2019, p. 326) states 27 January was the day Mankiewicz told Wanger of the affair.

⁸⁹ Landau described becoming aware of the affair when he and Burton were the only two actors called one day, but Taylor was present. When Burton arrived and kissed Taylor on the forehead, Landau thought "'Oh my God, well, well, well.'" I don't think I said it aloud, but I was kind of stupefied actually, aware of all the consequences

out later and Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 121) explained that on 28 January, Fisher sounded relaxed and happy when he cancelled their lunch to take his children out for the day. Attending a party held by Countess Volpi that evening, people asked Wanger if the rumours were true, referring to Parson's article. Wanger said he knew nothing. Meanwhile, Mankiewicz returned from a walk to learn Fisher had called him. Then Burton came round and drank for 3 hours until McDowall took him home, just as Sybil rang to ask where Burton was. Mankiewicz recalled going to bed 'exhausted by *Cleopatra*, but not by writing or directing' (Stern, 2019, p 327). The affair was still secret.

Once Wald's *Mr Hobbs Takes a Vacation* (Koster, 1962, Fox) ended its shoot (Badman, 2012, p. 62), *Cleopatra* and *Something's Got to Give*, were Fox's only productions (Silverman, 1988, p. 106). On 30 January, at lunch, Taylor told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 22) she would take a short holiday in Europe while Fisher was in New York recording, but Taylor later described Fisher wandering the villa not bathing, staying in his pyjamas all day long. Tom Mankiewicz said his father advised Fisher to leave: 'Eddie's really out of his league here with this romance. These two people will eat him alive. They're so in love with each other' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:07:06).

The next day, Levathes told Skouras the film's 126-minute cut continued to meet all expectations: Taylor's performance was outstanding, although he still worried about Mankiewicz' refusal to cut the script. Acknowledging Merman had failed to reduce the running time, Levathes estimated a 6-hour movie before final editing, anticipating filming would complete on 17 May – then unwittingly added – 'assuming no interruption of the current schedule' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 116). On 31 January, Fisher called Mankiewicz saying Burton had stayed out all night with Taylor, but Taylor brought Burton home to confront Fisher: Burton then humiliated them both (Stern, 2019, p. 327).⁹⁰ Fox still knew nothing of the affair, and if Fisher's accounts are true, nor did he.

and all the stuff basically that was to follow, with the paparazzi and the kind of world attention that romance got' (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:34:22).

⁹⁰ Fisher claimed Burton had said he was using Taylor to become famous, and while she was at first enraged, and ran away to Hanley's apartment, Burton found her there and they made up.

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Fisher (1991, p. 2) recalled that when it broke, the ‘maelstrom of passion and betrayal... was the greatest media frenzy of the time, the first great Hollywood love story of post-war America.’ Fisher’s hyperbole aside, the affair consolidated the paparazzi’s reputation (Cashmore 2016, p. 136) and sounded the ‘last gasp of the old morality given that cohabitation and adultery were still big sins in 1962’ (Maddox 1979, p. 170).⁹¹ Older Fox executives feared a moral backlash, but younger producers fought to sign Burton and Taylor (Walker, 1990, p. 250). Chris Mankiewicz thought his father encouraged the affair, hoping Burton would improve Taylor’s discipline (Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 186), the opposite was true. Burton thought it an ‘ordeal of fire;’ Taylor ‘a little like damnation to everybody’ (Brayton, 2014); Brodsky thought it absurd to suppress (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:04:53) the ‘priceless free advertising’ (Hughes-Hallett, 1990, p. 292). *Le Scandale* changed the film and our modern concept of celebrity.

Accounts differ about when Fisher and Sybil Burton knew of the affair. If the affair started before January 1962, both might have sensed something, for example, the several ‘moments’ where Taylor favoured Burton over Fisher. As the company celebrated Mankiewicz’ first year working on the film on 1 February, Fisher (1999, p. 205) stated he dismissed rumours about the affair as Fox publicity and tabloid journalism (Heymann, 1995, p. 242-243). That day he told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 122) Taylor was as ‘sweet and devoted as always.’ The next day, Wanger received an anonymous call saying Taylor was at Burton’s villa. Wanger called Taylor at home, where she was packing for a weekend in Paris with Fisher. Wanger concluded Rome was ‘the whispering gallery of Europe.’

On 3 February, with Taylor and Fisher in Paris; Burton went to Naples by train with his brother Ifor, who in anger punched Burton on the nose: Ifor’s censure hurt Burton more, and their relationship suffered for two years (Junor, 1986, p. 112). However, Wilmer (2009, p. 148-152),

⁹¹ The 1960 US Census recorded only 17,000 couples ‘sharing living quarters,’ 10-years later that figure was 143,000. The world was changing, and the older generation was out of step.

recalling that Mankiewicz had released him for 2-weeks,⁹² heard the news from Harrison on his return. As a family friend, Wilmer called Sybil, whom Wanger stated, 'was unaware of [Burton's] latest conquest.' Wilmer met Sybil for lunch at the Taverna Flavia, she confirmed the rumours: 'You know Rich well enough. He's done this a few times before and he'll probably do it again. But I'm sure he'll come back. He always has.' Sybil asked Wilmer to talk to Burton. Later that day, Sybil called Wanger, putting on the phone a doctor who explained McDowall had a boil which needed lancing, so could not work until Tuesday, cancelling Monday's shoot, giving Mankiewicz more time to write. One of few accounts detailing Sybil's reactions, Wilmer's aligns with a known period when Sybil was alone in Rome.

Fisher called Mankiewicz on 31 January implying he knew about the affair, but he stated it happened a week later. On 5 February, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p 123) told Taylor and Fisher to stay in Paris, and at Ascarelli's request told the press 'The rumours were unfounded. There is no romance, therefore nothing to deny.' Wanger met Burton, who asked if he was fired, describing the rumours as 'embarrassing to me as they are to you.... I will not allow anything to hurt my career or my marriage. And I won't do anything to harm Liz, who is a wonderful person.' Seeing Taylor at a crossroads in her life after the events in London, Wanger thought Burton provided the excitement she required, while Fisher was more like a brother. On 6 February, now back in Rome, Fisher (1999, p. 207)⁹³ was in bed with Taylor when Abrams called him and detailed the affair. Hanging up, Fisher asked Taylor if it was true. She said it was. Fisher packed in silence and went to Abrams'. On 7 February, Brodsky told Wanger he could not go into any cafe along the Via Veneto without Crushenko, chief of the paparazzi, offering \$160 for a negative of Burton and Taylor. Fisher's account serves his narrative of being distressed at losing Taylor, but suggests a staggering lack of perception, given the various events he described prior to 6 February.

⁹² This was for *Marco Polo* (Jaque, 1962, Han Productions), Mankiewicz released Wilmer, but stating not a day more, but 2 days prior to finishing, Fox cabled, demanding Wilmer's immediate return. The next day another cable said he might be required, so Wilmer carried on with the shooting. Then an irate call from Rome asked him to confirm his return immediately, denying sending a second cable. Wilmer completed his last day in Belgrade, boarded a waiting Dakota chartered especially for him at 02:00 and landed just after dawn at Fiumicino where a limo raced him to Cinecittà. Trying to recover in the makeup chair, Harrison asked him 'Well, what about Master Richard?' Wilmer was puzzled, Harrison replied 'Didn't you know? He's gone off with her.' When Wilmer realised Harrison meant Taylor, he replied: 'He can't have done. He thought she was a joke.' 'Well, she's no joke now' Harrison replied.

⁹³ See also Carter, 2008, p. 148.

Denying the affair, Mankiewicz advised Fisher to return to the villa to avoid Taylor charging him with desertion.⁹⁴ Fisher stated that although they slept together for the next 2 weeks Taylor 'just wasn't 'there' anymore, she was with him. And I wasn't "there."' Fisher described Taylor and Burton meeting at the studio or her 'talking love to him on the telephone. "Oh, dahling, are you all right?" With this new British accent.' In Wanger's (and Hyams, 1963, p. 125) office on 8 February, he discussed with Taylor and Burton how to deal with the paparazzi, they did not discuss the affair.

On 10 February, Wanger arrived on set at 09:45 for the 'Ides of March' scene. Taylor was crying because nobody had awoken her for her call. Mankiewicz was 'very sympathetic and gentle.' Wanger thought Taylor and Burton must have reached an understanding because 'everything was serene on set.' At home, drinking vodka, a friend – possibly Abrams – told Fisher to buy a gun and use it on Burton, because 'no judge in the world' would convict him (Heymann, 1995, p. 243). Wilmer (2009, p. 152) stated he and Burton lunched at Rome's Welsh Pub on Sunday 11, but very drunk, Burton was evasive, so Wilmer 'did not even try to talk to him.' The story of the affair still had not broken.

As Taylor filmed Alexander's tomb scene (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 126) on 12 February, Fisher now affected *Cleopatra's* production. Calling Mankiewicz at 21:30, Fisher said Taylor had not returned home. Continuing the tomb scene, the next day (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017), Taylor told Mankiewicz she returned at midnight. Meanwhile, Burton assured Sybil the affair had ended, but would 'play along' until the filming was over. Fisher (1999, p. 212-214; 2008, p. 150)⁹⁵ told Wanger he was going to Gstaad but first visited Sybil. She explained she had experienced all this before. Fisher wrote that as he drove to Switzerland via Florence, Sybil confronted Burton on set, forcing Mankiewicz to suspend production for the day, yet Burton was not in the tomb scene. McDowall's recollections are more credible. He found Sybil in tears saying Fisher had forced her to accept Burton loved Taylor more than her,

⁹⁴ Fisher later wrote Mankiewicz would do anything to keep his \$15,000,000 movie on track.

⁹⁵ See also Heymann, 1995, p. 243-244; Porter, 2012, p. 499; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 117.

apparently, she had given Fisher ‘the hardest slap in the face I was capable of giving and ordered him out of the house.’⁹⁶

In New York, on 14 February, Levathes, Ferguson, Feldman, and Lipsky discussed the Taylor-Fisher picture deal: meeting notes described needing a director ‘à la Mankiewicz,’ but no affair. Skouras also wrote to Mankiewicz commenting on the latest portion of script, again no reference. In Rome, Taylor knew Fisher had seen Sybil, while Fisher called Mankiewicz from Florence twice. McDowall told Fisher everybody was furious he had seen Sybil and didn’t act like a man. ‘I didn’t act like a man?’ Fisher wrote, ‘I had to hear that from this marshmallow...? I hung up on him.’⁹⁷ On set, McDowall told Burton Sybil was about to leave for New York to see Philip Burton who was unwell. Burton paled, saying Sybil and ‘the kids came first.’ Now Taylor worried. Hearing Taylor was in Hanley’s apartment with Burton, Fisher called them. Enraged with Fisher for speaking to Sybil, Burton told Fisher ‘You nothing, you spleen, I’m going to come up there and kill you.’

Taylor’s emotional state now fluctuated. On 15 February, with Burton visiting Taylor at Villa Papa nightly,⁹⁸ Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 35)⁹⁹ told Ascarelli there was no truth in the story. Fearing the public would ‘crucify her’ for breaking up another marriage, Brodsky argued they must ‘bottle it up as long as we can.’ On 16 February, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 126) described most newspaper coverage of the affair as ‘libellous, even under Roman law.’

⁹⁶ Brower (2022, p. 191) suggest that it was likely McDowall who told Sybil about the affair.

⁹⁷ Fisher described McDowall as ‘another phony.’ Geist (1978, p. 324) noted casting McDowall as a blond and effeminate Octavian meant he could act as an intermediary between Mankiewicz, Taylor and Burton. Taylor counted many gay men as close friends, when McDowell returned to New York after the shoot he told Clift about the rumours, to which Clift replied: ‘It’s lunatic. Bessie Mae is now the most famous woman in the world!’ But Clift also thought Burton wanted to be famous at any cost, so he had driven the affair (Kashner and Schoenberger, 2011, p. 37). Photographer Blaine Waller, a close friend of Clift, stated that Clift thought Burton ‘a self-indulgent actor.... getting off on his own voice’ which Clift did not consider acting (Kelly, 1981, p. 159).

⁹⁸ Tom Mankiewicz (and Crane, 2015, p. 66-67) recalled Taylor inviting him to dine with her and Fisher at Villa Papa. Thrilled, he accepted, but Fisher was unwell so went to bed. After dinner, in the living room, Taylor and Mankiewicz were drinking coffee when Burton entered through the back door. ‘Hello, luv, mind if I join you?’ he asked Mankiewicz, then embraced Taylor. Mankiewicz realised he was a chaperone. They all drank, Burton made them both laugh with his stories until Fisher entered in his bathrobe and slippers and calmly said: ‘It’s late, Richard. Elizabeth has to shoot in the morning.’

Burton replied, ‘I just came by to see my girl.’

‘You already have a girl, Richard. You have Sybil.’

After a silence Burton said, ‘They’re both my girls.’ Fisher paused, then walked back upstairs. Mankiewicz – deeply embarrassed – thanked Taylor for dinner and left.

⁹⁹ See also Rubythorn, 2011, p. 446.

Agreeing to end the gossip, Burton told Taylor the affair was over, then ‘tried to calm her’ (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 1:37:25), then asked his family to ask Sybil to return (Rubythorn, 2011, p. 449). That evening, Hanley called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 126) explaining Taylor could not work the next day, confirming Brodsky’s (and Weiss, 1963, p. 35) observation that Taylor was bubbling one day and remorseful the next. Taylor’s absences increased.

By 17 February, suspicions reached America. *The Perry Como Show* featured a sketch with a slave named Eddie getting in Mark Antony’s way (Carter, 2008, p. 149): ‘what do they know?’ Weiss asked Brodsky (1963, p. 36). Sybil’s arrival in New York fuelled speculation. Rome’s morning’s papers falsely stated Taylor being restrained from breaking through a glass door the previous night. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 126-128) and Mankiewicz visited her at 11:30. Hanley was present and a doctor. Mankiewicz spoke to Taylor alone, then returned to his hotel to write. Wanger stayed and chatted with Taylor stating she felt dreadful for Sybil, loved Fisher, and still missed Todd; she was upset but ‘perfectly reasonable.’ Taylor returned to bed at 17:00 and Wanger spoke with Hanley, McDowall, Valva, and several others. Wanger described finding a sleepy-looking Taylor in bed, having taken some sleeping pills. Suggesting she should eat, Wanger went to get her some food, then someone ‘foolishly’ sent for an ambulance. At the Salvatore Mundi Hospital the paparazzi were in ‘full force.’ Wanger recalled Taylor was fine, but ‘the story went out that Liz had attempted suicide.’ Wanger denied the story all night, saying it was food poisoning. Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 37-38) later told Weiss ‘We devised the food poisoning story and it seemed to go over.’ The story now snowballed.

Taylor’s attempted suicide made world headlines.¹⁰⁰ About to release her memoirs as the story broke, Doubleday requested Hopper make last-minute updates. Seeing an opportunity to resuscitate her crusade, Hopper (and Brough, 1963, p. 10)¹⁰¹ wrote: ‘I knew Elizabeth Taylor was about to dump Eddie Fisher in favour of Richard Burton soon after *Cleopatra* started

¹⁰⁰ Tom Mankiewicz recalls his father seeing Taylor at the hospital and asking her how many pills she had taken. ‘She mumbled something like “14.” And he said, “She’ll be fine.” Elizabeth says that she remembered thorough the haze “that son of a bitch”’ (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:00:00).

¹⁰¹¹⁰¹ See also Mann, 2009, p. 325-326.

filming in Rome. Because in 40 years in Hollywood I've told the truth.'¹⁰² Hopper's journalism no longer swayed public opinion; instead, stories acquired their authenticity from how they varied from the star image studios attempted to promote (Miles, 2011, p 188). Throughout the 'Cleomania' that followed, people sought a privileged glimpse of the real 'Lizpatra', but blending star and role made that impossible.

Working on *The Longest Day* in Paris (Hauck, 2006, 0:02:49),¹⁰³ and dining with Zanuck, Burton expressed concern about *Cleopatra's* management and reckless spending, doubting it would ever complete. He urged Zanuck to take a trip to Rome 'and scare the hell out of them by just appearing on the set' (Mosley, 1985, p. 445). On 18 February, Hanley told Fisher (1999, p. 214) Taylor was well but in hospital. Fisher thought this 'the best news I'd heard in weeks' because caring for Taylor was his 'specialty.' Fisher called Wanger announcing his return, fuelling further press speculation. Calling from Paris, Burton said he would return too: fearing further press activity, Wanger told him not to. Nobody could control the story.

Focus now shifted to Burton who returned to Rome on 19 February as Harrison moved to his pro-rata fee (20th century Fox 1962a). Badly advised by Chris Hoffa, his press agent, Burton released a statement entitled 'Elizabeth and myself'¹⁰⁴ (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 129).¹⁰⁵ Hoffa did not clear this 'home goal,' enabling the press to print the very stories Burton denied. In New York, Einfeld feared the impact on Fox shares. Meanwhile Philip Burton took Sybil to Idlewild Airport for her return to Rome, unaware of what had happened. When Sybil landed, reports of the 'food poisoning' described Burton at Taylor's bedside. Therefore, on 20 February, at Wanger's instruction, Burton explained the statement was Hoffa's unauthorised work. Fisher (1981, p. 213-214) saw Taylor in hospital, she asked if he had gone to see Sybil. Fisher replied, 'Elizabeth, I love you and would do anything to keep you.' On 21 February, Taylor told Wanger she would work only after a 13:00 meeting with Burton. When Taylor arrived, she told Wanger she felt unwell: 'my heart feels as though it is haemorrhaging.'

¹⁰² She revealed Sara Taylor's relentless ambition; Todd's conniving nature; that Taylor had really said 'What do you expect me to do? Sleep alone?'; but also, her 'scoop' that Michael Wilding was gay (Hopper and Brough, 1963, p. 10; Mann, 2009, p. 325-326). Wilding sued Hopper for \$100,000, winning substantial damages and 'a grovelling apology' for the groundless allegations (Morley, 1989, p. 81-82).

¹⁰³ Annakin (2006, 0:22:48) commented, 'we were able get the most amazing actors.' Burton added 'a lot of value to the picture, but he just picked up in between other things he was doing.'

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix 2.

¹⁰⁵ See also Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 37-38; Rubython, 2011, p. 453-454, 460.

Burton first mentioned the possibility of divorcing Sybil, upsetting McDowall, who moved out of their shared villa, though remained cordial on set. Wanger also noted Tunder¹⁰⁶ on set. Never had Burton's affairs attracted such attention.

On 22 February, *The New York Times* suggested that if Taylor didn't finish, it would ruin Fox. New York contacted Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 131) the next day, terming the affair a 'cancer' that 'will destroy us all.' Significantly, that day Fox drew up a list of Taylor's absences to date (Unknown 1962c). On 25 February, at 09:15 Mankiewicz called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 132) about Taylor and Fisher wanting to go to Paris to celebrate her 27th birthday. Agreeing, Wanger reminded Mankiewicz they had to finish Taylor's scenes as soon as possible. Noting Mankiewicz' state of exhaustion, Wanger called Skouras requesting MacDougall's return. Skouras asked: 'Is this your idea, or does Joe approve?' Harrison felt lucky to be in the first half of the picture, because 'Joe hadn't reached his climax of despair at that point' (Geist, 1978, p. 322). Merman told Levathes 'Production I'll straighten out, but this Taylor thing is dynamite' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 368).

By 26 February, Fox guaranteed MacDougall 5 weeks at \$4,722.22 per week with \$500.00 living expenses (20th Century Fox 1962b). Taylor filmed the scene in Antony's quarters with Harrison, which Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 133) thought a good day's work. In New York, Fox wrote to Frings about the Taylor-Fisher picture deal, confirming the offer discussed on 15 February (Grant, 1962). Aware of the affair, Fox still pressed ahead.

The affair exposed how little Fox, or the ailing studio system, controlled publicity. On 27 February, Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. 41) confirmed plans to swap roles. With Sybil 'ready to leave again, this time with the kids.' Brodsky concluded the Taylor-Fisher marriage was over and 'they still don't have a picture,' adding Taylor was 'in a frantic emotional state.' However, on set that day, Mankiewicz halted filming at 15:00 for an enormous birthday cake in Egyptian colours to celebrate Taylor's birthday. Wanger gave her a gold charm, the company a case of wine, Fox sent her a \$2,600 gold compact (Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 176). At 20:30,

¹⁰⁶ Tunder was the woman who had accompanied Burton when he met Wanger in New York to discuss being in *Cleopatra*.

Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 133) took Frings to Fisher's birthday party for Taylor, now in the Borgia Room of the Hostaria del Orso, not Paris. Attempting to prove his love, Fisher (1999, p. 218)¹⁰⁷ gave Taylor a large diamond ring and an antique mirror: Skouras sent the orchid centrepiece for the table. In Celigny, Burton's family expressed their concerns to him.

The next day, *Variety* (1962II) reported Hollywood would dip to an all-time low in 1962, given that only 16 pictures had started production, as opposed to 25 the same time in 1961. Proving Fox was not alone, it cited *The Longest Day*, *Mutiny on the Bounty* (Milestone, 1962, Arcola Pictures), *How the West Was Won* (Ford, Hathaway, and Marshal, 1962, MGM), *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962, Sony) and *Cleopatra* as 'ultra-expensive and prolonged productions.' MacDougall arrived in Rome 'Thank God you're here. I've gone dry' Mankiewicz said. Later, MacDougall saw one page on which Mankiewicz had written one sentence 15 different ways (Geist, 1978, p. 322-324). He also saw a 138-minute cut which he thought made 'all the heartache and tension and anxiety worthwhile.' Then, an Italian newspaper reported McDowall and Sybil were having an affair (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 133). Hollywood's control of publicity had disintegrated.

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Buchwald¹⁰⁸ stated the 'international hysteria' over the affair drove the nuclear disarmament talks and the Berlin settlement off the front pages. Zanuck thought it 'quite constructive for our organization' (Mann, 2009, p. 324); later legal depositions indicated that Fox never requested its end (Rubython, 2011, p. 459). Monaco (2003, p. 36) argued the degree to which the 'publicity deluge' affected the production was negligible, but Fox shareholders were concerned enough to elect Judge Rosenman as Fox chairman, despite his lack of industry knowledge (Stern; 2019, p. 329), intensifying Fox's internal power struggle.

Fisher (1999, p. 218) continued to deny any rumours, telling columnist Vernon Scott that he and Taylor were 'still very much in love, and would not 'let gossip interfere with the way we

¹⁰⁷ See also Rubython, 2011, p. 455; Badman, 2012, p. 169.

¹⁰⁸ Buchwald also wrote 'that when in Rome you must see the Coliseum, you have to see the Roman Forum, you have to visit the set of *Cleopatra*. Unfortunately, the first two are readily available, the third is very difficult' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:47:26).

feel about one another.’ Burton began drinking heavily on set; Taylor’s absences increased (Carter, 2008, p. 153);¹⁰⁹ Wanger described production meetings with Mankiewicz, Rogell, and Merman, as a costly version of *Waiting for Godot*. Wanger consoled Sybil, Fisher, and Taylor’s parents – Mankiewicz wrote (Bernstein, 1994, p. 368). Despite Harrison’s equally adulterous relationship with Roberts, he remained ‘blissfully separate from all of this Taylor-Burton romance and was not particularly friendly with either one of them’¹¹⁰ (Walker, 2002, p. 255).¹¹¹

Skouras’ position weakened. On 1 March Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 42) described the previous night’s board meeting, where Skouras’ plans to book *Cleopatra* into Madison Square Garden led to a ‘knockdown dragout’ with Gould. In Rome, having celebrated St David’s Day, a very drunk Burton arrived on set at 07:00, delaying the shoot by falling asleep. Meanwhile, Fisher informed Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 134) Taylor’s recurring phlebitis prevented her working for 2 days. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 134) appreciated Harrison’s excellent work and the improved weather but concluded, ‘this picture seems to be crisis after crisis after crisis.’ On 3 March, Sybil returned to New York. Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 43) thought Taylor still loved Burton, but Tunder was on set, so Burton and Taylor argued. On 5 March, Taylor filmed the bath scene: Mankiewicz’ dialogue reflected off-screen events (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 134). Miles (2011, p 188-189) described this ‘extra-cinematic discourse’ between actors and characters as the present informing representations of the past, moving the ‘temporality of the time represented into the here-and-now.... film-star adultery... infected the film-making process.’ Previous *Cleopatra* actors were synonymous with the character, but as the ‘Lizpatra’ soubriquet proved, Taylor now fused with it.

None of this solved Fox’s problems. On 6 March, Monroe expressed to Levathes her ‘wholehearted support’ for *Something’s Got to Give*. In February, aware of her waning popularity, Monroe had consulted Paula Strasberg and worked on her Swedish accent but did

¹⁰⁹ Capote felt sorry for ‘dull and dreary’ Fisher, because ‘Elizabeth demonstrated greater compassion for her cats and dogs’ than she showed Fisher. ‘She treated him like an errand boy’ (Heymann, 1995, p. 226).

¹¹⁰ However, Harrison did allow Taylor and Burton to escape to his house in San Genesio, Portofino. Roberts, Sybil’s friend, disliked this (Wapshott, 1991, p. 236).

¹¹¹ See also Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:38:35.

not really wish to make the film¹¹² (Badman 2012, p. 69-70, 119).¹¹³ Later in March, when Monroe learned Cukor and Bernstein had re-written the script she had learned, she rejected the new one (Rollyson, 2014, p. 261). Also on 6 March, Skouras first spoke to Wanger of sending a disciplinary letter to both Taylor and Burton (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 120-121). In Rome, Taylor was late, but continued filming the previous day's scene. Tunder was also on set, even though Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 134) had asked Burton's secretary to avoid this, so a female crew member drove Tunder to the airport (Alpert, 1987, p. 131).¹¹⁴ The next day, Parsons declared the marriage over: 'It is difficult to appraise how the world will react to another scandal involving Elizabeth.' (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 45).¹¹⁵ On 8 March, one newspaper reported Burton had no intention of divorcing Sybil and would never marry Taylor. When Taylor filmed the bedroom scene after Antony's departure for Rome, where Cleopatra shreds his clothes, Taylor supposedly cried out 'Sybil! Sybil' but hurt her hand in the process. Treating her, Dr Pennington (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 135) prevented her working until Monday. The Rome press, citing Parsons' recent article, re-opened the story, upsetting Fisher, which Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 77-79) feared negated any favourable publicity for a film Rogell now budgeted at \$27,000,000 (Silverman, 1988, p. 119). With costs rising, Fox saw the affair as a liability.

Therefore, Skouras and Koegel arrived in Rome on 10 March. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 136-137) described 'a wasted hour of verbal fencing' and an agreement to hold no more 'secret meetings which left out a few of the top people on the picture.' He discovered the next morning that Skouras, Rogell and Shamroy held a secret meeting. At a main meeting, Skouras explained some minority-stockholders – angered by last 2-years' \$60,000,000-\$75,000,000 loss – had filed negligence suits against Fox. Dining with Taylor and Fisher later at Villa Papa, hoping a 'great picture' would save his career, Skouras talked to Wanger about 'quality rather than budget.' Then, in his heavy Greek accent, berated Wanger for casting Burton: 'All Burton has done is cause trouble, and you can't understand a word he says.' Taylor resumed the bed

¹¹² Columnist John Sampson wrote of her arrival in New York where 'there was nobody to greet her, nobody to take her picture, nobody to ask her for her autograph. Not even a solitary wolf-whistle' (Badman, 2012, p. 98).

¹¹³ See also Rollyson, 2014, p. 257-258.

¹¹⁴ Six months later, Tunder stated she wished Burton all the happiness in the world, 'but not with her!' (Cashmore, 2016, p. 133).

¹¹⁵ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 302.

stabbing scene on 12 March, (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017), while Skouras, Koegel, and Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 137-138) watched a 160-minute cut and were 'wildly enthusiastic,' thinking Burton superb, along with Taylor and Harrison.' At lunch, Skouras told Burton how wonderful he was, adding, 'I understood every word you said.'¹¹⁶ Again, Skouras and Koegel offered no solutions.

The Taylor-Fisher marriage now entered its final stages. On 13 March Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p.46) described Taylor and Fisher being 'lovey-dovey again' but doubted its sincerity. They discussed Mankiewicz' potential Oscar nomination, though Mankiewicz thought Crowther would 'rap' the film. On 14 March, with *The Longest Day* shoot over (Zacky, Burns and Bider, 2001, 0:36:18), Zanuck stated his \$10,000,000 budget was more than he originally intended,¹¹⁷ but on such a project it was 'impossible to fix an exact budget in advance' (*Variety*. 1962z). Taylor and Burton filmed the 'Love is my master' scene (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017), Skouras liked the footage he had seen and was glad MacDougall was helping Mankiewicz (Feldman, 1962).

In Hollywood, on Fox's Stage 14, the art department started building *Something's Got to Give's* \$200,000 set (Badman, 2012, p. 119).¹¹⁸ On 16 March, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 139) reprimanded Burton about drinking on set. On 18 March, Taylor and Burton dined out, without Fisher. Burton drove her home just before dawn (Spoto, 1995, p. 198). Fisher (1999, p. 220) stated that was when he decided to leave her, so they made love for the last time.¹¹⁹ When he told her he had already made plane reservations to leave Rome in the morning, she erupted with anger. 'I wasn't allowed to leave her. "If you leave me now," she said, "you'll never see me again."' Parsons' declaration was correct.

¹¹⁶ Burton replied, 'That's more than I can say about you, Mr. Skouras.' Wanger states Skouras offered Burton two more pictures.'

¹¹⁷ This was the \$8,000,000 budget from Fox, which Zanuck was told he should not exceed, plus \$2,000,000 of his own money.

¹¹⁸ A replica of Cukor's own Beverly Hills mansion and back yard, the painters even reproduce the shrubbery found in Cukor's Garden (Badman, 2012, p. 119).

¹¹⁹ Stern (2019, p. 327) states Taylor's version was that she last had sex with Fisher on 12 February.

Press coverage was unrelenting. On 19 March, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 139) thought Fisher ill-advised to fly to New York. Friends helped a drunken Fisher (1981, p. 2) on-board, where he drank more. Fox representatives met him at Idlewild, where reporters quizzed him. The next day, on set, Mankiewicz told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 139) that Taylor – upset at Fisher’s departure – could not work because she had not slept the previous night. Having checked schedules with Matthews, Fox totalled Taylor’s 17 days’ illness (Unknown 1962d). On 22 March, *Variety* (1962gg) ran a full-page ad for *The Longest Day*,¹²⁰ which Zanuck aimed to cut to 180-200 minutes (*Variety*, 1962ff). Brodsky told Weiss (1963, p. 48) that, having returned to Rome, Sybil was taking the children to London. Wanger advised Skouras not to send letters of reprimand to Taylor and Burton (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 118), but Levathes instructed Frings to deliver ‘this note immediately to miss Taylor.’ It did not request Taylor to stop the affair, but to discipline herself ‘to finish her part in the picture as rapidly as possible.’ Skouras had broached none of this when in Rome. Meanwhile, in Genoa, side-stepping similar press coverage, Harrison married Roberts (Walker, 2002, p. 253).¹²¹ On 23 March, while Burton and Taylor filmed the ‘On your knees’ and ‘black and gold’ scenes (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017) Fisher called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 140) saying he missed Taylor. Press coverage continued.

Fisher still denied the affair. In Rome, on 24 March Taylor told Wanger if she received the same letter Burton had received, she would quit: Levathes should ‘save himself a stamp.... It’s too late for them to replace me, and if I walk out of here, Fox is as good as dead. Nobody tells me who to love or not to love, who to be seen with and not to be seen with’ (Heymann, 1995, p. 249). Taylor now used her power.

¹²⁰ ‘After 9 months and 17 days of photography in 31 locales, a motion picture has just been completed with the following international cast.’

¹²¹ The paparazzi made Harrison nervous, so he threatened to call it off, but Roberts recalled they both ‘drank a considerable amount.’ Harrison and Roberts honeymooned for a few days (Walker, 2002, p. 253).

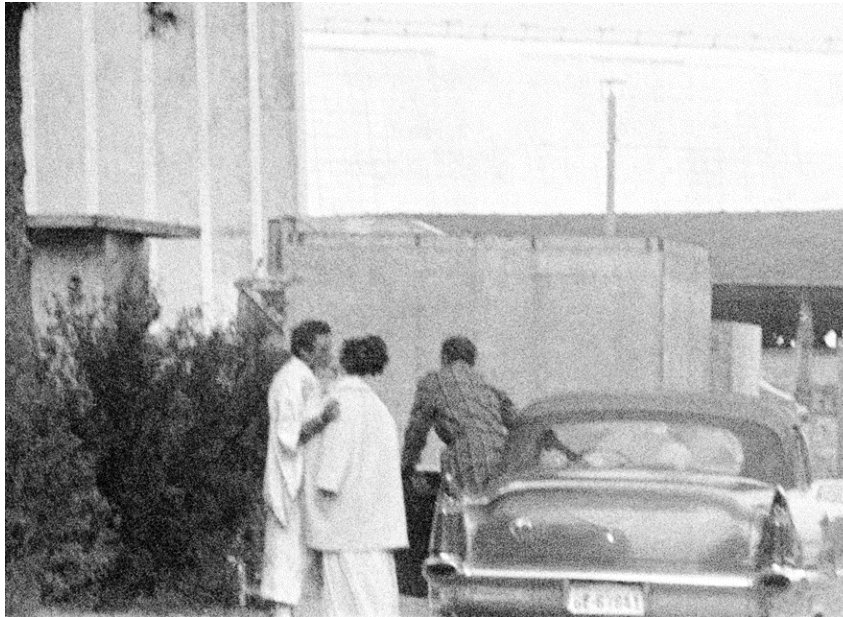


Figure 7.4

This photograph of Burton kissing Taylor was taken by Elio Sorci on the Cinecittà backlot, it became known as the kissing picture and was first published in *Gente* (Camera Press 2023).

On Sunday 25 March, French and Frings came to Rome to support Burton and Taylor respectively.¹²² In America, trying to quell the rumours, Fisher appeared on *What's My Line?* (Kashner and Schoenberger, 2011, p. 32).¹²³ After his identity was revealed, Fisher explained he was in New York on *Cleopatra* business. 'Some *Cleopatra* business?' replied the host. The panel laughed. Asked when the picture would finish, Fisher replied: 'I don't think it's matter of when it's going to be finished, because it's going to be the greatest picture ever made and the biggest box-office attraction in the history of motion pictures and Elizabeth Taylor-Fisher, will win the academy award for it.' Fisher (1999, p. 220-221) later explained before leaving Rome, he and Taylor had agreed to deny they had separated, and his manager convinced him to continue the charade. Then in Rome, *Gente*, published a photograph of Taylor and Burton on set, kissing (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 141). There was now proof of the affair. Press coverage gathered momentum. On 26 March, to work on the screenplay, Fox delayed shooting *Something's Got to Give* until 23 April (Rollyson, 2014, p. 261). Two days later in Rome, Harrison, collecting Roberts from the airport, shouted at the customs officers when they asked to search her handbag (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 142).¹²⁴ In London, Dirk

¹²² Under their agreement with Taylor, Fox paid for Frings to do so.

¹²³ Fisher entered to loud whistles and cheers. The panel asked: 'are you married to a very beautiful girl?' The audience murmured and Fisher's identity was discovered.

¹²⁴ Burton recalled Harrison created Italian expletives by adding 'o' to English words, like 'stupido' and 'idioto,' so when Harrison shouted 'take your hat off when you're talking to me! You pompous buffoono!' the Italians thought Harrison was insulting their officer and flag (Cottrell and Cashin, 1974, p. 240-241).

Bogarde and Alma Cogan organised Sybil's surprise birthday party (Junor, 1986, p. 114). In New York, Fisher collapsed with nervous exhaustion and was hospitalised (Rubython, 2011, p. 456), receiving a methamphetamine shot the next day, Fisher (1999, p. 221-222) left hospital.

On 29 March, Fisher's 'breakdown' story with Burton as 'the other man' sent reporters from every European newspaper to Rome. Back in New York, Skouras told the executive, that Levathes' insistence on not rushing pictures to release meant Fox had a product shortage, so no pictures for 1963 except for *Cleopatra*, which they could not premiere until March (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 50). Fox was relieved therefore when – on 30 March – Martin finally agreed to star opposite Monroe, on the proviso that should she not complete the film he would approve any replacement actor (Badman, 2012, p. 120).¹²⁵ In Rome, Harrison appeared in court to apologise formally 'to the officer, the Italian president, and finally to the entire Italian nation,' and the judge dismissed the case (Wapshott, 1991, p. 241).¹²⁶ Fisher was about to suffer similar humiliation.

Heavily 'medicated,' Fisher (1999, p. 217) held an ill-advised press conference at New York's Pierre Hotel. Aiming to disprove the breakdown story, pose for pictures, then leave, Fisher explained he had not left Taylor but was in New York on business. He admired Burton as an actor. Then one reporter asked about the kissing picture, now in *Oggi*. Another reporter asked if Taylor would deny the rumours, Fisher agreed to call her. Taylor later wrote: 'he told me

¹²⁵ Cyd Charisse, Steve Allen and Phil Silvers signed soon after (Badman, 2012, p. 120) Charisse was hired for \$50,000; Tom Tryon earned \$55,000, the film's budget was \$3,254,00 (Spoto, 1993, p. 562).

¹²⁶ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 143.



Figure 7.5

Taken by an anonymous photographer, this shows a very haggard looking Fisher at his press conference at the Hotel Pierre in New York on 30 March 1962. Shortly after this shot was taken, Fisher spoke to Taylor on the telephone.

that he'd called a press conference. He said he wanted me to tell them there was no foundation for the stories coming out of Rome. And I said, "Well, Eddie, I can't do that because there is some truth in the story. I just can't do that." And he said, "Wait a minute, what do you mean you won't do that?" And I said, I can't do that because it's true. There is a foundation to the story." Then he said, "Thanks a lot!" and hung up.' Fisher told the press: 'you know you can ask a woman to do something, but she doesn't always do it.' Headlines the next day declared Taylor had turned down Fisher's call (David and Robbins, 1977, p. 138-139).

Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 143) described Taylor receiving the call on set, and 'sick of being chased by the paparazzi' decided to turn the tables (Kashner and Schoenberger, 2011, p. 36). Previously, they had outsmarted the paparazzi by Taylor wearing a blonde curly wig to resembled Sybil (Hollywood Couples: Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, 2019),¹²⁷ now in the full glare of the press – presumably from the Intercontinental Hotel – Burton took Taylor to Alfredo's on the Via Veneto, staying until 03:00. Burton told Brodsky: 'I just got fed up with everyone telling us to be discreet. I said to Liz: Fuck it, let's go out to fucking Alfredo's and have some fucking fettucine' (Rubython, 2011, p. 457). Cashmore (2006, p. 18-21) described the 'enthusiastic assistance of a newly rapacious media' enabling Taylor and Burton to effect

¹²⁷ On 3 May 1962, Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 73-76) recalled standing in a corridor outside Burton's dressing room when a 'cute blonde suddenly brushed by us to go into Burton's room.' Only after a moment did he realise it was Taylor wearing a wig.

one of the most ‘dramatic changes in popular culture of the twentieth century.’¹²⁸ Their walk along the Via Veneto was a turning point in the way the public engaged with stars’ lives.¹²⁹



Figure 7.6

Taken by an unknown photographer on 6 June 1962, while Taylor shot in Ischia, this picture shows her wearing a blonde wig. This was something she was reported doing while in Rome with Burton so that people thought she was Sybil Burton. The simialrity was remarkable (Alamy, 2023)

With Rogell often counteracting Wanger’s optimistic communications and Merman arguing Mankiewicz was capricious and filming would last until July without cutting scenes, Fox now scapegoated *Cleopatra* (Bernstein, 1994, p. 370). Talk of Levathes replacing Skouras resurfaced (Lev, 2013, p. 250) and Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. VI), describing the resurgence of an ‘old guard within Fox,’ now noted Treves’ third force emerging to capitalise on the battle between Skouras and the Wall Street faction. Meanwhile, Wasserman and Stein realised their long-developed plan to buy Decca Records and its subsidiary, Universal. Wasserman now led the world’s first horizontally integrated studio – a large record company owning film studio (Sharp, 2003, p 119) – changing the studio system once more (Monaco, 2003, p. 31-32). In New York, Fisher tried to stage his comeback with his own record company and a series of

¹²⁸ A later time, Llewellyn saw them in a restaurant, but noting the paparazzi outside, offered to escort Taylor through the back of the restaurant with her wearing a headscarf, they declined, facing the barrage of cameras and questions when they left 2-hours later. Llewellyn reasoned for all their objections they loved the attention (Hernu, 1999, p. 75).

¹²⁹ Chris Mankiewicz dated Marie Deveraux, Taylor’s photographic double. People often chased them thinking she was Taylor. ‘At the age of 18 it was kind for thrilling to me, but I can understand the absolute, I mean utter pressure and anguish they went through trying to get any kind of relationship together... this was so excessive and so brutal’ (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:53:58).

appearances: his act began with 'Arrivederci Roma'¹³⁰ (Sheppard, 1975, p. 308).¹³¹ In Rome, *Cleopatra* continued to shoot.

APRIL 1962

As Austin (2020) began procession rehearsals,¹³² Taylor began exercising her power. Controlling the cast was difficult: 'this guy wanted to pee, that guy over there was tired, his legs hurt.... I could never get everybody up there all at the same time.' On a crane, using binoculars, Austin saw extras wearing sunglasses or a watch; one woman with Roman-looking hair and bodice, but wearing jeans. Someone had parked a car in the archways of the set, and one couple made love amongst some haybales. Austin cut many dancers because, having spent their weekends sunbathing, they had visible bra strap marks. Pan never had veils to rehearse the veil dancers. Lacking dancers, Pan would often pluck people out of the extras. Mankiewicz wanted 400 black actors, but there were not that many in Rome, so some extras were sprayed with body paint, until Rome's actors' union objected.¹³³

With Taylor and Burton together or out on the Via Veneto until 01:00 drinking, Taylor's lateness increased: the company soon resented waiting for her. Taylor had a railway carriage for her procession-scene dressing-room, Burton a separate carriage. 'They were 14-15 feet apart... and two days later they were pushed together.' Austin (2020) stressed, only Taylor had the power to request this and if shooting stopped, 'you can bet your life it was because of Elizabeth not feeling well or not wanting to do something or disagreeing with the script.' Austin argued, 'when I first knew Elizabeth, she was a lot, lot younger.... She wasn't dominating like that and then she found her power.... When she became independent, she acquired power and was shrewd, accomplished and very business-like.' She remained likable, would joke, and laugh, but hers was a 'childish power.... When she'd come out on to that set, she was still the little Elizabeth, but underneath it you knew that ... something was going

¹³⁰ Later, while he was dating Juliet Prowse, they sang 'I'm Cleo, the Nympho of the Nile.' Fisher's line was: 'There was not a man she couldn't get That was Cleo's problem on and off the set.' 'Unforgivably vulgar and dull,' wrote one critic (Sheppard, 1975, p. 308; Parker, 1989, p. 212).

¹³¹ See also Parker, 1989, p. 212.

¹³² He termed this 'an incredible job' that has never been repeated.'

¹³³ One of the 6 men that lift Taylor and carry her down to Caesar was a white dancer friend of Taylor's.

happen ... like “I don’t like that. I can’t say that.... I don’t think it would happen that way.”

Taylor knew Fox needed her.

Austin (2020) described Mankiewicz’ determination ‘to put history on film. In rehearsal, Austin saw a historian in civilian clothes talking to the extras, whom Austin later discovered had told Taylor that the arch she was to enter through was not built until long after Cleopatra died.¹³⁴ Taylor questioned Mankiewicz about this error, resulting in a 2-day argument about the script’s authenticity. Yet Austin maintains Mankiewicz’ intent was to ‘show us what really happened in that room or that hall. I would say he was very sincere about it’. As close friends, Harrison and Mankiewicz had deep conversations on set, laughing and joking. At other times Mankiewicz was ‘like a bear with a sore head’ which Burton disliked and was ‘always left on the side-line.... He isolated himself a little bit.... mainly with the men because they were all pissed-off, because they really wanted to screw Elizabeth themselves. There was a jealousy thing going on there between a lot of the actors... and he was drinking one hell of a lot.’ Austin’s observations covered this pivotal month.

Fox urged Mankiewicz to complete Taylor’s scenes. On 2 April, Louis Nizer, leading Taylor’s divorce,¹³⁵ issued a press release announcing she and Fisher had ‘mutually agreed to part. Divorce proceedings will be instituted soon’¹³⁶ (Sheppard, 1975, P. 305). Echoing Bara, // *Tempo* called Taylor a ‘vamp who destroys families and sucks on husbands like a praying mantis’ (Bragg, 1988 p. 163). *The Daily Mirror* described ‘one long eruption of matrimonial agitation.’ A *Life* feature story showed a photograph of her children with the heading ‘Please . . . Who’s My Daddy Now?’ (Heymann, 1995, p. 252). Then without naming anyone, the Vatican radio station expressed moral outrage about ‘two married people with children’ openly cavorting with each other and of the ‘caprices of adult children... which offended the nobility of the heart, which millions of married couples judge to be a beautiful and holy thing’.

¹³⁴ The Arch of Constantine - built 300 years later.

¹³⁵ Fisher demanded millions, Taylor could not believe she had to pay him, adding ‘Eddie Fisher had a career long before I came along, did he not?’ Explaining that Fisher argued she had ruined his career, Taylor agreed to offer him \$1,000,000 (Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 197-198).

¹³⁶ Around this time Jacqueline Kennedy supposedly asked her publicist ‘do you think Elizabeth Taylor will marry Richard Burton?’ (Kashner and Schoenberger, 2011, p. 35).

On 4 April, when Burton cabled Sybil in Welsh: ‘Love to all. Everything fine,’¹³⁷ the press soon translated and printed it. By 5 April, irked by the Vatican’s announcement (Rubython, 2011, p. 457-458),¹³⁸ with 802 scenes and 213 pages of script shot, Fox wanted Taylor – still uninsured – finished by 15 May. As the press stated: ‘if Elizabeth coughs, Fox gets pneumonia.’¹³⁹ The next day, Skouras (1962a) told Mankiewicz to caution the lovers and to complete Taylor’s scenes as soon as possible.

On 7 April, in Paris, Zanuck – refining his film – requested Burton to shoot an establishing scene. Burton thought the two days’ work: ‘A rare event!’ (Gussow, 1971, p. 234-235). Forty journalists covered his arrival, and Sybil’s an hour earlier. Sybil considered their staying at the same hotel, and dining at Maxim’s with Zanuck and Donald Houston, a reunion (Cottrell and Cashin, 1974, p. 250). She returned to London the next day and Burton to Rome (Walker, 1990, p. 258). Meanwhile, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 145) discovered Harrison had returned home without permission to try out a new speed boat in Poole.¹⁴⁰ *Cleopatra* seemed incidental to the personal stories playing out in the press.

Fox also had to deal with Monroe. On 9 April, Monroe informed Fox of her invite to appear at a Democratic gala in New York in May 1962.¹⁴¹ The next day, she began costume, hair, and makeup tests (De La Hoz, 2010, p. 83): Skouras, Feldman and Levathes thought she was at her

¹³⁷ Dwi am briodi’r eneth ‘ma.

¹³⁸ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 144-145; Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017.

¹³⁹ One paper denied Taylor and Burton were having an affair, but that Mankiewicz had asked Burton – a ‘shuffle-footed idiot’ – to go out with Taylor as a cover. On set, Burton shuffled past Mankiewicz mumbling ‘moronically, “Do I have to go out with her again tonight?”’ Brodsky asked Mankiewicz for a statement, who replied, ‘Actually, the truth is that Mr. Burton and I are in love – and Miss Taylor is being used as a cover-up.’ *Time* thought Mankiewicz’ joke unusually tasteless, but somebody asked Wanger: ‘Isn’t it terrible about Burton and Mankiewicz having an affair and hiding behind Elizabeth Taylor?’ (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:00:00).

¹⁴⁰ Contractually, Harrison was allowed to return to the UK twice, but returning from taking the boat ‘for a trial spin.’ Harrison (1990, p. 180) recalled seeing ‘a lot of little figures... dancing up and down on shore, waving at me and shouting.’ They explained he was wanted in Rome the following day because Taylor or Burton had failed to turn up, so Fox ‘wanted old stop-gap Harrison to go in, so I did. I went in.’ Harrison was now fed-up with how Fox used him but reasoned ‘they couldn’t do anything very much about it. I’d done too much of the film for them to sack me then’ (Talking Pictures: Epics, 2018). In June 1962, Fox and Harrison’s agent discussed his 9 April absence and a salary reduction, At one stage, Fox confirmed Lyons had told Harrison he was required that day, but on 22 June, Harris (1962) wrote to Fox about the absence being with the producer’s consent, so his money be reimbursed.

¹⁴¹ Monroe had agreed to sing ‘Happy Birthday’ on 24 March.

photogenic best (Badman, 2012, p. 122, 143).¹⁴² Skouras then called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 146) in ‘great agitation’ about *Life* stating *Cleopatra* was casting ‘call girls’ as extras. With Fox spending \$150,000 a day on *Cleopatra*, stockholders pressurised Skouras (Badman, 2012, p. 69),¹⁴³ who now blamed Taylor (Sheppard, 1975, p. 304-305). Austin (2020) prepared a procession dress rehearsal for Lyons, Shamroy, and Mankiewicz to watch. Taylor insisted on taking part, even though Austin warned her it would be a nightmare. Starting at 11:00, everybody was in place and Taylor atop the sphinx and – at Shamroy’s request – wearing a gold shawl to approximate her gold dress. With nearly 5,000 people on set, the dancers moved forward; the sphinx moved forward.¹⁴⁴ Austin then realised the Sphinx’s back wheels had caught the scaffold of the arch, so as Taylor moved forward, the archway turned. Despite all the noise, Austin heard ‘above all this. “Fuck you Austin, get me off here. Fuck you.”’ Mankiewicz thought it funny, but Taylor ‘was so pissed she never spoke to me for two days. I saw her on the Via Veneto, not that night, but the night after, and she [gestures her sticking up two fingers at him].’



Figure 7.7

Taken by an unknown photographer, this was shot in Rome on 10 April 1962. It shows Taylor and Burton driving together in the face of any disapproval of their affair (Alamy, 2023)

¹⁴² See also Victor, 1999, p. 156.

¹⁴³ See also Parish, 2006, p. 35.

¹⁴⁴ The plan was for 500 extras, 4 abreast, to pull the sphinx on set with ropes all done to a drumbeat, but then decided on using the toggles now seen in the film.

On 11 April, *Variety* (1962s) discussed Fox's rise in expenditure from £121,224,570 to \$139,960,143, not helped by rough seas making it impossible to launch the galley on the first day shooting at Torre Astura (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 146).¹⁴⁵ In Hollywood, Weinstein discovered Monroe naked, spread across her bed having unintentionally overdosed (Summers, 1985, p. 253). Weinstein asked Fox to postpone, but Levathes told him not to be melodramatic (Marilyn Monroe: The Final Days, 2001, 0:14:00). On 12 April, Rudin informed Levathes that even without script approval, Monroe would film only those parts of the script of which she approved (Leaming, 1999, p. 405). In Rome, the Vatican's weekly *Osservatore Della Domenica* published an open letter attacking Taylor.¹⁴⁶ Undeterred, she and Burton went to the Via Veneto that evening (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 146-149) until somebody commented on Maria's adoption (Maddox, 1979, p. 169), at which point Taylor fled the nightclub in tears (Cashmore, 2016, p. 138). Fox now seriously considered sacking Taylor using her 'morality clause,' stating they could use the footage they had to make a film (Rubythron, 2011, p. 461). Both stars caused Fox problems.

On 13 April, Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. 61) – confirming swapping their roles – discussed Fox rewriting its annual report 13 times before going to print. Citing press critical of Taylor and Burton, Skouras urged Wanger to keep Taylor out of the headlines. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 149-150)¹⁴⁷ argued the popularity of 'peep-hole publications' like *Confidential* belied 'the public puritanism.' Fisher called Wanger, upset by the Vatican letter, but Wanger's focus was filming 'one of the most dramatic scenes in the movie and one of the most dramatic real-life scenes I have ever witnessed.' Knowing all the extras had read the Vatican letter, Wanger wondered if they would accept Taylor: an extreme example of extra-cinematic discourse.

After a bomb threat, security guards – dressed in togas – were on set should anyone try to shoot Taylor. Sharaff had never seen Taylor so nervous (Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 203).¹⁴⁸ Taylor (1967, p. 132-134) thought it one of the 'sweetest, wildest moments I've ever had.' As she and

¹⁴⁵ Landau described the Torre Astura as enormous, 'about 10 football fields long' (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:16:08).

¹⁴⁶ See Appendix 2.

¹⁴⁷ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 119; Lev, 2013, p. 248.

¹⁴⁸ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 148.

Burton drove to the lot crowds jeered their car. With her vertigo, the near-disastrous dress-rehearsal,¹⁴⁹ and potentially violent extras, she panicked, telling Burton 'I don't think I can do it.' He convinced her to put on her \$6,500 gold dress and headdress and climb the sphinx.¹⁵⁰ 'Feeling totally trembly,' she entered through the arch, expecting to hear 'Cleopatra! Cleopatra!' She heard 'Leeez! Leeez! Baci!'¹⁵¹ Sara and Francis Taylor watched with pride, in a letter to a friend, Francis later described crying 'tears of both joy and sadness. This is her greatest role, Cleopatra, there is no doubt about it. But I am afraid she is paying a steep price for such glory' (Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 205). Harrison (1975, p. 189) was amazed by how 'many months had elapsed between fluffing my lines and Cleopatra's actual arrival.'



Figure 7.8

The famous shot of Taylor, as Cleopatra, winking at Caesar. This is a key iconic moment in Taylor's career. It is invariably used to illustrate Taylor's career or piece about Cleopatra, either the film or the historic queen (Alamy, 2023).

Then Taylor entered Hollywood iconography. Mirroring the earlier coronation scene, where Caesar kneels before Cleopatra, Taylor winks to Caesar as she bows to him. Lower and Palmer (2001, p. 112-113) suggest this 'bit of 1960s kitsch' was a moment in Taylor's life 'like no other.' Taraborrelli (2006, p. 204) considered the scene 'the apotheosis of the epic spectacle scene.' As Dauth (2019) observed, the procession captivated 'those in the audience who [had] read countless accounts of the exorbitant costs of the film' making this 'tangible expression of

¹⁴⁹ At a second dress rehearsal, Austin (2020) saw in the front row, in black face, the actor Jack Palance. Thinking Harrison or Burton was playing a practical joke, Austin's assistant enquired. It was Palance's double. Austin had to fire him, so he was paid a daily salary by Jack Palance's management not to be an extra."

¹⁵⁰ In 2012, Taylor's 24-carat gold cloth cape was sold at auction for \$59,375 (Belcher, 2013).

¹⁵¹ 'Kisses.'

Cleopatra's political savvy' the 'grand exception' to Mankiewicz' usual style of 'visual interiority.' Sustaining Mankiewicz' directorial style, it demonstrated Cleopatra's knowledge and ability to use 'her feminine beauty to captivate and conquer the enemy.' For 60 years, Taylor's wink has invariably accompanied any reference to the film, the star, or Cleopatra.

A 'brisk wind' followed by a sandstorm cancelled the next day's shoot (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 150).¹⁵² Skouras asked Wanger to urge Burton to 'stop going to the Via Veneto and those cheap joints.' Burton protested 'those places are not cheap; they are very expensive.' However, as Mann (2009, p. 321) noted, with *Sex and the Single Girl* dominating the bestseller lists, attacks on Taylor were 'relics of a different era,' revealing the paradox of high-selling papers printing editorials declaring the affair was 'no good for the movie industry.' The price of a Burton and Taylor negative was now \$500,000 (Guild, 1970, p. 229).

On 15 April, in Hollywood, Monroe (Badman, 2012, p. 126) called Weinstein requesting the removal of the 'sentimental schmaltz' from the script (Rollyson, 2014, p. 263). That evening, at a testimonial dinner held in Skouras' honour – revealing Skouras' precarious position – Groucho Marx quipped, 'Mr. Skouras faces the future with courage, determination... and terror' (Carter, 2008, p. 156). Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 65) later suggested 'Maybe Groucho Marx should be president!' Taylor changed how the public engaged with stars, an outlook Skouras did not recognise.

This affected Monroe too. Banner (2013, p. 398) maintained Fox failed to realise Monroe was creating a mature version of herself. *The Misfits* (1961) and *Something's Got to Give* were developmental stages. To play a wife and mother she replaced her breathy voice with something more natural (Victor, 1999, p. 284). Meanwhile, Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. 64) discussed Skouras' instruction to change *Cleopatra's* public image: Weiss was to show Taylor a file of American press cuttings to highlight mounting public scorn. The next day, with the main cast in overtime, weekly production costs returned to \$500,000 (Solomon, 2001, p. 69), not helped when loud meowings from beneath the stage halted filming. Tearing up the set, the crew found a cat and 5 day-old kittens, coaxing them out took another 30 minutes, costing

¹⁵² Mankiewicz told Brooks Roberts, the editor of *This Week*, there to visit that the 'wind cost us \$200,000.'

\$17,000 (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 150-151).¹⁵³ Bienstock wrote to Koegel requesting a meeting with Fox because Mankiewicz' contract should have expired on 6 November 1961. Then Fox's two stars delayed their productions.

Taylor and Monroe were unable to film. At 15:30 on 20 April, Monroe called Weinstein saying she could not work on Monday (Rollyson, 2014, p. 264). Fox sent its insurance doctors to check. They reported her 101° temperature - at which, contractually, she did not have to work - and serious respiratory infections, which would 'take weeks to cure' (Wolfe, 2006, p. 406). In Italy, Taylor and Burton separately drove 80 miles to a cottage in the grounds of an exclusive Porto Santo Stefano hotel. Seeing them in a piano bar, a local reporter informed his colleagues, who photographed Taylor and Burton embracing by the Tyrrhenian Sea (Alpert, 1987, p. 111-112).

Going anywhere on Easter weekend was 'naive to the point of stupidity,' but they had gone without telling Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 151)¹⁵⁴ who found them on next day's front pages 'sharing kisses and a bag of oranges.' However, that night, drunk, Taylor told Burton she would kill herself if he did not leave *Sybil*, then took an overdose and passed out. Burton drove her to Rome and Salvatore Mundi Hospital, where the doctors pumped her stomach. Her two black eyes and swollen face indicated they had fought: she could not film for 3 weeks (Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 212-214). The next day, Wanger told Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 68) they 'had a tiff and came back separately.'¹⁵⁵ On her flight, *Sybil* saw *The Sunday Times* article with the beach shot. Finding the house in Rome empty, she asked Wanger to collect her and after dinner went home to await Burton's return (Rubythorpe, 2011, p. 464). Burton now understood how much Taylor wanted him.

¹⁵³ No sooner had the cat disappeared, than 2 bats flew around the stage. Also, to avoid seagulls getting in the frame, Fox bought 'thousands of rotting fish' to distract them (Fisher, 1999, p. 173).

¹⁵⁴ See also Cashmore 2016, p. 139.

¹⁵⁵ This was untrue as was Hanley explanation to Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 151-152) that Taylor had driven home alone by car with a black eye and badly bruised nose, so he and the housekeeper took her to the hospital at 23:30.

Mankiewicz and Cukor tried to shoot around their stars.¹⁵⁶ Around 07:30 on 23 April Cukor called Charisse to the studio (Martin and Charisse with Kleiner, 1976, p. 224)¹⁵⁷ to shoot scenes with her, Martin, and Tryon (Wolfe, 2006, p. 502). Meanwhile, Wanger told Skouras 'Giving out the story' about Taylor's nose had 'deflated, for the moment, the suicide story.' Wanger described the 225-minute cut as 'great and if we can get the proper opening plus finishing Elizabeth,¹⁵⁸ I will feel much happier' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 121). Monroe was ill for the rest of the week (Marshall, 2005, p. 54); Pennington confirmed Taylor's bruises would disappear in 3 weeks (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 152); and a newsreel declared the royal barge was ready for filming at Porto di Anzio (Luce Cinecittà, 2021).

On 25 April, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 152)¹⁵⁹ held meetings about the battle of Actium, while the Rome police investigated the possibility of Taylor attempting suicide. Pennington told the press she did not take an overdose; Wanger said she had hit her face when her chauffeur stopped the car unexpectedly. The police were satisfied, but *Il Tempo* declared her presence in Rome 'undesirable' (Mann, 2009, p. 305). While Fox instructed its employees to water their own plants and bring their own lunch to the studio (Morgan, 2012, p. 321), Taylor's injuries cost \$250,000. The next day, the crew at the Torre Astura site discovered a sandbar near where Caesar's ship was to dock and heard the nearby NATO firing range the production scouts had missed (Parish, 2006, p. 30). NATO assured Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 152)¹⁶⁰ they would not fire guns during the next day's shoot, then 3 hours later said they would, cancelling another day. Wanger again urged Fox to stop Graham coming to Rome, because the gossip she printed angered the cast. Both films were now delayed.

Burton and Sybil met their children at Rome airport on 27 April, but had not pre-warned Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 153-154), so the paparazzi were there too. Then Egidio Ariosto, Italy's Under-Secretary of the Interior, gave a statement about a pre-dawn automobile

¹⁵⁶ When *Time* magazine met Mankiewicz, he asked the report if he would like to see the set the next day. Reporter explained he would have to choose between *Cleopatra* and seeing the Holy Father. Mankiewicz replied, 'well at least the Pope's got a finished script (Cronyn, 1991, p. 329).

¹⁵⁷ See also Marilyn Monroe: The Final Days, 2001, 0:24:21.

¹⁵⁸ Wanger cited 15 May.

¹⁵⁹ See also Christopher, 2000, p. 83-84.

¹⁶⁰ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 121-122.

accident on the Appian Way outside Villa Papa. Burton's car was demolished, the press reported that Taylor was with him. Ariosto told the press 'Miss Taylor with her amorous and non-amorous conduct which, unfortunately, morbidly interests and in fact occupies too much space in newspapers and weeklies, perhaps without her wishing to do so, defies Italian public opinion, which has always been very understanding of the sometimes-strange conduct of actors and actresses of the film world. But I have the impression this time Miss Taylor is exceeding the limits and, in fact, risks destroying herself.' Two days later, as Weiss (Brodsky, and 1963, p. VII) arrived in Rome, press photographed Kate Burton in a playground with Liza Todd-Fisher (Cottrell and Cashin, 1974, p. 252).



Figure 7.9

This shot was taken by paparazzi after Burton crashed his car. Taylor was clearly with him (Alamy, 2023).

On 30 April, Monroe arrived on set with a 102° temperature, but shot scenes until 17:20 (Badman, 2012, p. 132-134). In Rome, Shamroy told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 154) he still could not photograph Taylor. Telling Skouras he would bar Graham from the studio, Wanger suggested the Screen Actors' Guild should write to Taylor and Burton about their behaviour, wondering why Fox had not already asked them to do so (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 122-123). Still, nobody controlled Fox's major production.

MAY 1962

Fox's problems multiplied. In Los Angeles, Johnston died (Carter, 2008, p. 149).¹⁶¹ At Pinewood, Peter Rogers bought the Alexandria set, explaining after signing the contract it was for a Carry On spoof, enraging Skouras (Rubython, 2011, p. 468). In Rome, upset at people not treating Burton – still a lone figure on set – fairly, Taylor's attitude on any given day determined Mankiewicz' level of depression (Austin, 2020).¹⁶² In Hollywood, Monroe's insomnia medication often prevented her working in the mornings, so like Mankiewicz, she took 'vitamin shots' of habit-forming barbiturates.¹⁶³ Monroe's jealousy of Taylor grew: Levathes focused on *Cleopatra*, not Monroe's film; Shamroy, her favourite cinematographer, was filming Taylor; when Cukor cut a desert island scene in *Something's Got to Give*, it was to 'pay for more elephants or something' (Smith, 2003, p. 4, 7).¹⁶⁴ Nothing ran smoothly.

On 1 May, Monroe collapsed on set, not reporting for several days¹⁶⁵ (Marshall, 2005, p. 54).¹⁶⁶ On 2 May, *Variety* (1962j) announced Samuel Bronston Productions' *55 Days at Peking* (Ray, 1963, Samuel Bronston Productions) and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964).¹⁶⁷ Levathes announced Fox would spend \$40,000,000-\$45,000,000 on 15-20 films up to April 1963, mentioning *The Sound of Music* (1965) for the first time (*Variety*, 1962i). *Variety* (1962h) estimated *Cleopatra's* total loss in Britain at \$5,699,750, and the write off for *The Greatest Story Ever Told* as \$1,184,000. All 12 board directors were due for re-election. Skouras' contract expired on 31 December 1963, Levathes' on 25 September 1966. Should there be a proxy fight, Skouras owned 80,760 Fox shares, his family another 17,040; Rosenman owned 100; Loeb 10,200; Gould 1,190; Michel 1,421 (*Variety*, 1962g). Taylor still had a black eye and

¹⁶¹ See also Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:49:00.

¹⁶² See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 378-379.

¹⁶³ Wilder, still not having forgiven her for *Some Like it Hot* (1959) remarked 'It gets worse and worse. It used to be you'd call her at 9am and she'd show at 12 noon. Now you call her in May and she shows in October' (Badman, 2012, p. 133).

¹⁶⁴ See also Guiles, 1971, p. 313-314, 425; Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 87, 126; Wayne, 1992, p. 181; Spoto, 1993, p. 550, 574-575.

¹⁶⁵ Monroe's relationship with Cukor declined, but when somebody suggested firing her, Levathes argued 'if you're going to take anybody out of this picture, shouldn't you decide first who brings the people in, Cukor or Monroe?'

¹⁶⁶ See also Morgan, 2012, p. 324.

¹⁶⁷ Samuel Bronston conceived a film around Gibbons' *The Fall of the Roman Empire* in 1960. Philip Yordan devised a storyline and Franchina and Barzman developed the script. Anthony Mann directed (Richards, 2008, p. 89).

swollen nose. Harrison (1990, p. 180)¹⁶⁸ thought the affair made work ‘pretty trying’ every time they hit ‘each other... not turning up at the studio.’ With a temperature and sore throat, Mankiewicz rested for 2 days, and because Harrison would only work with Mankiewicz, the second unit cancelled too.

On 3 May, Wanger (1962a) told Rogell that Taylor could not work, so Skouras blamed Wanger for the affair and its impact on production. Skouras argued Wanger, not the SAG, should discipline the cast (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 123-124). Mankiewicz asked ‘when does a producer get bawled out for things that happen on the set or things that don’t happen on the set...? Without Walter there would not have been a *Cleopatra*... and I know there must have been times when he took abuse... meant for me.... They found somebody they could whip with impunity. Walter couldn’t hit back.... I could hit back by screwing up their entire investment. But he couldn’t hit back, and I tried to wrap him up in my skirts’ (Bernstein, 1994, p. 368-369). Now in Rome, Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 74) thought the 270-minute cut had ‘universality, majesty and wit.’ Mankiewicz’ contemporary language was ‘neither colloquial, which would be silly, nor too stately, which would be antique.’ The spectacle was tasteful, and Taylor’s performance instinctive. Burton was ‘the actor of his generation’ and Harrison even better. Weiss thought McDowall’s ‘brilliant coldness as Octavian’ made him a ‘fourth star.’ Everybody was still proud of *Cleopatra*.

On 4 May, some press suggested Monroe was feigning illness (Rollyson, 2014, p. 265). Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 155) hoped Taylor’s parents – who had arrived the day before – would steady things, but Taylor quarrelled with them (Sheppard, 1975, p. 317-318). Wanger reluctantly met Graham (1968, p. 181-184; 190-191; 194-195) for dinner. She wrote they had never liked each other, that Wanger was ‘deceptively polite and fiercely antagonistic behind my back.... Enthused about how marvellous everyone was, and what a great picture *Cleopatra* would be’. On 5 May, Taylor fired her housekeeper for selling her story to a magazine (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 154), Burton’s former housekeeper sold her stories to another

¹⁶⁸ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 154-155.

(Cottrell and Cashin, 1974, P. 252).¹⁶⁹ Taylor returned to work on 7 May, but with a 101° temperature Monroe did not (Rollyson, 2014, p. 265-266).

On 8 May, the procession finally completed, marking the end of *Cleopatra's* first half.¹⁷⁰ As Sharaff gave a champagne party¹⁷¹ (Wanger and Hyams, page 158), Weiss (Brodsky and 1963, p. 80-81)¹⁷² collected Skouras and Moskowitz from the airport. They viewed a 300-minute rough cut. Heavily sedated for his prostate condition, Skouras looked 'worse than death' but asked Weiss to punch him should he fall asleep. At the intermission, Moskowitz – who was to 'do battle' with Mankiewicz – declared the picture 'wonderful.' Skouras agreed but urged Wanger and Mankiewicz to complete quickly, telling Wanger: 'In all sincerity, I do not believe you have ever felt the responsibility of this venture as I have' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 385). Both executives admired *Cleopatra*.

Illness delayed both movies. By 9 May, 5 days behind, Monroe was required for the rest of the shoot. Fox needed it in cinemas by October (Rollyson, 2014, p. 266).¹⁷³ The next day, Taylor's illness lost another day (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 159). On 11 May, Levathes told Rudin Fox required Monroe on set every day of the week of 14-18 May (Leaming, 1999, p. 407). Instructed by Gould to warn Monroe not to attend the Kennedy gala, Ferguson sent Rudin a 2-page letter threatening dismissal¹⁷⁴ (Wolfe, 2006, p. 505-506). On 12 May, Taylor came to

¹⁶⁹ On 6 May's *Sunday Express* Stanley Baker, Burton's friend, said he understood his attraction to Taylor, arguing 'it is absolutely essential for an actor to establish some sort of emotional rapport with an actress if any kind of performance is to be given on the screen. And, after all, they had to play some of the great love scenes of all time.... You cannot just turn up at the studio, make love, and then say good night. It's impossible' (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 155-156).

¹⁷⁰ Hordern (with England, 1993, p. 114) explains then the doves had been in the pyramid so long they just sat there. Pan described a man stationed with a gun and blank cartridges to get them started (Sheppard, 1975, p. 311-312). Gino Malerba, the man inside the pyramid, emerged covered in droppings from startled birds (Franceschina, 2012, p. 239). Those that flew arrived in Naples and Turin a month later.

¹⁷¹ Hopper interviewed Pan: 'The dancing girls are French, English, German, Spanish, African and West Indian, with a few Americans. Trying to get girls of exceptional beauty of face and figure who could dance was the main problem. Weather was another as, on several occasions, deluges of rain sent 6,000 extras home and called for time out to repair costumes and settings' (Franceschina, 2012, p. 239).

¹⁷² See also Carter, 2008, p. 156.

¹⁷³ See also Marilyn Monroe: The Final Days, 2001, 0:32:58.

¹⁷⁴ It read: 'Marilyn, as you know we are behind schedule with our picture. We have a great deal of money already invested in it and we cannot afford any more delays. While I realise that this social function may be important to you, we cannot consent to or acquiesce in your absence and I must, on behalf of 20th Century-Fox, insist that you will be available at our studio to render your services during the week of May 14 to 18 inclusive (Badman, 2012, p. 148).

work complaining of dental pain. Skouras asked Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 159) for a completion date and footage for the next stockholders' meeting. Denying there would be a divorce, the Burtons told British reporter David Lewin, Sybil and Taylor were good friends; that Burton went to Porto Santo Stefano to read, that Taylor – travelling there for the day – had an accident on her drive back (Alpert, 1987, p. 112). Skouras left Rome on 13 May as Einfeld arrived, who had a 'heated discussion' with Wanger about how publicity had mishandled Graham. Einfeld congratulated Mankiewicz on the film, saying it would earn back its money. Another Fox executive praised *Cleopatra*.

The stockholders were less convinced. On 14 May, Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 87-89) wrote 6 versions of Wanger's cable explaining he was delaying the filming of the death scene and objected to Skouras and Levathes showing footage at the annual stockholder's meeting.¹⁷⁵ In Hollywood, Monroe shot some 50 takes in 94° heat for 9 hours (Rollyson, 2014, p. 266). She was on time the next day too, but called Robert Kennedy (Wolfe, 2006, p. 408-409), who called Levathes, who refused to release Monroe for the gala. Kennedy spoke to Gould (Taraborrelli, 2009, p. 430) who also refused, because Monroe had 'caused all sorts of kinds of trouble.' Kennedy lost his temper, called Gould a 'Jewish bastard' and slammed down the phone (Badman, 2012, p. 148-149). In New York, Skouras chaired a 210-minute annual shareholders' meeting. The colour photograph of Taylor and Burton on the annual report cover and Fox's debts enraged stockholders. Taking full responsibility, Skouras argued the third and fourth quarters would improve. 'Listen,' said one stockholder, 'we're paying you good money, so you better produce. If you can't, then get out.' Another shouted: 'Wake up, the star system is dead.' Then Skouras ran *Cleopatra* and *The Longest Day* footage which 'made a favourable impression,' and declared Taylor would complete the next week, assuring stockholders the film was 'in the bag' (*Variety*, 1962bb).¹⁷⁶ Again, Skouras deceived the stockholders.

¹⁷⁵ In Rome that day, Taylor filmed the last fire incantation scene (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017), later at Villa Papa a hundred students gathered outside to 'kidnap' Taylor for their freshers' week. The police dispersed them (Sheppard, 1975, p. 313-314).

¹⁷⁶ See also *Variety* 1962pp; Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 122-123; Lev, 2013, p. 250.

The next day Fox tried to stop Monroe's New York trip¹⁷⁷ (Spoto, 1993, p. 573). However, on 17 May, after working 5 hours, Monroe flew to New York, telling reporters 'I told the studio 6 weeks ago that I was going. I consider it an honour to appear before the President of the United States (Rollyson, 2014, p. 266-267, 271).¹⁷⁸ The call sheet recorded she had permission to finish filming at 12:30 to travel (Marilyn Monroe: The Final Days, 2001, 0:44:37), yet an hour later, attorneys filed a breach of contract notice,¹⁷⁹ mailing Rudin of the dire consequences that would follow (Spoto, 1993, p. 575).

In Rome, cornered by paparazzi on the Via Veneto, Taylor burst into tears. Tom Mankiewicz later asked 'Who could really be prepared for that kind of publicity, that level of attention? Not even Elizabeth, who'd grown up with it, who knew better than anybody how to deal with it' (Mann, 2009, p. 303). On 18 May, Fox's hand-delivered 'Violation of Contract' note angered Monroe (Badman, 2012, p. 146-147). In Rome, as filming on the mausoleum sequence began, Taylor received a death threat written in Italian but sent from Canada. The Rome police contacted Interpol and provided 3 plain-clothed guards at Villa Papa (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 160-161).¹⁸⁰ Levathes now felt the need to act.

On 19 May. Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. 94) discussed Skouras' impending prostate operation. Following Sybil's return home, Burton bought Taylor an emerald brooch in Bulgari.¹⁸¹ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 161) received 'many press calls over a rumour that Skouras will be out of 20th Century-Fox.' In New York, at around 23.30, Lawford – building on the show's running gag about her lateness – announced: 'Mr. President the late Marilyn Monroe!' Monroe tottered to the lectern. The audience gasped as Lawford removed her white mink, revealing her sheer silver-beaded dress. She sang: 'Happy—birthday—to you, Happy birthday to you, Happy birthday Mr. Pres—id—ent, Happy birthday to you,' then Adler's new *'Thanks for the*

¹⁷⁷ Martin had declined the gala, because they were 'too far behind' schedule and Hopper was told it was cancelled (Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 130).

¹⁷⁸ See also Spoto, 1993, p. 575.

¹⁷⁹ It was dated to the previous day, the day of the stockholders' meeting.

¹⁸⁰ See also Mann, 2009, p. 305.

¹⁸¹ At Taylor's suggestion Burton bought a brooch for Sybil too, but only a quarter of the cost.

Memory’ verse, before leading the audience singing Happy Birthday.¹⁸² For Monroe this was a professional and personal triumph. The next day she returned to Los Angeles intent on finishing *Something’s Got to Give* (Taraborrelli, 2009, p. 433).¹⁸³ Monroe’s iconic moment came at a cost.



Figure 7.10

Monroe’s rendition of ‘Happy birthday Mr President’ at the Democratic Gala on 19 May 1962 in New York is one of the most iconic moments Monroe’s career. Taken by Cecil Stoughton, it shows Monroe in her flesh-toned beaded dress, that drew gasps from the audience. Monroe considered this moment the peak of her career (Alamy, 2023).

On 21 May, Monroe shot all day, but not close-ups (Wolfe, 2006, p. 413), finishing at 17:00 (Marilyn Monroe: The Final Days, 2001, 0:48:11). Taylor and Burton shot the ‘slap’ scene, and everybody complemented Mankiewicz on the procession scene. Mankiewicz then ‘did the best 20-minute scene I ever saw. He told them how it stank.... He also gave Wanger the shivers by saying he wants to do it over.... Just about everything was wrong, to hear Joe tell it. Everyone did badly. Mankiewicz took all the responsibility, but wanted his spectacle, “not the De Mille kind” and wanted to re-shoot the wink. Mankiewicz was furious at the static extras that an assistant director in a costume should have moved. He could also see wristwatches, wigs worn incorrectly and gaps in the crowd.’ Brodsky told Weiss about having lunch with Crowther, who like most people was just happy to meet anybody connected to the film

¹⁸² In the wings, Callas congratulated Monroe, who recovered in her dressing room before taking her front-row seat, where Garland embraced her. Kennedy spoke: ‘I can now retire from politics after having had Happy Birthday sung to me in such a sweet, wholesome way.’ Monroe later attended a smaller party, where she was famously photographed with the two Kennedy brothers.

¹⁸³ See also Guiles, 1971, p. 317; Summers, 1985, p. 270-271; Spoto, 1993, p. 567-568; Badman, 2012, p. 147-148, 150-152, 155-159; Banner, 2013, p. 393, 397; Rollyson, 2014, P. 267.

(Brodsky and Weise 1963, p. 134).¹⁸⁴ Mankiewicz nearly cut *Cleopatra's* most famous moment.

In Rome, on 22 May, Taylor and Burton filmed the 'kiss – to take my breath away' scene (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017).¹⁸⁵ In Hollywood, Monroe refused to work with Martin who had a cold (Marshall, 2005, p. 55), so shot her nude swimming scene the next day, for 7 hours. She told her photographer, 'If I do come out of the pool with nothing on, I want your guarantee that when your pictures appear on the covers of magazines, Elizabeth Taylor is not anywhere in the same issue.' After a 20-minute lunch break, Monroe removed her body suit, the first star to do so for a domestic movie (Rollyson, 2014, p. 269).¹⁸⁶



Figure 7.11

One of Lawrence Schiller's images of Monroe in the nude scene for *Something's Got to Give* (Alamy, 2023). By removing her body suit, Monroe aimed to rival Taylor's nude scene – see Figure

Canby (1962d) described 'industry minds' thinking 'Fox may have made a much better bet in the costly Cleo than in say, three lesser \$10,000,000 productions or six at \$5,000,000.... No picture, including *Gone with The Wind* (1939), has ever come to market so thoroughly presold and publicised.' In Rome, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 161) and Mankiewicz discussed

¹⁸⁴ See also Geist' 1978, p. 325.

¹⁸⁵ Kashner and Schoenberger (2011, p. 22-23) recorded the kiss got longer with each repeat. On the last take, Mankiewicz shouted, 'Print it.' Taylor and Burton did not break. 'Would you two mind if I say cut? Does it interest you that it is time for lunch?' After that scene, Taylor placed her director's chair next to Burton's, where it remained until the end of the shoot.

¹⁸⁶ See also Guiles, 1992, p. 428; Morgan, 2012, p. 327; Badman, 2012, p. 164-165; Cashmore, 2016, p. 146-147.

operation 'Home Stretch' while Wanger held meetings about Egypt; the battle of Actium; plans to take 235 cast and crew to Ischia; and scrapping the Torre Astura location.

In Washington, Georgia's Democratic House of Representatives member, Iris Faircloth Blitch opposed Taylor's re-entry to the US (Cashmore, 2016, p. 137).¹⁸⁷ Others agreed that 'the nation's morals were decaying because of the Taylor-Burton scandal' (Spoto, 1995, p. 199), someone added, 'the real truth of the matter is that the producers of *Cleopatra* in their overzealous quest for box-office exploitation have been derelict in their duty not only to the people, but to God and country as well. I would almost guess that Antony and Cleopatra were angels compared to what is going on between Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in Rome'¹⁸⁸ (Sheppard, 1975, p. 317). Monroe and Taylor challenged conventions.

On 24 May, Monroe's improved attendance and the swim scene delighted Fox executives (Spoto, 1993, p. 582).¹⁸⁹ Skouras urged Mankiewicz to spend less, while in Rome, Wanger decided to ignore Blitch's comments (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29). That night, Taylor and Burton attended Sinatra's benefit performance in Rome. Meeting in his dressing-room after, there was a 'big row' and Burton refused to take Taylor home¹⁹⁰ (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 163).¹⁹¹ The next day, Skouras' operation had gone well and Monroe selected photos from the swim shoot (Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 160). In Rome, after being damaged in transit, the slapping scene had to be re-shot, but the previous night's events delayed the planned shoot of the death scene, so they shot Cleopatra lying in state (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017). Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, P. 99-102) described growing tension surrounding filming Cleopatra's death. Irked that Skouras' told stockholders the picture was 'all but finished,' Taylor knew that once filmed, Fox could stop the money. On 26 May, Monroe agreed to film her Swedish accent scenes with Charisse and a fully recovered Martin (Badman, 2012, p. 166).

¹⁸⁷ Blitch argued that Taylor had: 'lowered the prestige of American women abroad and damaged good will in foreign countries, particularly in Italy. It is my hope that the Attorney General in the name of American Womanhood will take the measures necessary to determine whether or not Miss Taylor and Mr. Burton are ineligible for re-entry into the United States on the grounds of undesirability.'

¹⁸⁸ Ed Sullivan later announced, 'I do hope youngsters will not be persuaded that the sanctity of marriage has been invalidated by the appalling example of Mrs Taylor-Fisher and married man Burton' (Taylor, 1967, p. 126-127).

¹⁸⁹ See also Wolfe, 2006, p. 414, 417; Banner, 2013 p. 399.

¹⁹⁰ George Stevens, Jr. eventually brought Taylor back to her villa at 03:00.

¹⁹¹ See also Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 99-102

In Rome, Taylor's migraine ended filming at 14:45 (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 163). Having agreed to film on Sunday, the next day Monroe phoned in sick with an ear infection (Rollyson, 2014, p. 269). Fox's delight in Monroe evaporated.

Levathes still had to manage both films and stockholder anger. On 28 May, Monroe shot nothing (Marilyn Monroe: The Final Days, 2001, 0:53:14). In New York, with Skouras out of action, Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 103) described the 'spirit of let's-shut-down-*Cleopatra*-before-they-shut-us-down.' Moskowitz, Koegel and Levathes agreed to travel to Rome, where the fear was that with the death scene filmed, New York would stop the money, or Sybil would return to reclaim Burton. Yet Weiss later cabled Brodsky to say: 'We have it. She is dead.' Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 163-164) described the change to the historical version of the death, with Taylor placing her hand in a basket of figs, not clasping the snake to her breast.¹⁹² The next day, Fox stock plummeted to its lowest level in 33 years (Walker 1990, p. 256).

Monroe's film was 11 days behind schedule (Marilyn Monroe: The Final Days, 2001, 0:53:17). In Rome, Taylor and Burton re-shot the slapping scene (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017) while Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. 106-107) speculated that Fox might allow Mankiewicz to film for 1-2 months. The Wall Street group controlled 'their boy' Levathes, whom Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 164) thought would urge stopping the picture or eliminating 'as many scenes as possible.' Wanger notably described Mankiewicz's work as excellent 'but much too much of the same thing, and much too much of the same dialogue' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 378-379). Monroe's absence from set on 30 May (Rollyson, 2014, p. 269), convinced Levathes to shut-down her picture (Carter, 2008, p. 157), even though the next day she completed 38 takes (Rollyson, 2014, p. 269). Simultaneously, Skouras ordered Mankiewicz to 'terminate Miss Taylor's services no later than 9 June and to complete all photography no later than 30 June' (Unknown, 1962a).¹⁹³ Levathes, Koegel, and Moskowitz arrived in Rome to enforce those dates (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 125-126).

¹⁹² Sharaff (1976, p. 114) saw the use of a real asp and medics on standby as the film trying to 'meet the demands of realism in movies.' However, Walker (1990, p. 256) states the asp was an innocuous Sardinian garden-snake. The figs were not in season in Italy, so they were flown in from Libya.

¹⁹³ See also Unknown 1962b.

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Unlike Taylor's, Monroe's birthday was subdued. With Fox losing \$9,000 every day Monroe was absent, Rosenman instructed Feldman to prepare her dismissal notice and a \$1,000,000 damage suit, filed in Santa Monica. Meanwhile Feldman lunched with Greenson, Rudin and Ferguson, seeking a guarantee that Monroe would be on set regularly from Monday. Monroe worked all day on 1 June. Cukor forbade any celebrations until 18:00, when the cast surprised Monroe with a cake¹⁹⁴ and a hand-drawn card.¹⁹⁵ After attending a charity baseball game, Monroe returned home with a high temperature (Rollyson, 2014, p. 270).¹⁹⁶ At Rome airport, Weiss (and Brodsky, 1963, p. 112-113) collected Levathes, Koegel, and Moskowitz, whom Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 164-165) met at 22:45. Ignoring the fact that Wanger owned 1 third of the production, Levathes took Wanger off salary, he was not to cut or edit the film;¹⁹⁷ Taylor's salary and expense payments must end no later than 9 June and all photography by 30 June; then no more money for production in Italy. Wanger had 'no intention of accepting this ultimatum from the company, but... did not intend to argue.'¹⁹⁸ Humiliated, Wanger later harangued DeCuir for overbuilding the Alexandria sets. They had already spent \$500,000 on the 26,000 costumes and \$250,000 on the Tarsus barge, which Mankiewicz still had to film: also, the Battle of Pharsalia, the Actium naval battle, and Antony's confrontation with Octavian's legions. Wanger estimated this would take until 31 August (Bernstein, 1994, p. 378-379).¹⁹⁹ Neither of Levathes' disciplinary measures were productive.

Fox's two productions collided. Monroe was unwell on 2 June. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 165)²⁰⁰ went to Naples to view the Ischia locations, resolve the lack of hotel rooms, and logistical problems presented by the heavy equipment, returning to Rome the next day.

¹⁹⁴ Moriarty had collected 50c from all the crew.

¹⁹⁵ It showed a cartoon nude Monroe with discretely placed towel reading 'Happy Birthday (Suit).' Barris (1995, p. x), having returned from Rome, took photographs while telling Monroe about Taylor. Monroe asked, 'Can you imagine they're paying her a million dollars for that picture?'

¹⁹⁶ See also Leaming, 1999, p. 413; Victor, 1999, p. 206; Smith, 2003, p. 6-7; Wolfe, 2006, p. 524; Margolis, 2011, p. 8-9; Badman, 2012, p. 168-169; Banner, 2013, p. 398-399.

¹⁹⁷ After all Wanger's contract stated that if WALWA was unable to 'deliver a substantially completed photo-play pursuant to the aforesaid agreements, with Taylor,' Fox would have the right to terminate all said agreements (20th Century Fox, 1960a). Fox did not terminate the agreements, it could not.

¹⁹⁸ Levathes read this from the last executive committee minutes.

¹⁹⁹ See also Geist, 1978, p. 325-326.

²⁰⁰ See also Geist, 1978, p. 326-327; Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 194; Bernstein, 1994, p. 370; Leaming, 1999, p. 412; Marshall, 2005, p. 56, 185; Badman, 2012, p. 174; Rollyson, 2014, p. 270-271.

Levathes cancelled the following day's Pharsalia shoot and ordered Wanger to state when filming would finish and its cost.

Then, on 4 June, at 05:00, Feldman called Levathes to explain Monroe could not work. Levathes immediately determined to replace her²⁰¹ or shut down her picture. Rudin guaranteed Monroe's appearance on Wednesday, but Fox's insurance doctor confirmed Monroe's sinusitis and 102° temperature.²⁰² Feldman told McLean to replace her; Rudin received notice; Monroe called Skouras in Hospital. Back in Rome, symbolising the company's belief in *Cleopatra's* quality, Harrison²⁰³ called Wanger offering to underwrite the cost of filming the Pharsalia scene. On 5 June, in Rome, Wanger, Merman, Rogell and Mankiewicz battled with the executives over a proposed memorandum of understanding. Rosenman agreed to Taylor working until 23 June, but not to Mankiewicz filming a shot of Cleopatra making her final progress to the mausoleum. Thinking Levathes 'hysterical,' Wanger said 'Pete, don't let failure go to your head,' then he and Rogell signed. Merman and Mankiewicz walked out. Levathes declared Mankiewicz did not know what he was doing or how to make a movie. Mankiewicz cabled Rosenman, stating the loss of the Pharsalia scene was 'the most expensive coitus interruptus in history,'²⁰⁴ but Rosenman was resolute. Levathes created more issues than he resolved.

Fox actively pursued Monroe. On 6 June, Cukor told Fox to fire and replace her, but only Levathes could approve (Badman, 2012, p. 174-175). Graham (1984, p. 127-128)²⁰⁵ broke the story. NATO firing at Torre Astura prevented shooting, while in Paris, Sinatra relayed his conversation with Taylor and Burton to Zanuck, who finally chose to act. Richard Zanuck recalled: 'It was only when *Cleopatra* got so out of hand that he started realising that the fate of the love of his life, *The Longest Day*, could be in jeopardy.' Zanuck dictated a 'management

²⁰¹ Names suggested were approach MacLaine, Novak, Day, and Bardot.

²⁰² Contractually Monroe did not have to work with a temperature over 101°.

²⁰³ Harrison's contract ended on 4 June 1962 (McLean, 1961d).

²⁰⁴ This would make the film 'the first indoor movie ever shot in Todd-AO' Mankiewicz said.

²⁰⁵ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 167; Guild, 1970, p. 254; Zacky, Burns and Bider, 2001, 0:36:55; Freedland, 2005, p. 127.

and production formula for Twentieth Century-Fox,²⁰⁶ advising Skouras how to run the studio. Zanuck now pursued Fox.

Monroe fought back. On 7 June, Greenson and Rudin met Feldman and Ferguson. Greenson promised to remove Paula Strasberg from the set and wean Monroe off barbiturates. In Rome, with rain preventing exterior shooting, Mankiewicz re-shot the slapping scene and the tickling' scene with Caesarion. Brodsky and Weiss (1963, P. 115-118)²⁰⁷ discussed Levathes's comment about no longer requiring a Rome publicity unit. The next day, now back in New York, Levathes discussed Monroe with Gould and Feldman, officially cancelling her contract at 15:00, Forty-five minutes later, Feldman told Rudin Fox intended to pursue Monroe's breach of contract. Levathes announced this in a press statement.²⁰⁸ Weinstein concluded Fox fired Monroe because 'Skouras and... Levathes were losing control of their talent... she was a pawn.' At 17:00, Greenson called Monroe saying she was fired. Enraged, she called Robert Kennedy, who called Rosenman, who said Kennedy should talk to Gould: after their last call, Kennedy could not. One Fox employee told the press: 'no one studio these days can afford to have Liz Taylor and Marilyn Monroe working at the same time.'²⁰⁹ In the press, Fox now aggressively accused Monroe of being 'out to ruin Fox.'²¹⁰ Given the money her films had earned, Monroe was dumbfounded. Skouras was too ill to intervene.

Unchecked, on 9 June, Levathes announced Lee Remick would replace Monroe. Then Martin – stating he had 'signed to do the picture with Marilyn Monroe and I will do it with no one else' – quit. Monroe called Skouras who blamed the Wall Street faction. Monroe called Zanuck

²⁰⁶ See Appendix 2.

²⁰⁷ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 167; Spoto, 1993, p. 594; Barris, G. 1995, p. xiii-xiv; Leaming, 1999, p. 414; Margolis, 2011, p. 68-69; Badman, 2012, p. 176, 178-180; Rollyson, 2014, p. 271-272; Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017.

²⁰⁸ Marilyn Monroe has been removed from the cast of *Something's Got to Give*. This action was made necessary because of Miss Monroe's repeated wilful breaches of her contract. No justification was given by Miss Monroe for her failure to report for photography on many occasions. The studio has suffered losses through these absences and the Twentieth Century-Fox Film Company will take legal action against Miss Monroe' (Leaming, 1999, p. 414).

²⁰⁹ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 148) responded 'no company can afford the mismanagement of Fox.'

²¹⁰ Publicity planted an ad in *Variety* reading, 'Thank you, Miss Monroe, for the loss of our livelihoods,' signed by 'the crew of *Something's Got to Give*,' the crew had nothing to do with the ad. Nunnally Johnson called Zanuck about Monroe's firing: 'I never particularly liked Monroe,' Zanuck told him 'but I've got a hell of a high regard for her box-office value. The treatment of her on this film makes me terribly frightened for the future of Fox' (Wolfe, 2006, P. 423, 425).

who, revealing his plan, reassured her, saying when he regained control of Fox, she would finish making the film (Badman, 2012, p. 182-183).²¹¹ In Rome, Taylor's two infected teeth prevented her working. Levathes called Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 167) about Monroe's firing: 'He considers himself a big hero.'²¹² Taylor was sympathetic towards Monroe and soon after offered her unexpected support: 'I know we're not friends, Marilyn, but what's happening to you now has been happening to me for a long time over this *Cleopatra* situation. The financial problems that are going on with the studio are not the fault of either of us – but they need to put the blame on someone for their desperate problems and they seem to be using the two of us. So, I wanted to tell you, if you're in a bad position and you need any help financially, I will send some money to you' (Casillo, 2018, p.265-267).

Levathes' decisions slowly unravelled. Martin explained he and Monroe had the right chemistry, so would not film without her (Spoto, 1993, p. 595-596). Levathes declared: 'We've let the inmates run the asylum and they've practically destroyed it' (Summers, 1985, p. 27). Hopper (and Brough, 1963, p. 39) explained Monroe shrewdly told everyone that Fox was blaming her to disguise how much trouble it was in over *Cleopatra* (Morgan, 2012, p. 328). In New York, Arnold Grant, Zanuck's attorney, told him Rosenman would replace Skouras temporarily at the next board meeting until Fox found an official successor. Zanuck was secretly buying Fox shares, to unseat Gould or others in any proxy fight. He met Lehman and Rosenman, to present his \$1,000,000 exploitation plans for *The Longest Day*: opening the film in Paris, then New York and London, then in selected American cinemas on a specially priced, reserved-seat basis. Rosenman said 'under no circumstances would *The Longest Day* have special handling,' it would go straight on grind. Zanuck offered \$8,000,000 – the money Fox had invested – for the film. Rosenman explained while he would 'accept the offer like a shot,' Fox would not let him, then left. 'What a bastard!' said Zanuck, 'all my life, I've never been so mistreated' (Wolfe, 2006, p. 425-426, 430).²¹³ Zanuck determined to protect his film.

²¹¹ See also Tosches, 1999, p. 343-344; Martin with Smith 2004, p. 99-100; Wolfe, 2007, p. 424-426.

²¹² Wanger recalled when he was a young producer at Paramount and impatiently fired a star, Jesse Lasky had called him to say 'Walter, under your contract you have a perfect right to get rid of that star, but that is not what we hired you for. We hired you to get the best out of people, not to fire them.'

²¹³ See also Gussow, 1971, p. 243; Mosley, 1985, p. 462-464; Harris, 1990, p. 111.

On Location at Anzio, Fox confirmed Wanger's firing and stopped his per diem (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:14:42). Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 167) told Earl Wilson this was 'a problem of cutting costs, nothing else' and recalled 'Liz couldn't be sweeter. She was so angry she wanted to quit. But [Mankiewicz] and I convinced her to work on for the good of the picture.' Then, after calling Levathes, Merman told Mankiewicz and Taylor 'Wanger is the Producer, and the salary matter is something of a private nature between Walter and the Studio.'²¹⁴ Owning part of the picture, Wanger remained in Rome, organising, and attending meetings. Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 119)²¹⁵ asked, 'Don't tell me you honestly believe anything will save this company in our lifetime.' That night the Carol Burnet and Julie Andrews (2019, p 45) television special spoofed *The Sound of Music*.

On 13 June, the SAG discussed Martin's actions with Fox (Badman, 2012, p. 183-184). *Variety* (1962x)²¹⁶ detailed Fox's battle with Monroe, describing Levathes blowing 'his stack,' but agreeing Monroe's behaviour was 'beyond routine arrogance of stardom: If studios and agents could not control their stars, "bankers would step in."' Zanuck publicly stated he did not know why Wanger was fired (*Variety*; 1962y). Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 123) revealed that before they left Rome, Rogell explained Wanger was still boss.

Filming moved to Ischia, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 168)²¹⁷ arrived by boat; Taylor and Burton by helicopter, taking adjacent suites at the Regina Isabella Hotel. Seeing some storm damage to the set 'Mankiewicz just stood there and said, "rebuild it," turned round and walked away' (Austin, 2020). Taylor was ill the next day, Mankiewicz (1962c) sent Wanger a list of scenes to shoot. On set, unloading the special effects' butane tanks, noticing something wrong, prop man Bill Middlestat cleared the area. 'In moments, the tank exploded. His quick thinking saved the lives of quite a few people.' The Ischia shoot was not easy.

²¹⁴ Under the terms of Wanger's contract, were he to be removed, Fox would have to agree with Taylor as well, the third party in the production.

²¹⁵ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 354, 370-371.

²¹⁶ See also *Variety* 1962w.

²¹⁷ See also Alpert, 1987, p. 113.

Zanuck met Monroe in New York on 15 June, then Skouras in hospital. Both men agreed on Monroe's reinstatement: Skouras called Levathes (Badman, 2012, p. 195-196).²¹⁸ In Ischia, given the negative press, the perception was Monroe was bankrupting Fox, not *Cleopatra*, even though everyone realised there was enough to make two films. With no other film in production, *Cleopatra* now carried Fox's entire overhead²¹⁹ (Austin, 2020). On 16 June, in New York, Nizer joined the team Grant was assembling for Zanuck (Mosley, 1985, p. 464). Meanwhile, Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. 131-132) discussed some stockholders asking Zanuck to return to power. Then, in Ischia, 29-year-old Marcello Geppetti heard about Taylor's carefully arranged 'day out' with Burton and photographed them sunbathing on their hired yacht (Cashmore, 2016, p. 136). This proof of their affair challenged any old-style Hollywood 'carefully constructed studio portraits.' Taylor's paradigm shift of refusing to 'hide or seek forgiveness... paid off'²²⁰ (Brayton, 2014).²²¹ Zanuck would return to a different industry.



Figure 7.12

This image (Alamy 2023), was taken at the same time that Marcello Geppetti's photographed Taylor and Burton kissing on the deck of a motorboat near Ischia (viewable at <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2014/apr/28/the-years-la-dolce-vita-in-pictures>) all of these images confirmed their affair and made headlines around the world.

Publicity was changing. On 17 June, Rizzoli, an Italian press magnate, offered his yacht for the weekend, suggesting Wanger invite Taylor too, she invited Burton, but stipulated 'no

²¹⁸ See also Spoto, 1993, p. 597.

²¹⁹ Tom Mankiewicz recalled: 'Dad used to joke. We'd be driving to the set and he'd say, "Right now, the head of Fox in Hong Kong is taking two hookers to lunch and charging it to my picture"' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:13:26).

²²⁰ 'To me, being honest is all a part of being what one is. I don't try to give any illusion, or delusion, at all. It isn't that I don't care. But what I am is my own business' Taylor told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 153).

²²¹ See also Mann 2009, p. 322.

photographs.²²² During lunch, sailing to Capri, looking up, Taylor asked 'What's that behind the curtain?' It was a cameraman, movie-camera in hand, shooting footage for Rizzoli's newsreel company. Furious, Taylor and Burton blamed Wanger, who convinced Rizzoli not to release the film (Rubythron, 2011, p. 471).²²³ The next day, Monroe agreed for her swimming shots to feature on 72 magazine covers worldwide (Badman, 2012, p. 165). Publicity worked in different ways.

Gradually, Levathes reversed his actions. Still functioning as producer, by 20 June, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 169) questioned the decision to cut the additional scenes. Mankiewicz complained to Skouras about the 'inestimable damage to audience impact and understanding' and therefore to the film's success (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 127-128). Monroe agreed to photoshoots and interviews with the world's leading syndicated columnists to aid her retaliation. Fox cancelled Remick's contract (Wayne, 1992, p. 186-187).²²⁴ The next day, Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 133-135) argued nobody cared about 'the Taylor-Burton publicity from Ischia' and that Skouras 'didn't have the old fight-back left in him.' They speculated that 'something may happen' at the next board meeting 'like closing the studio or something.'

On 22 June, Rosenman (1962) allowed the second unit to hire extras for the Alexandra scene, but still not to shoot the mausoleum scenes and told Mankiewicz Fox could not afford Taylor's salary for the extra 2 days, but if Taylor agreed to accept a daily rate after her salary closed out Mankiewicz could shoot them. Bautzer advised Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, P. 169) to remain as producer and that he would get Fox to announce this. Monroe appeared on the cover of *Life* in her robe on the set of *Something's Got to Give*²²⁵ (Marshall, 2005, p. 187). As

²²² Also on board were Monica Vitti, Michelangelo Antonioni, Marcello the Duke of Caraculo, and Terence Rattigan. Rattigan's presence might have later led to Burton being offered *The V.I.P.s* (1963).

²²³ Taylor called Nizer. The incident severely damaged Rizzoli's reputation in Hollywood and no major star or director ever worked with him again. He died 7 years later, 'full of regrets over the incident' (Rubythron, 2011, p. 471).

²²⁴ See also Wolfe, 2006, p. 428-439.

²²⁵ Monroe told one interviewer: 'I don't look on myself as a commodity, but I'm sure a lot of people have, including one corporation in particular which shall be nameless. If I'm sounding "picked on," I think I have been. ... An actor is supposed to be a sensitive instrument. Isaac Stern takes good care of his violin. What if everybody jumped on his violin?' (Wolfe, 2006, p. 428-439).

doctors operated on Skouras, Levathes began to see his and Zanuck's wisdom (Spoto, 1993, p. 597).

Trying to correct his errors, Levathes visited Monroe at her home on 23 June and agreed to another meeting (Badman, 2012, p. 195-196). In Ischia, Taylor filmed 'How is the wind for Egypt,' Actium, then her last scene (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017).²²⁶ Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 170) concluded: 'For 5 years I have waited to see what I saw today – Cleopatra's barge arriving at Tarsus. The scene was right out of Plutarch.'²²⁷ Taylor (1967, p. 140) recalled 'after my last shot, there was a curiously sad sort of aching, empty feeling—but such astronomical relief. It was finally over.' Merman promised not to formally announce Taylor's completion, to ward against Sybil arriving. Taylor spent her last night on Ischia (Bragg, 1989, p. 215), as Hopper (and Brough, 1963, p. 25) predicted Burton would reject her. The next day, Merman (1962) cabled Levathes stating that if they got a break – 'and I do mean every break' – they would finish first unit shooting by 8 July and second unit by 18 July. Fox's threats three weeks earlier were forgotten. Merman also asked Moskowitz to cable Taylor about the end of her contract and told Levathes the bad weather meant delaying Taylor's last day. Levathes' reversals could not save his career.

On 25 June, Mankiewicz (1962d) told Bienstock about his dealings with the executive committee. On 27 June, Canby (1962e) described that day's Fox board meeting as an 'extraordinary session which might not only impact on a handful of board members, but also the success of the company.' During the meeting, Weiss and Brodsky (1963, p. 136-142) – arguing *Cleopatra* was blamed for 'years of Fox absurdity' – discussed Wanger's belief that Skouras would be voted out but neither Levathes, Michel, nor Moskowitz would succeed him. Weiss was baffled why they could not publicise Taylor's completion, then cabled Brodsky to announce Skouras' resignation. Skouras would stay on until a committee agreed on his

²²⁶ Merman listed Taylor's total Production days (No Sundays and Holidays) 226, total Days no call 48, total Days Worked 121, of which Taylor was late on 99 days (or a total of 53 hours). She was absent 66 days: 34 because of her fault and 33 because of illness (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 128-129) Taylor was absent from *Cleopatra* far more times than Monroe (Badman, 2012, p. 187).

²²⁷ The Barge scene cost \$500,000, including the 250' barge with its 100' masts and gold-lined deck (Sheppard, 1975, p. 319-320).

replacement.²²⁸ This favoured Treves, because Fox would consider many candidates not just the favourites. As chair, Rosenman now controlled Fox (Leaming, 1999, p. 417). *Variety* (1962kk) identified the conundrum of knowing when to make the decision to cut your losses: a company with a runaway picture faces the 'awkward choice of abandoning a property when it's realized the production costs are soaring beyond original expectations or staying with it because it would be unwise to turn back.' Levathes was no longer favourite to replace Skouras.

Zanuck soon was, and cabled Fox on 28 June.²²⁹ Not defending Skouras, Zanuck thought the board equally responsible for recent decisions, arguing a non-specialist board could never run a film company. The board's treatment of Zanuck offended him and should Fox collapse, he would personally face a significant financial loss. He was now 'thinking of putting his own name forward' (Lev, 2013, p. 250-251). In Ischia, Cronyn shot his final scene (20th Century Fox 1962c), checking with Mankiewicz that it really was the end of his shoot, in full costume he jumped off the pier into the water.²³⁰

The next day, as Monroe continued a photo-shoot with Barris on Santa Monica beach, Fox was renegotiating her new \$1,000,000 contract.²³¹ In New York, Fox wanted to cancel the Philippi scene, essential for the opening of the second half, and for which the set was already under construction²³² (Rollyson, 2014, p. 275).²³³ Mankiewicz (1962e) cabled Skouras, Levathes and Rosenman, explaining the damage to the opening of the film and that 'tent' scenes they had already shot would make no sense: 'For my part I have exhausted such

²²⁸ That committee comprised Skouras, Rosenman, Gould, Loeb, Lehman and Clarkson.

²²⁹ Zanuck released it to the press on 30 June, and *Variety* (1962o) published it on 4 July.

²³⁰ 'It was a long way down and I very nearly didn't come up again. I hadn't anticipated the weight of my water-soaked costume. I couldn't even lift my arms above the surface, and I had to dog-paddle to the jetty where I was unceremoniously hauled out. As I stood there panting, dripping, one of the Italian hairdressers came racing over to me and started to comb my sodden wig. It was a ludicrous gesture—about on a par with my dive. But I didn't care. I was free' (Cronyn, 1991, p. 345).

²³¹ \$500,000 for *Something's Got to Give*, plus a bonus if it was completed on its new schedule, then \$500,000 or more for a new musical called *What a Way to Go* (Wolfe, 2006, p. 535).

²³² Ferguson closed contracts for Hume, Sharaff, Taylor, Zavitz, and Robert Webbs (Second unit director): Hume, Aug 2 1961- June 28 1962; Sharaff, June 13 1961-June 29 1962; Taylor, Aug 11 1960 to June 23 1962; Robert Webbs (Second unit director), March 27 1962 to June 18 1962; Vivienne Zavitz (hair stylist and designer of wigs for Elizabeth Taylor), Aug 15 1961 to June 29.

²³³ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 171-172; Wolfe, 2006, p. 535.

energies and talent as I possess and the prospect of a flow of similar pronunciamientos in the month ahead is one I cannot face.... The film I could not assemble properly much less turn over with pride. With mutual appreciation of responsibilities and suggesting that mine toward the stockholders is no less than yours, I suggest that you replace me [as soon as] possible by someone less critical of your directives and less dedicated to the eventual success of *Cleopatra*.' Mankiewicz remained the director.

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In Ischia, having worked so hard, the crew refused to work on Sunday 1 July, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 173) felt they deserved it: Ischia filming completed 2 days later (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017). Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 173) had no news about shooting in Egypt and thought they were to shoot battle sequences in Spain and/or America. A helicopter took Taylor – who was not going to Egypt – to Naples to fly to Rome (Cashmore, 2016, p. 6).

On 4 July *Variety* (1962m)²³⁴ noted Michel would retire at the 27 July meeting and described Zanuck – the highest stockholder – rallying independent stockholders to support increasing the Fox board membership from 11 -24. Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 146-147), thought Zanuck's 28 June statement 'magnificent and needed saying just that way—unforgettable.' In New York, Zanuck, with his attorneys, met Lehman. Later he met the entire Fox executive committee. Zanuck outlined his plans for Fox's survival, stating other candidates were extraneous, because he would force a proxy fight. Zanuck and Skouras met their lawyers the next day (*Variety*, 1966ee).

By 5 July, Egypt was back on the schedule (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 173). Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. 149) joked about the plan between the 'mustache' – Zanuck – and 'Zeus' – Skouras – to become president and chairman of Fox respectively, suggesting they knew of the Zanuck-Skouras plan or retrofitted their later account. Mankiewicz worked on the script for the Battle of Actium sequence. The shoot was not over. Principal photography finished slowly.

²³⁴ See also *Variety* 1962n.

On 6 July, during the last day of the Torre Astura shoot, Gang told Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 173) Fox refused to allow Taylor to shoot the mausoleum scenes and that the Pharsalia scenes were too expensive to shoot. The plan, permission allowing, was to return to Cinecittà on Monday to film Taylor crossing to and entering her Alexandrian tomb.

Wanger spoke to Bautzer about how to reveal the facts of Fox's mismanagement. He wanted to avoid a long lawsuit if he could. 'I have no personal venom against anybody, but I am just revolted by the self-serving carelessness of these negligent and incompetent individuals, except in their own interest' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 374). Back in Paris on 8 July, and under legal instruction to say nothing, Zanuck pointedly stated 'I have 9 solid days in the re-recording room on my picture *Longest Day* costing under \$10,000,000.' Meanwhile Fox announced it would do 'everything possible to circumvent any proxy fight.' As *Cleopatra* wound down, Zanuck's fight gathered momentum (Variety, 1962t).

On 9 July, in Rome, Taylor watched the last scenes at Cinecittà. Merman explained she could not travel to Egypt with the company for fear of riots or her being killed.²³⁵ Harrison waived his fee with SAG for the Pharsalia scenes. On 10 July, Fox suggested Monroe sign a pre-prepared public apology acknowledging her 'barbiturate habit' and begging for 'forgiveness' for her 'tardiness and lack of discipline.' The next day, Harrison signed his fee waiver. Skouras urged Mankiewicz to complete filming and return to Hollywood (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 153).²³⁶

On 12 July, Monroe and Fox verbally agreed she would earn \$500,000 for *Something's Got to Give* and another \$500,000 for one more movie. She would not engage Paula Strasberg, Newcomb or Greenson in her films, and would lose her director and cameraman approval and the right to view rushes daily. Monroe requested script approval and for Negulesco to replace Cukor. All legal actions would end, but Fox still desired an apology (Rollyson, 2014, p. 276). On

²³⁵ Shooting in Egypt was complicated because President Nassar's government upheld an anti-Israeli stance, if a passport bore an Israeli stamp, no Arab country would allow access. Egypt would not allow Taylor to enter because she was Jewish, but realising filming would generate \$5,000,000 to \$8,000,000, argued Taylor was a converted Jew which 'didn't count.' Mankiewicz, also Jewish, identified as an Atheist, so that didn't count, and his sons had a Catholic mother, so they could enter too (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:04:26).

²³⁶ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 173-174; Badman, 2012, p. 213; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 130.

the hills outside Cinecittà, Burton and Harrison shot the Pharsalia scenes (Elizabeth Taylor - The Legend, 2017). On 13 July, Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 156-157) wrote a 'moderate apology' for Monroe, then was 'taken off the assignment.' Treves – believing Levathes would become president – declared Zanuck would not win a proxy fight.²³⁷ In Rome, Harrison and Burton shot more Pharsalia scenes, but in Los Angeles, Robert Kennedy sued MCA under the Sherman Antitrust Act (Sharp, 2003, p 118). However, as MCA decided its future, Wald died on 14 July (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 174). Wald had written the previous week: 'Right now, [Fox] is filled with chaos, confusion, contradictions, and just plain old-fashioned crap. I wish they would settle the presidency so we can all go back to work.' Wald favoured Zanuck (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 158-159).

Arriving in Alexandria on 15 July, the company stayed in King Farouk's old palace (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:40:58). *Cleopatra* had gone to Egypt, because of those promised 5,000 Egyptian soldiers at a fee of \$1 per man per day. Now the army wanted \$4. On 17 July, Fox pressured Mankiewicz to cut scenes, but none of the equipment or costumes arrived, costing more money. The next day, at 07:00, the company left for Edkou – a small primitive village an hour from Alexandria – and shot one brief scene with Burton, even though wigs and costumes still had to arrive. On 19 July, Wanger asked Egypt's Vice-President to keep the customs open to drive a special case to the location: it was the wrong one. On 20 July they shot nothing, so on 21 July, unable to make a deal with the soldiers, Merman used local extras and imported 750 students from Alexandria's universities. Locals refused to work with the students, so rioted with guns, clubs, and rocks. During this, 20 army and police were trampled over until 3 camel-corps appeared to calm things. Mankiewicz and Burton watched from their tent, Landau joked: 'Shoot the riot, it's better than the picture' (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 175-176).²³⁸ Riots continued the next day. On 23 July, Wasserman announced the dissolution of the MCA agency (Sharp, 2003, p 121) circumventing Kennedy's legal action.

Still needing daily injections, on 23 July, Mankiewicz' nurse accidentally hit his sciatic nerve (Mankiewicz and Crane, 2015, p. 68). In agony, Mankiewicz hobbled around using Wanger's

²³⁷ Gould declared 'he has as much chance as a snowball in hell.'

²³⁸ See also Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:17:08; Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:40:58.

cane, or by wheelchair (Geist, 1978, p. 327-328).²³⁹ In New York, Nizer had 'corralled enough support to vote Zanuck in,' but Loeb confronted Zanuck about his record as an independent producer (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 162-163). Reporters refused to attend a press conference about *The Longest Day* unless Zanuck made a statement about the upcoming board meeting, he still answered 'no comment' to any penetrating questions. Levathes – the other front runner – was also in New York (*Variety*, 1962hh).

On 24 July, Lehman met Zanuck and Nizer, and subsequently shifted his position. Zanuck still did not know how the board meeting would play out (*Variety* 1962f). Mankiewicz was still ill, but later that day first unit location shooting finished. Back in Alexandria, at the wrap party, Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 176-178)²⁴⁰ spoke. He was glad the picture was finally over after 4 years: 'tonight we are gathered here, within hours of completing the greatest attraction in the history of entertainment. I wish I could give you all the reward you deserve.' London was their Dunkirk and 'Sir Winston Mankiewicz' led them 'to safety through seas infested with wolf packs of submarines from the New York office, of U-2 bombs from Hollywood.' He paid tribute to 'Queen Elizabeth, the reigning monarch of the screen, a woman of character and a fighter for ideals,' and saluted 'St. David Burton, who has won all of our hearts and who is destined to startle the world with his dynamic performance.' Harrison was 'Caesar Emperatur Emperata whose magnificent, sincere performance has thrilled us all.' Wanger praised 'McDowall's brilliant Octavian,' the 'magnificent infantry of 20th Century-Fox's back lot.... Leon Shamroy and his great crew, Freddy Simpson, and his flame throwers; Irene Sharaff, who never missed a date through the long experience and during problems that have never been equalled in the history of Hollywood.' He praised DeCuir, Matthews and the rest of the crew. Wanger's war analogy equally applied to Fox.

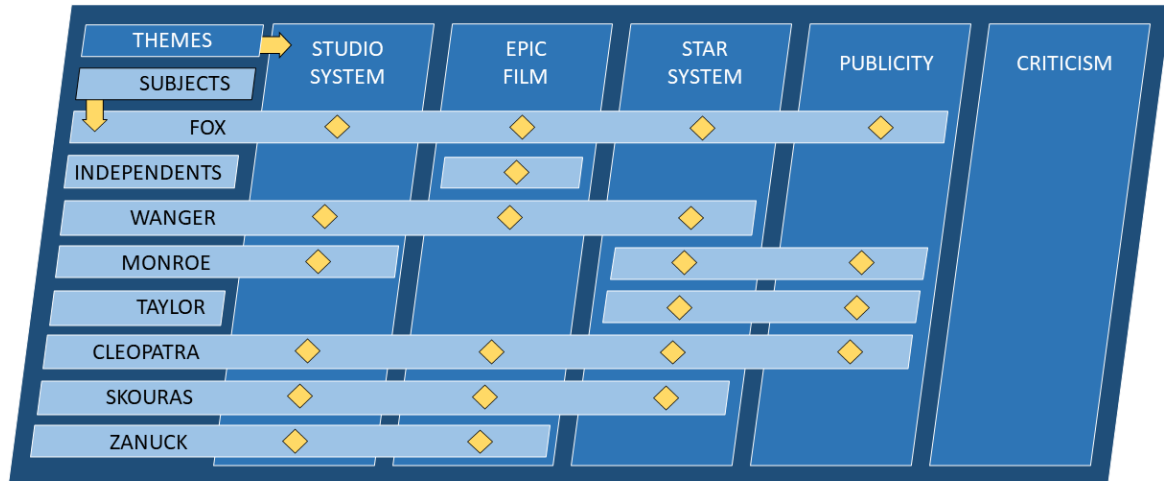
²³⁹ De Cuir supposedly saw Mankiewicz carried on a stretcher frantically scribbling, when De Cuir asked, 'How's it going?' Mankiewicz replied, 'I'm writing the last page' (Geist, 1978, p. 327-328).

²⁴⁰ See also Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:48:08, 0:06:47.

SUMMARY

Figure 7.13

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Thematic Summary Chapter 7



Kennedy's pursuit of MCA motivated Wasserman dissolving the agency and acquiring Decca and Universal. This was the origin of the horizontally integrated model, which – mired in problems – Fox failed to acknowledge. Panicked by costs and reactive in its management, Fox lost control of *Cleopatra* and *Something's Got to Give*. Skouras' assurances to Mankiewicz soon evaporated because he failed to resolve or understand *Cleopatra's* problems, often remonstrating key staff, but failing to offer constructive suggestions. Skouras or Levathes repeatedly told the board *Cleopatra's* problems were solved, Skouras even told stockholders production would end within the week, knowing this was untrue. Eventually Skouras was too ill to intervene.

The more *Cleopatra's* costs increased, the more Fox pressured Monroe to make a new film. Attempting to prove his ability to manage the studio's talent to angry stockholders, Levathes, ignored Monroe's worth and tried to destroy her, he fired Wanger from his own picture, but the next day accepted this simply meant Fox stopped paying Wanger, who was still producer. Aware of this – and determined to protect *The Longest Day* – Zanuck prepared for a proxy fight. The Taylor-Burton affair revived Fox's internal power struggle, but now Zanuck wanted control.

Zanuck controlled his epic production tightly, Fox did not. It only sent Rice to Rome during December 1961, who failed to address why *Cleopatra* was making losses. Building on Wyler and Kubrick, the epic genre reached its apogee with *El Cid* (1961), a mature epic that *Cleopatra* needed to match, just as the genre's popularity began to wane. Mankiewicz strove to advance Mann's approach by realistically capturing history and telling the story over 2-films, but Fox never approved this idea. *Cleopatra* embodied 'prodigality' as many epics did, but this prodigality was unplanned, because only Mankiewicz knew the plan. Nor did Taylor and Monroe's illnesses help.

On-set belief in *Cleopatra* sustained it throughout 1962. Fox executives repeatedly praised the rough cut, even though many went there to berate Wanger and Mankiewicz. Footage also soothed angry Fox board members and stockholders. Yet Skouras repeatedly blamed Wanger's failure to drive the production. Therefore, the distance between Skouras and Wanger regarding *Cleopatra's* epic status widened. *Cleopatra* lacked Zanuck's level of oversight.

Not even Zanuck could have been prepared for the 'extra-cinematic discourse' that emerged when the production arrived in Rome and continues to mythologise the film. Best conveyed in the 'Lizpatra' soubriquet used by the press at the time, the public saw Taylor and *Cleopatra* as one. The affair became indistinguishable from the love story at the heart of Mankiewicz's second-half script. Once more a *Cleopatra* film linked the excess of its star to the historical excess of the character.

However, Le Scandale effected a paradigm shift: Taylor refused to apologise for her behaviour, demonstrated by photographs of her and Burton walking on the Via Veneto or sunbathing on a yacht. Without Taylor, Fox was ruined, therefore had to progress, and collectively face any condemnation that followed, thus reinventing celebrity. While some disliked Taylor, the greater number did not, influenced no doubt by the kind of thinking embodied in books like *Sex and the Single Girl* which informed the sensibilities of the newly emerging cinema audience. Rather than be controlled by Fox, like Monroe was, Taylor – as an independent – exercised her power. The more the public accepted her behaviour, the more power she had. The more power she exercised, the more the public accepted her behaviour.

Taylor was Dyer's superwoman personified, instead of exploiting her femininity, she adopted male characteristics to survive and enjoyed male prerogative. For instance, with adultery still taboo in the early 1960s she and Burton obfuscated about when the affair began.

The affair changed *Cleopatra's* trajectory which almost risked becoming incidental to the personal stories played out in the press. Therefore, Fisher's actions, which Fox did not control, caused problems, as much as Taylor's emotional upheavals affected production. Wanger tried to soothe the injured parties, while Mankiewicz protected his film. Aware of the affair, Fox still pressed ahead with a 4-picture Taylor-Fisher deal, until the marriage dissolved. Events in Rome – including the affair - weakened Skouras' position, who did not truly recognise the impact of Taylor's paradigm shift.

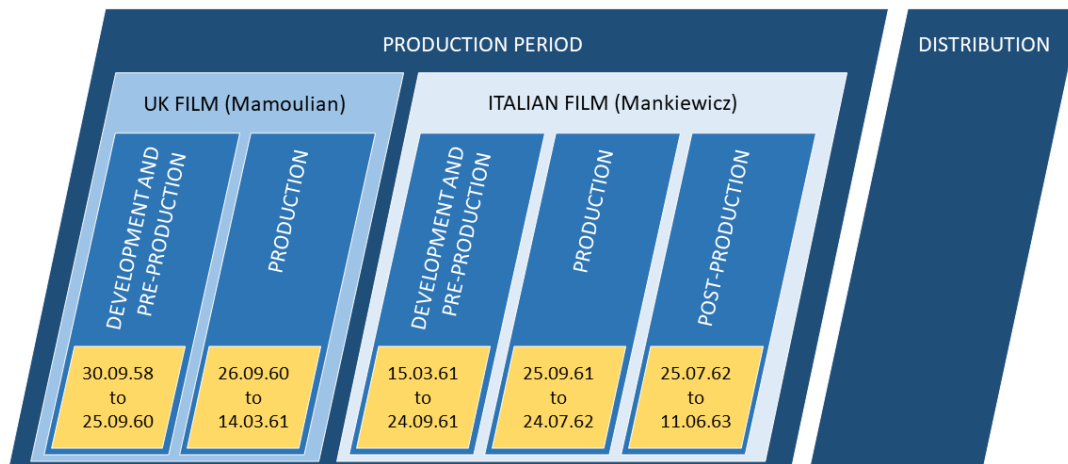
When stockholders grew angry, Levathes overreacted and chose to punish Monroe, who enjoyed none of Taylor's power. Both actors impeded Fox's financial recovery, but as their birthday parties indicated, Fox treated Monroe like a servant: Taylor like a queen. Fox was delighted when Monroe posed naked or reported for duty, but not when she disobeyed them. Just as Fox had earlier failed to build on her success in *Some like it Hot* (1959) they now failed to realise Monroe was creating a mature version of herself. The disparity in how Fox treated its two stars meant Monroe saw Taylor as a rival, yet when she was fired, it was Taylor who offered her support.

The Taylor-Burton affair was such a turning point because it was photographed. The publicity *Cleopatra* and Taylor experienced in London escalated in Rome, becoming ever more invasive and ever more daring. Not Ascarelli, Wanger, Brodsky, nor Weiss, could control the relentless Rome press and at times struggled to physically protect Taylor. When Taylor first attempted suicide, nobody believed Fox's ridiculous cover-story, exciting only more press coverage. Yet Fox's executive still argued *Cleopatra* lacked publicity, exposing how little Fox, and the ailing studio system, understood the voracious nature of a paparazzi-fuelled media. Then Monroe used Fox's own publicity campaign against her to support her cry for independence, making it clear Fox – specifically Levathes – failed to understand the bond between a star and her public. As Wasserman's horizontally integrated model grew, it established a new kind of relationship with the media.

THE MOST UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL

(*Julius Caesar* – Act 3, Scene 3)

Figure 8.1



JULY-DECEMBER 1962

As Zanuck battled for Fox, Taylor met Burton at Rome airport alone (Rubythorn, 2011, p. 475). In Hollywood, Levathes personally delivered a revised script to Monroe (Badman, 2012, p. 221),¹ who agreed to show it to Martin that weekend (Rollyson, 2014, p. 277). With *The Longest Day* projected to outgross any previous black and white picture (Guild, 1970, p. 239), at 16:00 in New York, Zanuck and Grant met the Fox board. Rosenman chaired, Gould led the attack. Zanuck recalled, 'the bile just poured out of them. It was filthy stuff – mostly about my private life.' Gould also questioned Zanuck's independent production record,² then Rosenman asked what Zanuck would do if he became president. Zanuck lit a cigar, stood, and said, 'I have nothing to say. If you want me, fine. If not, get somebody else!'

¹ Badman and Rollyson place the script exchange a few days apart (Rollyson this date, Badman the 27th). However Rollyson's version makes more sense regarding the weekend meeting at Cal-Neva. The Lake Tahoe casino resort was named after its location on the border between California and Nevada. Sinatra apparently shared its ownership with Mafia boss Sam Giancana (Victor, 1999, p. 46).

² Grant retaliated, asking how much Fox had lost in the 'last few years? In the last few weeks?'

As Zanuck paced outside, chain-smoking cigars, Brodsky spoke to Treves several times, he now favoured Koegel.³ Around 19:00, Skouras came out to go the restroom, blaming the long agenda for not having reached a decision. Next, Rosenman came to ask Zanuck if he would appoint Skouras as Chairman, were he elected. 'For past services and face saving,' Zanuck agreed. Rosenman replied: 'If you should change your mind, I think I might be useful.' Zanuck knew he had won. Lehman and 7 others voted for Zanuck: Rosenman, Gould and Loeb did not. At 19:45 photographers captured Skouras jubilantly shaking Zanuck's hand; Loeb resigned immediately; Gould the next morning; then Rosenman. Zanuck telephoned Richard Zanuck in California, making him executive vice-president in charge of worldwide production, telling him that night to 'close the studio'⁴ (Gussow, 1971, p. 246-247).⁵ As Wanger cabled Skouras about the completion of photography (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 131-132) and Cinecittà dismantled the sets (Santas, 2008, p. 116-117), Fox was under new management.

On 27 July, echoing Brown's 'naïveté and compulsive behaviour' comment, Weiss (Brodsky and 1963, p. 168) concluded there would always be pictures, but they would not be 'as grand, as foolish, as wonderful as they used to be.... With *Cleopatra*, the movies go out in style.' Feeling the loss of their MCA representation, Kelly, Brando, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Novak, and Janet Leigh would have agreed (Sharp, 2003, p 121-122).

Shooting *Cleopatra* in continuity for 10 months had cost an additional \$7,500,000. Therefore, by 28 July, Fox needed a Monroe film to aid its recovery.⁶ Monroe met Martin at Cal-Neva (Badman, 2012, p. 220) for a weekend central to many conspiracy theories.⁷ Regardless, at 08:00 on 30 July, she was back home working in her garden (Banner, 2013, p. 408). On 1 August,⁸ *Variety* (1962c) concluded the threat of a proxy fight forced the board to elect

³ Canby (1962b) confirms that Treves had proposed appointing Koegel as a compromise candidate. This article reveals that Treves and the Boat were the same person.

⁴ Ironically, that day, *Variety* (1962ii) had written Fox studios would not close down, even though Levathes had begun to release staff.

⁵ See also Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 143-144; Wolfe, 2006, p. 541-542; Gomery, 2008, p. 254.

⁶ Mankiewicz later argued the \$40,000,000 included the studio overhead (Munn, 2008, p. 122).

⁷ Some suggest Sinatra supplied her with pills, prevented a suicide attempt, shared her with his mob pals, that she met DiMaggio there, or never went there because it was a cover story for a secret abortion (Victor, 1999, p. 46 and 274-275). Staff at Cal-Neva describe her as sad and stricken, others as calm and composed, but subdued (Taraborrelli, 1999, p. 360).

⁸ Nizer - who represented both Taylor and Fisher in their divorce – denied they had reconciled (*Variety*, 1962d).

Zanuck.⁹ As Fox chairman, Skouras' yearly salary was \$139,000. Zanuck declared he would not 'take the blame on decisions' he didn't make (Green, 1962a), increased the board to 15 members – adding Grant and Wyler¹⁰ – then returned to Paris to complete *The Longest Day*. Making no comment about Richard Zanuck's appointment and promising 'no changes' until he had considered Fox's future, Zanuck announced he would oversee *Cleopatra's* edit. Still in post, Levathes hired Negulesco to direct a revised *Something's Got to Give* (Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 295). Rudin stated Monroe and Fox signed her new contract this day (Spoto, 1993, p. 618). Monroe told Moriarty 'We're going to go back and work' (Badman, 2012, p. 235). Zanuck's promise to Monroe made sound business sense, it was not naïve or compulsive.

On 2 August, Richard Zanuck described the Fox lot as 'desperate. There were only about 50 people here.... Things were so tight, we were trying to figure out ways to get another janitor off the payroll' (Dunne, 1998, p. 12). Tom Mankiewicz recalled his father beginning 6 weeks of editing with 'nothing on the lot. No pictures in preparation. Nobody under contract. Nothing' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:19:05 and 1:21:08). Mankiewicz and Spencer cut 630,000 feet of film to 'a mere' 22,000 feet: a new experience, even for Spencer. Skouras later called the excessive footage the 'greatest area of waste in the film.... I am sure you have seen the logs of the production department where he has exceeded 600,000 feet of negative, which is something of a record in the history of the business' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 15-29, 134-155).¹¹ Mankiewicz' problems were soon overshadowed.

For Taylor and Monroe, 4 August was significant. After leaving Rome, the Burtons had returned to Celigny: Taylor lived with her children 70 miles away in Gstaad, vowing never to see Burton again because they were 'destroying too many lives.' Alone for the first time since she left Nicky Hilton, one day Christopher told her, 'I prayed to God last night that you and

⁹ *Variety* (1962e) reported that Zanuck had already filed proxy papers in case he was not appointed as president.

¹⁰ The articles of association allowed Wyler to sit on the Fox if he was not actively working for Fox as a director. At the time Wyler was not.

¹¹ See also IMDb.com, 2023.

Richard would be married.’ When McDowall and Valva visited Taylor on 4 August, after their earlier visit to Celigny, they discussed Burton for 4 hours (David and Robbins, 1977, p. 150).¹²

In Santa Monica, Monroe awoke in a sombre mood, spoke at 10:30 to photographer Larry Schiller about photographs for *Playboy* magazine, then approved the photos he had taken.¹³ Arriving at 13:00, Greenson remained with Monroe until after 19:00, except for an interval between 15:00-17:00.¹⁴ Monroe was playing with her dog at 19:05 in the garden, then Joe DiMaggio Jr. called her about breaking off his engagement, cheering Monroe who thought his fiancée unsuitable. At 19:41, she relayed this news to Greenson, then said: ‘Goodnight Mrs Murray, I think I’ll turn in now’. From 19:55 she played Sinatra albums in her room (Badman, 2012, p. 260, 265).¹⁵ Both stars’ lives were about to change.

By 03:40 on 5 August, Monroe was dead. The nature of that death is not important here, except for noting 3 uniformed Fox security guards patrolled Monroe’s house and reporter Joe Hyams (1974, p. 140-142)¹⁶ arrived around dawn to cover the story. Deputy Medical Examiner of Los Angeles County, Dr Thomas T. Noguchi began Monroe’s post-mortem at 10:30. The next day, Head Toxicologist, Ralph Abemethy listed the drugs in Monroe’s system,¹⁷ leading news coverage around the world to report her death as suicide from an overdose. That day, 800 Fox employees received pink slips and notice that the lot would be vacated in 10 days. Zanuck concluded ‘the Levathes administration had ruined the place,’ Monroe’s death was another blow.

McCann (1988, p. 9) argued the circumstances of Monroe’s death belong, ‘with tragic appropriateness, to the B-movie script.’ Ever direct, Hopper (and Brough, 1963, p. 43) declared: ‘All the sob sisters of the world fell to work explaining why. Of course, we shall

¹² See also Taylor, 1967, p. 153; Heymann, 1995, p. 250-251; Kashner and Schoenberger, 2011, p. 40.

¹³ When Schiller returned from a weekend in Palm Springs, he found an unaddressed, un-stamped envelope shoved under his studio door with the marked photos (Guiles, 1992, p. 435).

¹⁴ During this time many Monroe biographers claim Robert Kennedy visited her.

¹⁵ See also Guiles, 1992, p. 435; Spoto, 1993, p. 629-630; Wolfe, 2006, p. 453-454; Marilyn Monroe History 2, 2014 0:43:22; Rollyson, 2014, p. 283-285.

¹⁶ See also Summers, 1985, p. 319; McCann, 1988, p. 174; Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 370; Badman, 2012, p. 276, 301, 321; Banner, 2013, p. 426; Rollyson, 2014, p. 286.

¹⁷ Barbiturates (4.5 mg percent), choral hydrate (8 mg percent), and pentobarbital (13 mg percent) (Rollyson, 2014, p. 286).

never know. She took that secret with her.’ Unaware of how much Monroe regarded her as her rival, Taylor could not ‘believe it was suicide. I think she accidentally overdosed on sleeping pills,’ confiding to friends, ‘I thought it would have been me.’ Zanuck stated: ‘Like everyone who knew... or worked with her, I am shocked. Marilyn was a star in every sense of the word. I do not claim to have discovered Marilyn Monroe. Nobody discovered her. She discovered herself. I was merely an instrument that provided her with the vehicles in which she was able to reach the theatre-going public of the world’¹⁸ (Wayne, 1992, p. 204).¹⁹ Monroe’s death compromised Zanuck’s recovery plans.

Monroe became an American cultural icon (Talking Pictures: Sex Symbols, 2019). *The Misfits* (1961) acquired a deeper resonance and fans demanded Fox re-release her movies.²⁰ On 9 August, the Chief Coroner told the press that ‘more than one drug’ might have caused Monroe’s death, so ‘[I] may still order an inquest,’ but his preliminary judgement was death because of a ‘possible overdose of barbiturates.’ Around this time, in Switzerland – possibly reminded of their mortality – Burton invited Taylor to lunch at the Chateau de Chillon on Lake Geneva. Subsequently, they met every few weeks. Taylor (1967, p. 143)²¹ reasoned: ‘if that’s the way it’s going to be, that is the role I will accept. Not very satisfying, but it was better than nothing. At least I wouldn’t be hurting anybody, and it seemed we really could not stay away from each other.’ Sybil was Taylor’s only true rival.

Presenting his recovery plans on 15 August, Zanuck suggested a council of other studio heads. They later argued there was little they could tell Zanuck: given the Paramount Decree they feared being seen talking to each other. Two days later, Levathes’ accusations of mental illness during his press campaign against her, now supported the argument that Monroe was suicidal. Monroe appeared on the cover of *Life*, as Dr Curphey confirmed she died of ‘acute

¹⁸ Years later, Mankiewicz described a memo from Zanuck announcing: ‘I don’t think that she can act, I don’t think that she can dance, that I don’t think she can walk and I’m sure she can’t talk, but there is nothing either of us can do to keep her from becoming a star’ (BFI, 1982, 0:19:00).

¹⁹ See also Staggs, 2001, p. 87; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 132-133.

²⁰ By 5 September, *Variety* (1962p) reported that after her death all 885 prints of Monroe’s films were in constant use in the US and Canada. Exhibitors were running double bills, so weekly dates were little over 400 and sold on flat terms. There was also talk of Fox releasing a compilation film and a LP of her songs.

²¹ See also McCann, 1988, p. 178-179; Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 369; Spoto, 1993, p. 644; Badman, 2012, p. 309.

barbiturate poisoning,' that she might not have intended to die when she took the overdose, but she had 'more than once tried to kill herself when she was disappointed or depressed.' On 27 August, *Variety* (1962rr)²² speculated on Levathes' future as President of Fox Television. The next day, Zanuck appointed Poe as Vice-President in charge of world distribution, while the coroner issued Monroe's death certificate. For the only time in the history of the LA coroner's office, the verdict was death by 'probable suicide.' Fox could therefore claim Monroe's life insurance, suggesting she was still under contract to Fox when she died.

Over 29-30 August, assuring stockholders that Fox was still a wealthy company, Zanuck effected several changes. He postponed – rather than cancelled – several projects but told Fox employees he was: 'not a hatchet man either by instinct or nature. My desire in the long run is to provide more jobs on a permanent basis. Meanwhile during this period of reorganisation, I seek your sympathetic understanding and patience so that eventually our studio will emerge once again second to none.' As Zanuck outlined 'a permanent and modern organization adaptable to the current needs of our ever-changing industry,' Moskowitz and others announced their vice-presidential 'resignations,' as did Levathes who remained president of Fox Television. Merman returned to his original role; Grant replaced Michel; and newly elected Adam Gimbel²³ joined the board, returning Fox's management to people who understood filmmaking. *Variety* (1962nn)²⁴ speculated Zanuck would 'energize fullest merchandising' with *The Longest Day* and *Cleopatra*. Zanuck shutdown Fox, except for *Cleopatra*, future TV projects, or screenplay preparation (Canby, 1962c). Painfully aware of the \$7,000 daily loan interest, on 31 August Zanuck asked to see *Cleopatra* no later than the end of the first week of October: Mankiewicz responded with a completion schedule.²⁵ Assuring Mankiewicz he would not take over, Zanuck(1962a)²⁶ assumed 'proper progress [was] being made.... From a personal standpoint, I am eager to see the film. All I have heard about it has been exceptionally good.' Zanuck needed *Cleopatra's* success.

²² See also *Variety* 1962aa, 1962tt; Badman, 2012, p. 310-311; Rollyson, 2014, p. 281-283, 286.

²³ Of Saks Fifth Avenue.

²⁴ See also *Variety* 1962tt, 1962oo, 1962qq, 1962ss.

²⁵ Finish Editing October 15th, Dupe to Music October 15th, Dub Dialogue October 20th, Combine Dialogue and Effects November 10th, Start to Re-record Final 6 Soundtrack December 11th, Start Cutting Negative December 20th, Ship Negative to New York February 29th.

²⁶ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 134-155.

Zanuck had yet to see *Cleopatra*. On 3 September, bidding farewell to Paris²⁷ he stated Fox would 'always produce pictures of its own' (*Variety*, 1962q) but would be a simpler operation centred on more package deals. Zanuck emphasised quality not quantity with *The Longest Day* and *Cleopatra* key tentpoles (Canby, 1962c). Mankiewicz (1962f)²⁸ informed Zanuck, 'we have a rather large amount of dubbing to do.' The 150-minute Cleopatra/Caesar story and the 170-minute Cleopatra/Antony story mirrored the 2-film plan, which Mankiewicz later claimed was 'the arrangement I made with Skouras' (Mosley, 1985, p. 471). Mankiewicz thought buying 2 tickets to 2 films on consecutive days a new marketing concept (Alpert, 1987, p. 114). Critically, Mankiewicz understood he would not dub until the edit was nearer to its eventual length.

By 12 September, Zanuck's focus shifted to *Cleopatra* and new productions. Fox could only release *The Sound of Music* (1965) in 1964/65 because of contractual restrictions, so Fox's release schedule for the next 12 months, started with *The Longest Day*'s roadshow premiere, but no exact date for *Cleopatra*'s release. As *Variety* (1962u) had speculated, Zanuck urged Poe and Einfeld to emulate Todd's use of merchandising, specifically Taylor tie-ins.²⁹ Zanuck suggested publishing Mankiewicz' script; exhibitions of *Cleopatra* costumes, props, wigs, and set designs; a lavish souvenir programme; and book tie-ins (Bernstein, 1994, p. 372). Zanuck also instructed Mankiewicz not to exceed 240 minutes and that Spencer should assemble any eliminated footage for Zanuck to review 'after I have seen your completed first cut.' Zanuck agreed to cutting *Cleopatra* to its approximate length before dubbing it (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 134-155).

Other concerns now arose. On 17 September, Wanger (1962b) wrote a statement to the WGA arbitration committee, supporting Mankiewicz' sole screenwriting credit, to which MacDougall objected. Needing funds, Wanger instructed Bautzer to sell his 10% share in *Cleopatra*,³⁰ which Bautzer did to Seven Arts (Bernstein, 1994, p. 381-382).³¹ On 18

²⁷ Held in the upstairs room at Maxim's.

²⁸ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 134-155.

²⁹ For example, Cleopatra Enterprises sold 'a high-quality line of cosmetics and perfumes, plus every type of woman's accessory, jewellery, beauty books.'

³⁰ He calculated that a \$100,000,000 income would realise \$2,875,000.

³¹ By 17 January, Seven Arts Productions had failed to buy-out Taylor's shares in *Cleopatra* (*Variety*, 1963vv).

September, anticipating a \$17,000,000 worldwide gross for *Cleopatra*, Magna President, George Skouras,³² estimated the Todd-AO royalty payment would exceed \$1,000,000 in addition to the \$200,000 licensing fee (*Variety*, 1962dd).³³ Spyros Skouras first appeared as Fox Chairman at a testimonial dinner supporting Zanuck's plans: he was 'particularly exhilarated' because Fox was 'once again on the road to success and prosperity' (*Variety*, 1962ee). That day MCA completed its Decca takeover (Karney, 2005), securing MCA/Universal's predominance of the industry (Lev, 2003, p. 146). Decca's 1963 \$200,000,000 annual revenues rose to \$1,500,000,000 over 20 years (Gomery, 2008, p. 220). Zanuck led Fox, but Wasserman led Hollywood.

Zanuck's chief focus remained *The Longest Day*. The French government officially sponsored the 25 September premiere at Paris's Palais de Chaillot (Green, 1962d). De Gaulle's cabinet and America's ambassador to France attended. Lights on the Eiffel Tower advertised the film; 1,000,000 spectators saw Edith Piaf singing 'La Marseillaise' from one of its platforms. 'The most extravagant display of fireworks that Paris had seen in our time' followed: De Gaulle entered triumphantly (Gussow, 1971, p. 254) with 1000 troops. 'What a night. What a showman [Zanuck] was' Robert Wagner recalled (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 0:38:05,1:20:32).

In October, Brodsky (and Weiss, 1963, p. 175) became advertising and publicity director of Filmways. Wanger finally agreed to write his book and approached Hyams (1974, p. 152-153)³⁴ to co-author, finishing in 2 months. During several interviews, 'Wanger read from his diary entries and discussed the production, the personalities, and the politics behind the film.' Hyams helped Wanger recall forgotten details. Admiring Taylor, Wanger wanted the book to show 'she had so much more guts and much more fortitude and ingenuity than all the people who were talking about her.' Her 'strong code of personal ethics' impressed him, so talking to Hyams he downplayed 'the relationship etc. etc.,' until Hyams pointed out the 'etc., etc.' would sell the book (Bernstein, 1994, p. 377-378). The Taylor-Burton reconciliation had

³² Skouras' brother.

³³ Each Todd-AO print cost \$15,000, raising *Cleopatra's* total print cost to \$1,000,000.

³⁴ See also Bernstein, 1994, p. 375-376.

reignited press interest (Bret, 2011, p. 165), so Zanuck also underestimated the depth of ‘the relationship etc. etc.’

McDowall found *The Longest Day*’s 3 October New York premiere and quasi-military parade ‘absolutely mind-blowing.’ Crowther did not have a ticket, so travelled down from his home in Connecticut to a special Sunday showing.³⁵ In profit within 6 months,³⁶ the film eased Fox’s financial pressures (Mosley, 1985, P. 468-469).³⁷ On 6 October, as Mankiewicz (1962g) issued a statement about the writing of *Cleopatra* for the WGA, *Dr. No* (Young, 1962, United Artists) premiered. Embodying the changing preferences of cinema audiences. Its instant success spawned the James Bond franchise (Hernu, 1999, p. 76).

Richard Zanuck assumed Levathes’ Head of Production role on 8 October and Levathes left.³⁸ Elmo Williams became head of European production and Poe executive vice-president for distribution, forcing Einfeld to retire too (Lev, 2013, p. 252). Zanuck agreed with Rogell and Merman’s analysis of Wanger’s ‘dereliction of duties,’ so having agreed to meet him in Paris, refused to pay Wanger’s transport costs. Wishing to avoid a suit against Fox, Wanger urged Zanuck, ‘not to aggravate this situation and further damage my status as producer of *Cleopatra*.’ Zanuck told Feldman to tell Wanger, Fox would not work with him again.³⁹ Mankiewicz recalled: ‘nobody let him know. They treated him contemptuously’ (Bernstein, 1994, p. 373).

Mankiewicz was Zanuck’s next target. On 10 October, McDowall praised Zanuck’s achievements with *The Longest Day* and speaking of *Cleopatra* added ‘you really cannot imagine the scope of the film!’ (*Variety* 1962r). Mankiewicz flew to Paris the next day to begin dubbing with Taylor and Burton (Stern, 2019, p. 335). On 13 October, Zanuck saw Mankiewicz’

³⁵ Given the film’s multi-lingual nature, it had been dubbed in English, but in Paris had been shown in a multilingual version, Zanuck quipped: ‘Crowther is a little bit of a snob, and he speaks French and some German. Why don’t we put the three-language version on for him? I think it might appeal to him’ (Mosley, 1985, P. 468-469).

³⁶ In its first year, it grossed \$25,000,000 (Zacky, Burns and Bider 2001, 0:38:35).

³⁷ See also Hofferma, 2000, 0:21:55.

³⁸ Christina Levathes later said her husband ‘was marvellous about it, I stopped speaking to Skouras, but Peter would still have lunch with him. I just felt he betrayed Peter in an unforgivable manner’ (Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 272).

³⁹ Ruling out the Justine project Wanger, Mankiewicz and Taylor had planned.

first cut, for which Spencer brought an additional 40 minutes of scenes but no accompanying dubbing 'loops.' Based on the 12 September exchange, Mankiewicz did not consider this his final cut.

The edit mirrored the 2-film scheme. Despite press coverage revealing Taylor and Burton were seeing each other once more, Zanuck insisted they release only one movie, in case they separated, arguing 'Where are we then...? We gotta get our money.' Zanuck recorded a 276-minute cut; Tom Mankiewicz (and Crane, 2015, p. 69)⁴⁰ stated it lasted over 7 hours; Mankiewicz (1962k) described it closer to 300 minutes, but that Zanuck saw a 288-minute cut.⁴¹ At the intermission, Zanuck described what he had seen as 'beautifully written, beautifully acted, beautifully directed.' At 23:45, after a 90-minute dinner without discussing the film, they ran the 'highly emotional' and 'dramatic second half,' finishing at 02:15. Zanuck repeated 'beautifully written, beautifully acted, beautifully directed and staged,' but was disappointed by the battle of Actium shots. Mankiewicz explained they were shot during what 'we called the big squeeze' and agreed 'something should be done about it.' They would meet the next day and run the film the next. Tom Mankiewicz quoted Zanuck saying: 'That Antony's a weak man. If any woman did that to me, I'd kick her right in the balls.' Mankiewicz replied, 'The picture's not about you, Darryl.' Zanuck's reaction to Antony was telling.

Meeting a former Figaro publicist,⁴² Cronyn⁴³ (1991, p. 328, 331, 343-344)⁴⁴ heard Mankiewicz declare 'Zanuck just saw the picture and he thinks it's terrific.' Then an assistant explained Zanuck could not see Mankiewicz. Zanuck expected not to 'have to do anything more than walk in and see the picture. But when Mankiewicz brought me his first cut and I looked at the film I was shocked.' Mankiewicz maintained Zanuck saw a 'cut for length only,' it was not his final cut, so had not prepared 'all of the out-takes for dubbing, because loops could be easily

⁴⁰ See also Geist, 1978, p. 328-329; Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:23:45; Cork and Van Eyssen, 2007a, 00:22:02; Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 134-155.

⁴¹ De Cuir recalled that at a later meeting about reshooting certain sequences 'Darryl kept intoning, in not too happy a voice, "Seven and a half hours!"'

⁴² Mike Mindlin.

⁴³ Cronyn (1991, p. 328, 331, 343-344) described Sosigenes as a good part in the script, but most of 'Old Sausage Knees ended up on the cutting-room floor,' his 10 months works was reduced to 5 minutes screen time.

⁴⁴ See also Geist, 1978, p. 328-330.

prepared.⁴⁵ On 15 October Mankiewicz continued dubbing and Zanuck (1962b)⁴⁶ sent notes, suggesting they should film everything the board had previously blocked. The next day Zanuck, Spencer, and Williams tried to re-cut *Cleopatra* in secret. Denying Mankiewicz permission to view the film, Zanuck excluded him.

Zanuck needed *Cleopatra* to be a success. In London on 17 October, launching *The Longest Day*, Zanuck told the press⁴⁷ Fox would 'lose \$25,000,000' that year, *The Longest Day* would only earn money the following May/June, then *Cleopatra* earnings would follow through in 1964 (*Variety*, 1962cc). Zanuck unveiled 9 independently produced films as part of Fox's recovery – including *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (Reed, 1965, Fox) and *The Sound of Music* (1965). On 20 October, having heard nothing from Zanuck, Mankiewicz requested an 'honest and unequivocal statement of where I stand in relation to *Cleopatra*' (Carter, 2008, Pp. 161). Mankiewicz (1962h) believed he had not 'finished editing the film as I conceived and directed it,' and wanted 'the opportunity to do so. Either that or be told to get out.'

Zanuck (1962c) had seen the film twice and its eliminated sequences and was still making notes. He had taken 'pains to not only study every line of dialogue from the screen, but also from the script,' to evaluate how to progress, and if needs be shoot 'several important retakes.' Highlighting that Mankiewicz had not quarrelled with him about the physical aspects of the film, Zanuck added 'had I been in on the project, as you say, "from its inception," we would not be facing the acute problems we face today.' Zanuck urged re-editing and reconstructing the 'undeveloped or only partially-developed elements,' entailing re-shooting some scenes and eliminating aspects Zanuck found confusing. Zanuck agreed to meet Mankiewicz when dubbing was complete, adding 'I, too, have a big stake in the final result and beyond that I have a responsibility as the Executive Head of this Corporation, which I cannot and will not ignore'. Zanuck doubted *Cleopatra's* success.

⁴⁵ Later, when one interviewer asked how Zanuck recut the picture, Mankiewicz responded: 'he re-chopped the picture,' adding 'I'm not sure I'm ready to talk about it even after all this time' (Dauth, 2008, p. 182).

⁴⁶ See also Stern, 2019, p. 335.

⁴⁷ His first in the UK since his appointment.

Zanuck thought the battle scenes amateurish and needed re-shooting, so was 'already examining every conceivable possibility,' having commissioned sketches for the shooting of miniatures. Zanuck thought the procession 'original and breath-taking,' setting a standard for the film so that other scenes gave the impression of being "'off stage or skimpy.'" The film's ridiculous opening was difficult to follow 'even after repeatedly reading the script.' Zanuck wanted to see the battlefield 'littered with dead as far as the eye can see. Riderless horses wander about in the background, as the line of prisoners goes by.'

Citing Rogell and Merman's accounts, Zanuck then blamed Mankiewicz. 'It serves no point in telling me that you were prevented from doing certain things throughout the picture that you wanted to do. I have read three independent day-by-day production reports. The "squeeze" came after you had spent more than \$30,000,000, and when there was very little money left to spend. You were not deprived by the "Administration" when it came to the Procession into Rome. It was not the fault of the "Administration" (Heaven knows I have no desire to vindicate them) that you wrote the script during production (or at least re-wrote it) You knew long in advance of the written and signed commitments with Liz and others. The production was moved to Rome on your recommendation. I am not going to ask you why the script was not completed prior to production, but it is only reasonable to point out that this caused you to shoot the major part of the picture in continuity. Important actors waited weeks and months before ever appearing, and then they were carried on and on endlessly before they reappeared.⁴⁸ This shooting in continuity... added production costs which do not appear "on the screen." Sets were built on overtime and then left idle for weeks and months. Some of the exteriors waited so long that they had to be repaired or reconstructed. Can this fairly and honestly be charged to "Administration?" These are production decisions, and in this case, they were not only vital but tragic.' Although not of Zanuck's making, he now sought to solve these problems.

Zanuck accepted Mankiewicz was not the official producer but argued 'in the history of motion pictures no one man has ever been given such authority.' Zanuck cited records

⁴⁸ Zanuck stated Taylor was called under 30% of the time; Burton had worked under a week in the first 17 weeks; McDowall worked only once in the first 4 months.

showing Mankiewicz made ‘every single decision and that your word was law.’ Fox denied Mankiewicz nothing, ‘until the last 3 or 4 weeks of the picture, when the treasury had begun to sag, and Moskowitz and the others arrived with the “ultimatum.”’ Zanuck argued that Skouras had some responsibility, yet was ‘in a desperate personal situation, but since he was not a picture-maker, and since... Levathes had no production knowledge, and since both... Merman and... Rogell were either powerless to act or useless, you were indisputably in the driver's seat.’ Stating he had no interest ‘in pin-pointing the blame on any individual,’ Zanuck argued Mankiewicz could not hold the ‘Administration’ responsible. Many sources already cited, disproved Zanuck’s conclusions.

Zanuck had nothing ‘but the highest praise for’ most of the Cleopatra/Caesar or Cleopatra/Antony scenes, reminding Mankiewicz he had said so during the screening. He still thought so ‘after running the film again and studying it,’ but quarrelled with ‘many minor incidents within the framework of these brilliant scenes, but I believe they can be handled editorially.’ He suggested additional episodes ‘to bridge the many bridges that the story has to cross, and particularly the bridge from the Caesar story to the Antony story.’ Zanuck criticised the imbalance in Antony’s rise to power, thinking him a ‘cardboard figure without anything but narration to indicate that he is ostensibly the “new Caesar.”’ Then, despite their 3 September exchange, arguing the lack of dubbing loops indicated Mankiewicz’ rough cut was his final edit, Zanuck gave Mankiewicz his requested ‘unequivocal statement... as bluntly as you have put it. On completion of the dubbing, your official services will be terminated. If you are available and willing, I will call upon you to screen the re-edited version of the film. After you have done so, I will meet with you and go over it reel by reel and debate any points of difference that may arise. I will carefully consider any and all suggestions or objections that you may have to anything that has been done with which you disagree. I mean this sincerely and am prepared to take time to sit down with you reel by reel when the next version is ready. On the matter of re-takes or additional scenes involving principal actors, I will make every effort to obtain your services, if you are available.’ Geagley⁴⁹ argued *Cleopatra* needed Zanuck to rescue what Mankiewicz did not think needed rescuing (Zacky, Burns, and Bider,

⁴⁹ Geagley’s PhD was about *Cleopatra*, but it appears on no research database, and when Geagley was contacted, he did not reply.

2001, 1:24:12). The truth was more complex, Zanuck did not recognise Antony's hamartia: but determined to save Fox, Zanuck excluded Mankiewicz.

On 22 October, still dubbing in Paris, Mankiewicz received Zanuck's letter (Geist, 1978, p. 330). Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 180) later noted Zanuck once blamed 'committee mismanagement' for *Cleopatra's* high cost, but as Fox president now blamed Mankiewicz. Mankiewicz (1962i) refuted every point, adding: 'I am, I suppose, an old whore on this beat, Darryl, and it takes quite a bit to shock me . . . but never could I imagine the phantasmagoria of frantic lies and frenzied phony buck-passing... [in] your letter!' The next day, Zanuck announced: 'In exchange for top compensation and a considerable expense account, Mr Joseph Mankiewicz has for two years spent his time, talent and \$35,000,000 of Twentieth Century-Fox's shareholders' money to direct and complete the first cut of the film. He has earned a well-deserved rest' (Mosley, 1985, p. 471-472). Tom Mankiewicz (and Crane, 2015, p. 69) said his father refused to leave his 'hard work and sweat on the cutting room floor, especially since... it contained all of the best character scenes that truly fleshed out the principal roles.' Mankiewicz maintained Zanuck's insistence on a 240-minute film destroyed the real picture, with Burton suffering most because Zanuck 'didn't understand' Antony, therefore nobody has ever seen Burton's performance (Ferris, 1981, p. 122).⁵⁰ Zanuck and Mankiewicz had argued before, but this was deeply personal.

Taylor dubbed in Paris 23 to 26 October. Burton still publicly denied he was leaving *Sybil* yet stayed with Taylor at Paris's Lancaster Hotel. While there, film producer Anatole De Grunwald⁵¹ offered him the lead in *The V.I.P.s* (1963, Warners), with Loren co-starring. Taylor joked 'Why don't I do it too? Let Sophia stay in Rome!' Although uninsurable, de Grunwald signed her, meaning Taylor's next film would be for MGM, her old studio. Stating 'it may not be the best picture in the world,' Taylor accurately argued 'it will make a fortune.'⁵² Unlike

⁵⁰ Mankiewicz determined to regain his 'usurped right to finish my work, and hopefully, to prevent *Cleopatra* from becoming 'The Longest Night' (Geist, 1978, p. 330).

⁵¹ De Grunwald had produced Burton's first film, *The Last Days of Dolwyn* (Williams, 1948, De Grunwald Productions).

⁵² It earned \$15,000,000 world-wide. Frosch registered Taylor's new Bermuda-based company, Taylor Productions Inc. and for that company to be legally compliant, Taylor had to be actively involved in film's

Zanuck, MGM knew a Taylor-Burton film, soon after *Cleopatra*, would sell. For Taylor it was ‘an excuse to be together’ (Bragg, 1989, p. 225, 235).⁵³ However, on 25 October, Mankiewicz found Taylor and Burton distant, then discovered Zanuck had shown parts of his letter to them so that it implied Mankiewicz had criticised them. Mankiewicz showed Frings the entire letter (Stern, 2019, p. 337) and Taylor and Burton relaxed. At a 26 October press conference, announcing Levathes’ departure, Zanuck accused Mankiewicz of demanding complete control of *Cleopatra*, which Zanuck had refused, but ‘left the door open—wide open—and offered to meet with him at any time and debate the points of difference’ (Geist, 1978, p. 331-332).

Taylor declared Mankiewicz’ treatment ‘disgraceful, degrading, particularly humiliating.... Mr. Mankiewicz took *Cleopatra* over when it was nothing—when it was rubbish—and he made something out of it. He certainly should have been given the chance to cut it. It is appalling’ (Sheppard, 1975, p. 323). Burton added ‘Mr. Mankiewicz might have made the first really good epic film.’ Zanuck revealed Taylor had earned twice \$1,000,000 and would earn more through the terms of her deal (Bret, 2011, p. 159),⁵⁴ so Mankiewicz defended Taylor. ‘*Cleopatra* was conceived in emergency, shot in hysteria and wound up in blind panic, but any effort to saddle blame on Miss Taylor is wrong . . . she may have had problems of illness and emotional problems, but she didn’t cost Twentieth any \$35,000,000’ (Parker, 1989, p. 215).

In *The New York Herald Tribune*, Hyams printed a cable from Billy Wilder to Zanuck, describing the ‘wave of disgust [that] has swept over this town since the brutal and callous dismissal of people, even though they hold perfectly legal contracts. The “let them sue” attitude is reprehensible. No self-respecting picture-maker would ever want to work for your company. The sooner the bulldozers raze your studio, the better it will be for the industry.’ Wyler commented: ‘speaking as a fellow director – not as a member of the Fox board – I was sorry to see... Zanuck take the picture away from Mankiewicz’ (Geist, 1978, p. 331). Zanuck reasoned Mankiewicz had ‘absolutely no legal ground,’ by not bringing the loops, he had delivered his

production, so Frosch arranged for Taylor Productions to have joint billing with MGM as producer (Rubython, 2011, p. 482).

⁵³ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 322; Alpert, 1987, p. 120; Jenkins, 1988, p. 102-103; Wyke, 1997, p. 106-107; Kashner and Schoenberger, 2011, p. 43-44; Rubython, 2011, p. 479-482; Cashmore, 2016, p. 167.

⁵⁴ When she saw Fox’s breakdown of her costs, Taylor noted ‘they said I ate 12 chickens and 40 pounds of bacon every day for breakfast. What?’ (Carter, 2008, p. 145).

first cut print on 13 October. Calculating a final \$40,000,000 cost, Zanuck ruled out Taylor doing any re-shoots, but would require Harrison and Burton (*Variety*, 1962b), then confirmed the WGA's ruling that Mankiewicz must share the writing credit with MacDougall and Buchman (*Variety*, 1962a). Zanuck attacked Mankiewicz on every level.

Mankiewicz retaliated. *Cleopatra* was 'in some ways the most pivotal film Dad ever made—it changed his professional life, and not necessarily for the better. It became a burr under his creative saddle and an unpleasant memory from which he never really recovered' (Mankiewicz and Crane, 2015, p. 60). At 11:15, on 30 October,⁵⁵ Mankiewicz (1962j)⁵⁶ held his own press conference. He denied planning to sue Zanuck or Fox for breach of contract, this was for him a moral principle. 'To be frank, I'm much too old a cotton picker at picking that gold cotton out there in those gold plantations. I know that "old mares" is going to do what he wants with the cotton at the end.' Zanuck had read only a transcript of the dialogue, not the script; Mankiewicz questioned Zanuck's motivation for mentioning his financial remuneration; not taking the dubbing loops to Paris was a cost-saving effort; Mankiewicz had consistently referred to his first edit as a tentative cut. Mankiewicz questioned Zanuck's 'unfathomable comments about bridges between scenes' and thought the death of Caesar was the most natural intermission point 'I think has ever existed in the theatre.'

Fox could terminate Mankiewicz' contract, but he flatly refuted having the control over the film Zanuck had described: 'As far as I can remember there are only three demands I made on the entire film. One was for Richard Burton; one was for Rex Harrison; and the third was the time to complete the script before we started to shoot and this last one was not granted.' Mankiewicz restated it would have been 'infinitely cheaper' to keep Taylor on salary to write the script and properly prepare the film. He denied shooting in continuity, noting he had first tried to shoot the procession. Mankiewicz argued the chain of command had no beginning or end and he made 'it crystal clear... I have never demanded control. I know better than to demand control. All I wanted was to be consulted about the changes he intended to make in

⁵⁵ At his home on 129, East 71st street New York. Aided by Canby from *Variety*, reporters from *The Wall Street Journal*, *Variety*, *Time Magazine*, *The New York Herald Tribune*, and *The New York Times* attended (Stern, 2019, p. 339).

⁵⁶ See also Mankiewicz 1962k; Geist, 1978, p. 332-333.

the film. I wanted an opportunity to present my own ideas on the film.’ He counterargued Zanuck’s every accusation.

Thinking the chances of Zanuck asking him to cut the film, were ‘about as good as having Castro invite us down to the Havana Hilton pool for a swim,’ Mankiewicz rounded on Zanuck. Asked if he would direct Zanuck’s suggested additional scenes, he thought it depended on the scenes and ‘what it was he wanted me to shoot.’ Naming McDowall and Cronyn in particular, Mankiewicz hoped Zanuck would preserve the quality of the work of all the main cast. Zanuck’s refusal to let Wanger see the cut was ‘very vindictive and unpleasant.’

On 31 October, Canby (1962a) contended the bitterness of Mankiewicz’ dismissal gave independent directors reason to pause before agreeing to work with Zanuck. Mankiewicz also wrote to SDG⁵⁷ president, George Sidney, so Zanuck (1962d) responded on 7 November, blaming irresponsible statements in the press for the ‘alleged’ termination. Zanuck noted Mankiewicz had not referred to the door Zanuck left open. Accusing Wilder of running ‘true to form,’ Zanuck added ‘the bulldozers will not “raze the Studio” or plow it under, until I have exhausted every possible effort to restore the state of productive activity it once enjoyed.’ Restating Mankiewicz ‘deliberately provoked this actually non-existent “conflict” for the purpose of shifting any future “blame” to me,’ Zanuck added: ‘If the film justifies its cost and is an enormous success then Mr. Mankiewicz as the director gets his full share of the credit. However, should the film not justify its unparalleled cost, then “Mr. Zanuck ruined it”’ (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 134-155).

Appearing on *What’s My Line* (Stern, 2019, p. 339), on 18 November, Mankiewicz was asked ‘How long were you on *Cleopatra*? Was it two years?’ He replied ‘I don’t think I have ever been on anything else. I can’t remember when I wasn’t on *Cleopatra*, or *Cleopatra* wasn’t on me.’ The argument was public and personal.

Throughout this, Zanuck still drove *Cleopatra*’s exploitation. On 28 November, *Variety* (1962mm) reported *Cleopatra* would open the following June in 100 cities throughout the U.S.

⁵⁷ Screen Directors’ Guild

and Canada on a hard-ticket roadshow. Overseas releases would follow in October in 125 cities. Burton and Harrison would join the January and February shooting schedule, for what Zanuck emphasised were not retakes, but scenes Fox's previous administration had not authorised. Spencer, McLean, and Williams were editing the film and music recording would start in January. Zanuck said nothing of re-instating Mankiewicz (Heymann, 1995, p. 253), but Matthews explained that by the end of November, they were 'crawling back to have him come and do the rest' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:25:55). In December, Rogell told Skouras: 'I had no idea that you would turn over to [Mankiewicz] all the business management of the unit, and that's exactly what happened. Joe engaged Johnston, Johnston engaged Magli, and they ran it. Joe believed in [them], but they let him down. We, management, are to blame for that, not Mankiewicz!' Skouras denied this until 1963 (Bernstein, 1994, p. 366-367). Then Fox fired Rogell.

On 6 December, Taylor and Burton booked into the Dorchester's adjoining Terrace and Harlequin suites (Rubython, 2011, p. 482-483) prior to filming *The V.I.P.s* (1963).⁵⁸ The next day, as Mankiewicz and Matthews planned their wedding, *The New York Times* announced he would probably re-join *Cleopatra* following a recent 'extremely constructive' conference with Zanuck (Geist, 1978, p. 335).⁵⁹ Mankiewicz (1962m)⁶⁰ had agreed to write new scenes and work 'hand in hand' with Zanuck, but soon realised Zanuck's cuts removed Antony's weakness. The year ended, marking Hollywood's all-time production low of only 138 films, a 26% fall from 1961 (*Variety*, 1962v).⁶¹ On 15 December, Wanger agreed to negotiate or sell all interests in *Cleopatra* for no less than \$350,000 (Bener, 1962b). *Cleopatra* was partially back on track.

⁵⁸ Insurers had quoted a \$2,500,000 premium to cover *The V.I.P.s* (1963) \$4,000,000 budget, but MGM gambled and did not insure Taylor.

⁵⁹ DeCuir said Zanuck was 'against bringing Joe back, but I pleaded, "It's joe's picture. It's his material. There isn't a writer-director in Hollywood who can wade into the complex mess and do that patchwork"' (Geist, 1978, p. 335), but Zanuck wanted another director, until Wyler heard, and threatened to resign (Mankiewicz and Crane, 2015, p. 69).

⁶⁰ See also Gussow, 1971, p. 257.

⁶¹ Fox was largely responsible, but Columbia reduced its output and MGM only managed 22 films (*Variety*, 1962v).

In London, Austin (2020) thought Burton and Taylor ‘different people. We used to sit in the back of that Rolls Royce in the airport waiting to do the shot pulling up at the entrance. And we’d sing cockney songs.... They were both still drinking badly.’ On 24 December, Taylor left London for Kent, while Burton spent Christmas with his family⁶² at their Hampstead home (Rubython, 2011, p. 483). Sybil still believed he would never leave her (Amburn, 2011, p. 203).

On 26 December, *Variety* confirmed Mankiewicz’ reconciliation with Zanuck. Honeymooning in the Caribbean (Geist, 1978, p. 335) Mankiewicz (1962l) mapped out a tentative shooting schedule. Fox lost \$33,374,000 in 1962 (*Variety*, 1962jj). As 1963 began, Hollywood no longer made its own product, it hired out studios to television or independent production companies. The ‘signature aesthetic or philosophy’ of the golden age – where studios produced their own films in their own house-style – had gone, so the idea of the ‘big studio head’ with its focus on a ‘central patriarchal force of control’ transformed into ‘the corporate conglomerate or the independent production company’ (Gomery 2008, p. 254). Wasserman used independent productions like *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Mulligan, 1962 Pakula-Mulligan) or *The Birds* (Hitchcock, 1963, Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions) to revive Universal’s prestige. Wasserman’s conglomerate now led Hollywood’s increase from 140 features in 1963 to 230 by 1973 (Monaco, 2003, p. 32). Zanuck belonged to another era.

JANUARY-JUNE 1963

In early 1963, Weiss (Brodsky and, 1963, p. 175) became Vice-President in Charge of Advertising and Publicity for Kubrick’s Polaris Productions. Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 181) thought *The V.I.P.s* (1963), ‘a modest-budget film’ MGM was ‘rushing to completion to capitalize’ on the Taylor-Burton relationship. Yet Sybil would appear on set one day and Taylor the next, both giving Burton conflicting advice. Depressed, Burton began drinking heavily (Walker, 1990, p. 260).⁶³ On 7 January, Ferguson (1963a) waived Fox’s objection to Wanger selling his *Cleopatra* rights. On 9 January, honeymooning in the Bahamas, Mankiewicz

⁶² Sybil, the children, Ifor and Gwen.

⁶³ See also Kelly, 1981, p. 168; Ferris, 1984, p. 127; Morley, 1989, p. 135; Spoto, 1995, p. 197, 212.

(1963a)⁶⁴ scripted retakes and additional scenes. Fox predicted a \$35,000,000 box-office from advance *Cleopatra* sales alone, so Skouras told the Bank of America's Vice-President it would be 'the greatest of hits.... even beyond our expectations:' Skouras thought \$75,000,000-\$100,000,000 overall (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 155). Although Taylor and Burton's 'almost daily [media] space grab' had temporarily diminished, *Variety* (1963cc) described 'perhaps the greatest advance penetration... for any motion picture,' speculating that should *Cleopatra* 'hit the jackpot,' Zanuck might 'achieve a miracle and turn the company around.' However, it drew comparison with MGM's \$20,000,000 *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962) budget, concluding Wall Street disliked 'such costly commitments.' Wall Street disliked grand and foolish pictures of which *The Fall of The Roman Empire* (1964), which began shooting in Ultra-Panavision and Technicolor on 16 January⁶⁵ (McIntosh, Mizrahi and Rodriguez, 1993d, 0:07:28, 0:11:50, 0:18:37), was an example.

As Lehman and Richard Zanuck met Zanuck in New York to discuss *The Sound of Music* (1965) (Matessino, 1994b, p. 4), *The Longest Day's* box-office domination had doubled original expectations (*Variety*, 1963uu). For *Cleopatra*, Poe announced The Rivoli Theatre had presented Fox with a cheque⁶⁶ for 'the highest sum of money ever paid in the history of the entire entertainment business for any attraction to be exhibited by any means.'⁶⁷ ' On 19 January, Burton agreed to shoot extra scenes (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 199). Skouras later remarked 'Never before in history has any picture been handled so dramatically from the distribution point of view. Records were broken in publicity and there has been tremendous word-of-mouth.' Yet on 30 January, McIntyre (1963) told Fergusson a *Cleopatra* soundtrack album was 'beyond the stage of speculation,' stating Fox should advise its legal team if it did

⁶⁴ See also Stern, 2019, p. 341.

⁶⁵ This was at the Bronston Studios in Spain's Sierra Guadarrama Mountains. The shoot would last 143 days and had a \$16,000,000 budget (Richards, 2008, p. 89). Its forum set outsized DeCuir's, which the designers had built to be shot from every angle, even with thousands of extras, they had to spread out to 'fill' the square. The interiors were so well-finished, the Encyclopaedia Britannica used them to shoot a history series about Roman life (McIntosh, Mizrahi and Rodriguez, 1993d, 0:07:28, 0:11:50, 0:18:37).

⁶⁶ The \$1,250,000 cheque continued a trend initiated by the Walter Reed theatres for their access to *Spartacus* (1960).

⁶⁷ On 30 January, *Variety* (1963a) detailed the Rivoli's 2616 enquiries at the box-office, averaging 218 people a day.

not wish to distribute such an album. The idea of selling *Cleopatra's* soundtrack – as Todd had done with *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956) – had barely occurred to Fox.⁶⁸

Cleopatra was incomplete. On 6 February, as *The V.I.P.s* (1963) completed filming (Ferris, 1984, p. 42),⁶⁹ Richard Zanuck announced Fox was returning to production (Harris, 1990, p. 113). Mankiewicz (1963b) continued to rewrite scenes to shorten *Cleopatra* as he and Zanuck (1963) had discussed; one required Taylor for linking shots.⁷⁰ On 7 February, Fox prepared to open *The Longest Day* in 80 additional cinemas over the next month, before its grind release in June (*Variety*, 1963u). *Cleopatra* advances had reached \$8,350,000 (Karney, 2005). The next day was the Burtons' 14th wedding anniversary, they went for dinner and to the theatre (Walker, 1990, p. 261). Burton soon asked for a divorce. Sybil returned to Switzerland with the children (Alpert, 1987, p. 122) and Burton ascribed his inability to film during these weeks to an attack at Paddington Station.⁷¹ More likely Taylor nursed Burton's nervous breakdown (Munn, 2008, p. 141), during which time he was unable to travel to Spain. Mankiewicz departed for Spain on 9 February to prepare for shooting. Zanuck followed, stopping briefly in Paris (*Variety*, 1963ss).

Recounting the Zanuck-Mankiewicz rapprochement, *Variety* (1963rr) observed Wanger had bought the film rights for a 'bargain basement price of \$50,000... now estimated to be worth at least 10 times that much.' He had maintained his production office, including a secretary, at the Fox studio, until the previous week. However, Wanger was amazed at Fox not consulting

⁶⁸ On 7 February, Ferguson (1963b) replied to McIntyre who was at a 'little bit of a loss' about the idea of a soundtrack album, but reasoned that Fox had employed North and the musicians, therefore Fox owned the rights, unless the contract gave WALWA and MCL any rights, which Fergusson thought Wanger and Taylor would argued it did. Fergusson also noted the album would add to the film's gross receipts which under the agreement meant WALWA and MCL would take a cut of the income.

⁶⁹ Taylor hardly missed a day's filming (Cottrell and Cashin, 1974, p. 289-290). Asquith thought her 'a serious actress.... Whenever she walked onto the set, she knew exactly the point of the scene. She gets into the mood immediately when she steps in front of the cameras.... I have seldom known her to fluff a line.' Hers was a 'natural, instinctive acting talent... [with] an extraordinary sense of rhythm... the timing of her pauses, her movements, even her facial expressions are instinctively right (Bragg, 1989, p. 255). Rutherford thought Taylor 'a much-misunderstood girl whose only fault was that she loved [Burton] too deeply,' even Jacqueline Kennedy asked Hollywood publicist Warren Cowan if he thought Taylor would marry Burton?

⁷⁰ Fox eventually paid her \$50,000 for 30 seconds' reactions.

⁷¹ Apparently, after returning from seeing an international rugby match in Wales, a gang of youths attacked him for no apparent reason, leaving him badly cut around the eye. In 1978, Burton said it was 'a street fight', in which 'they fractured my spine' (Bragg, 1989, p. 234-235; Rubython, 2011, p. 483-484).

him on the preparation of the film's advertising campaign, which focused on Taylor and Burton. Arguing *Cleopatra* had 3 equally important stars, Wanger speculated that Fox had reworked Harrison's contractual arrangements. Zanuck had not sought Wanger's input, who hoped for a 'dignified, artistic and inspirational' picture (Canby. 1963b). Discussing the 2-film idea, *Variety* (1963qq) concluded it had 'never got anywhere,' but Wanger wished Zanuck had considered the idea more seriously, reasoning 2 films halved the negative cost. Wanger maintained *Cleopatra* would be the first to surpass a \$100,000,000 gross rental.

Zanuck had blamed Mankiewicz for *Cleopatra's* excess, on 15 February Skouras blamed Wanger. That day, with Burton unavailable,⁷² Mankiewicz shot the scene where Caesar dispatches Rufio and Candidus⁷³ to relay his victory to Antony (Geist, 1978, p. 336-337).⁷⁴ Skouras maintained *Cleopatra* was 'probably the most expensive picture of all times and I think this is going to be the greatest picture that was ever produced. I was so happy when Mr. Zanuck became president and associated himself with *Cleopatra*. You can imagine the cost had really plagued me, and I had to accept the responsibility.... I could not say to the other people it was not my fault. Mr. Zanuck, to my delight, agreed with both Joe Mankiewicz and myself, that the battles of Pharsalia and Philippi should be photographed. Wanger did not favour it. They tried to interfere when the cost of the picture got high, but I thought the battle of Pharsalia was so vital and important. You have to know Walter Wanger - if you know him, then you cannot put credulance [sic] in his statements (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 198-199, 201).

Even though Skouras had been ill during the latter stages of the Italian shoot, these comments indicate that he was already blaming Wanger for any potential failure. On 19 February, in Times Square, Fox erected a widescreen-shaped poster showing Taylor half-reclining⁷⁵ with Burton standing behind her, but no Harrison. The aim was 'understated, underscored rather

⁷² Long shots of him on horseback were John Sullivan his stunt double (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:10:16 and 1:13:51).

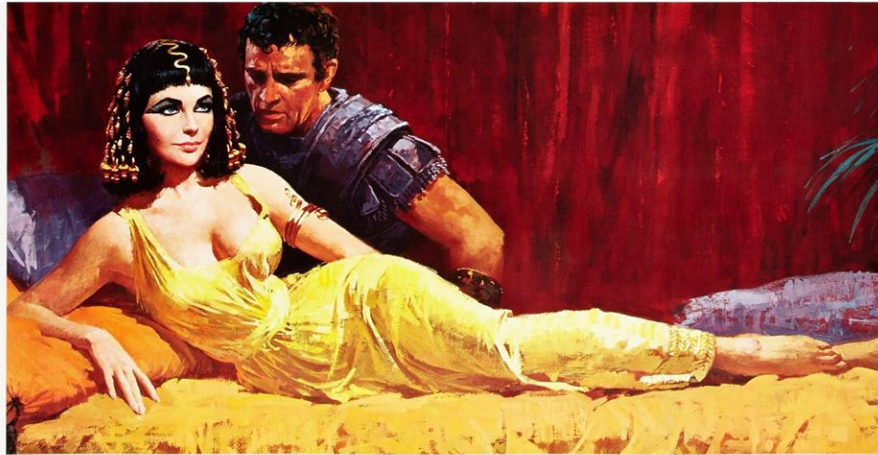
⁷³ A hastily added character played by Andrew Folds in relatively few scenes.

⁷⁴ Mankiewicz' original idea for the Battle of Pharsalia scene was of a camera moving with a shepherd who drives his flock over a verdant hill and plunges into the carnage of the Pharsalia battlefield. He did not film this. Stevens released Landau and McDowall from *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) for the re-shoots.

⁷⁵ The body was Lois Bennett's, a photographer's model who earned \$35 for one hour's work (Solomon, 2001, p. 72).

than over-gimmicked’ so no names or titles, just the release date (Cashmore, 2016, p. 150).⁷⁶ This error was not Wanger’s. Omitting Harrison revealed Fox’s intention to use the affair to ‘sell’ *Cleopatra*.

Figure 8.2



Howard Terpning’s original poster design for *Cleopatra*, in which Harrison does not appear (Alamy). This was the image raised in Times Square and to which Harrison’s solicitors objected.

On 27 February, Rogell sued Fox for breach of contract and for \$429,000 due under terms of his contract, which he argued still had 3-years to run (*Variety*, 1963ddd). The next day, Burton celebrated Taylor’s 31st birthday (Walker, 1990, p. 264). As Harrison finished work (20th Century Fox 1962a), Mankiewicz asked if he had a ‘likeness clause’ in his contract, explaining that Fox was capitalising on ‘all the scandal-mongering about Burton and Taylor... by playing up the romance.’ He advised Harrison to look at his contract (Garland, 1998, p. 42-43). On 1 March, Frosch (1963) wrote to Fox outlining the breach: ‘We are instructed to take immediate legal steps to effectuate the removal of any advertising that is not in conformity with the terms of the contract... and to seek financial redress for the damage incurred.’ Fox had not renegotiated with Harrison.

With Burton’s close-up scenes shot at Pinewood, *Cleopatra* finally wrapped on Sunday 3 March (Harrison, 1990, p. 183).⁷⁷ Zanuck supervised as Mankiewicz edited 96 hours of film

⁷⁶ See also Solomon, 2001, p. 72; Lev, 2013, p. 256.

(Carter, 2008, p. 162):⁷⁸ as Austin (2020) argued, ‘there was so much stuff that was never in the movie and that has never seen the light of day.’ Mankiewicz restored scenes of Sosigenes tutoring Cleopatra, but cut Rufio and Octavian scenes drastically, therefore their commentary on the central characters (Geist, 1978, p. 336). Mankiewicz called Landau to say his death scene was cut and his crying scene reduced,⁷⁹ preventing Landau receiving an Oscar nomination. Landau maintained Antony was hurt most by the cutting. His sense of self-destruction was gone: ‘Richard’s performance was severely damaged by those cuts because the progressions were not there’ (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:23:32, 0:26:47). Mankiewicz dismantled his vision.

Fox focused on *Cleopatra*’s premiere and release. On 6 March, Ferguson argued Fox had not breached Harrison’s contract because it stated, ‘over-all advertising campaign,’ not individual advertisements, but agreed to discuss with New York (Variety, 1963bb). On 15 March, Zanuck declared Fox officially open and ‘with everyone’s help it will continue.’ Anticipating *Cleopatra* would continue the trend of the \$11,500,000 in guarantees from 18 theatres, Zanuck thought Skouras’ £100,000,000 prediction was ‘purely guesswork, but ... I wouldn’t say this is an impossible figure’ (Variety, 1963v).

Zanuck also announced Wyler had resigned from the Fox board to direct *The Sound of Music* (1965) (Variety, 1963z).⁸⁰ Variety (1963w) announced there would be no *Cleopatra* press showings prior to its 12 June premiere, and that Fox would add Harrison’s likeness to Howard Terpning’s billboard painting (Variety, 1963x).⁸¹ Harrison thought it ‘an ignominious farcical business even though I got my “rights” in the end. I disliked the fact that I had literally to fight

⁷⁷ Folds later shot one final scene in Malibu, when they realised they needed it (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:10:16 and 1:13:51).

⁷⁸ See also Rothman, 2011, 0:03:53.

⁷⁹ Mankiewicz told him: ‘I have enough footage here to make another movie called The Further Adventures of Rufio and Octavian.’ Talk had been that Landau would earn an Oscar nomination, but the cuts prevented that (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:23:32, 0:26:47).

⁸⁰ See also Variety, 1963y.

⁸¹ Brown recalled: ‘we had to repaint the sign and paint Rex in there’ (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:35:55), Taylor commented: ‘I suppose he sort of floats above us, like a Chagall figure. I really think that Walter Wanger and Joe Mankiewicz should be included to float above him. Somewhere there should be Freud looking down at us all’ (Solomon, 2001, p. 72).

for a footing in what was a three-handed film' (Wapshott, 1991, p. 240-241). In truth, Taylor and Burton still prevailed in the public mind.



Figure 8.3

This was Terping's revised poster design for *Cleopatra*, with Harrison included (Alamy).

Wanger (and Hyams, 1963, p. 2-5) completed his book on 22 March. Focusing on what a star brings to a movie other than a great box-office, he concluded 'you get what you pay for: an extraordinary talent who brings something to a movie in terms of experience and intelligence that you cannot get otherwise – if you treat them properly.' On 26 March, Seven Arts (1963) terminated its 31 December employment agreement with Wanger, citing his reputation for extravagance. Wounded, Wanger sued Fox for \$500,000 damages to his reputation, \$104,000 in back salary and \$60,000 in job-hunting expenses, then a second multi-million-dollar libel suit against Fox and Earl Wilson for leaking and publishing Wanger's firing from *Cleopatra*.

Bautzer thought that although weak, the libel action would restore Wanger's name when the jury heard the shocking revelations about Fox (Bernstein, 1994, p. 375). The next day, *Cleopatra's* cash advances saw Fox shares increase to \$29. Skouras argued 'nothing like this has ever happened before in the history of motion pictures. Therefore, there is no doubt in my mind that our goal will be reached and perhaps even surpassed' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 156).⁸² Wanger was forgotten.

⁸² See also Karney, 2005.

On 3 April, through his lawyer, Abraham L. Pomerantz, Skouras told Bantam Books Inc. Wanger's book was 'replete with crass misstatements which reflect on Mr. Skouras' character, integrity and executive ability.' Bantam were to cease and desist and recall all copies, or risk liable action (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 158). The next day, noted for her 'toughness,' Crist – already making regular television appearances – became *The New York Herald Tribune's* new film critic (*Variety*, 1963c). With Burton instructing Frosch to deposit \$1,000,000 into Sybil's Swiss bank account and pay her \$500,000 a year for the next 10 years (Christopher, 2000, p. 89-90), Sybil returned to Celigny, refusing to discuss Burton publicly. However, she did later describe this as her lowest point, that she knew 'I was really in trouble. It was awful' (Alpert, 1987, p. 113, 122-123). If she did try to commit suicide, as later suggested, it was then.⁸³

On 8 April, having returned to the Dorchester while Burton filmed *Becket* (Glenville, 1964, Wallis-Hazen) (Rubythorn, 2011, p. 502), Taylor's relationship with Burton was unequivocal. *The Longest Day* failed to win the Best Picture Oscar on 16 April: Zanuck blamed disaffected Fox ex-employees for the loss (Lev, 2013, p. 252-253). However, by 23 April, although Fox had changed the Terpinng poster, Columbine productions Ltd and Harrison – 'an actor of international standing and repute and one of the world's most distinguished motion picture filmstars' – sued Fox. Fox had agreed Harrison's likeness would be equivalent to Burton's, but had 'failed and refused, and continued to fail and refuse, to use Harrison's likeness in a manner equivalent to the use of the likeness of Burton.' The suit cited not only the Terpinng poster, but a full-page advertisement in 7 April's *Sunday New York Times* (Rosenthal, 1963).⁸⁴ The Taylor-Burton relationship still predominated Fox's campaign.

On 25 April Fox's annual report detailed Zanuck's \$3,621,000 reorganisation costs, partially accounting for 1962's \$39,796,094 net loss. The subsequent \$33,374,000 write-off included \$1,802,000 for *Something's Got to Give*, but Zanuck's letter to stockholders detailed Fox's substantial progress in reversing the situation (*Variety*, 1963yyy). On 26 April, *Esquire's* Clay

⁸³ Burton said she took 'too many pills,' but Mike Nichols recalled 'two red razor-blade scars on her left wrist' (Bragg, 1989, p. 208).

⁸⁴ Mankiewicz kept a copy of a *Sunday News* advert for the Rivoli theatre, which also failed to show Harrison, Fox files also contain the same advert.

Felker advised Brodsky to publish his personal exchanges with Weiss. Despite Fox filing a \$3,000,000 lawsuit against Wanger, Doubleday agreed to do so. Zanuck argued Brodsky and Weiss ‘ridiculed and crucified everything concerning *Cleopatra* and particularly the home office administration.’ Mankiewicz emerged ‘as the great villain, outside the Fox personnel and that they treated Wanger sympathetically,’ with whom Zanuck speculated Brodsky and Weiss had conceived their book (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 1:21:16, 1:22:20).⁸⁵ Never had a book about a film been released before its premiere, certainly not two. Lower and Palmer (2001, p. 111) argued these, and the gossip published about *Cleopatra*, confused the ‘excesses of Fox’s production company ... with the sexual excesses of Taylor and, in turn, with that of *Cleopatra*.’ Needing *Cleopatra* to succeed, any publicity outweighed Skouras or Zanuck’s personal discomfort.

Attacks and counterattacks continued as North scored the film. Intensive research⁸⁶ informed the 210-minute score, for which North received the first Annual Composers and Lyricists Guild Award and an Oscar nomination⁸⁷ (Henderson, 2009, p. 57, 64-67, 158).⁸⁸ On 1 May, maintaining *Cleopatra*’s costs included the \$9,000,000 UK loss (Lev, 2013, p. 255-256), Mankiewicz told *Newsweek* that Taylor’s emotional upsets ‘did not cost us that much money.... To blame... Taylor for the cost of *Cleopatra* is like blaming the French Revolution on a shortage of cake’ (Sheppard, 1975, p. 327).

On 15 May, arguing Wanger’s screen credit was incorrect, his attorneys filed an injunction against the film’s premiere (Bernstein, 1994, p. 380-381).⁸⁹ By 17 May, with *Cleopatra* already among the year’s top 10 films, *Variety* (1963tt) estimated that Taylor’s 10% profit deal would make her first payment around \$785,000. On 21 May, a highly cropped shot of Taylor’s nude scene appeared on the cover of *Life*, selling out immediately. The article quoted Taylor saying: ‘I have paid and Richard has paid through both of our hearts and our guts. Our brains have

⁸⁵ See also Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 156-157.

⁸⁶ He had begun this approach with *Spartacus* (1960) and continued it with *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965).

⁸⁷ Beyond the minor key pomp of the procession scene, the score weaves themes for the three lead characters together, peaking at the end of the film, however the Caesar and Cleopatra love theme is the film’s lyrical core, but it is not conventionally lyrical because North wanted to capture Cleopatra’s ambition. North used a range of historical instruments, but also jazz instruments to add to the score’s exoticism.

⁸⁸ See also Geist, 1978, P. 338-339; Cyrino, 2005, p. 141-143.

⁸⁹ See also Guild, 1970, p. 203.

bled.... I have learned that there's no deodorant like success' (Mann, 2009, p. 325). At that day's stockholders' meeting, Zanuck 'strode onto the stage to very warming applause' to conduct a business-like 2-hour meeting with wit and eloquence. The first quarter had made a profit, but there was still the cost of *Cleopatra*. If it made \$62,000,000 world-wide Taylor would earn an estimated \$7,125,000 (Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 174-175).⁹⁰

Nothing dented *Cleopatra's* selling power. On 27 May, Skouras learned that excerpts from Brodsky and Weiss's (1963) book would appear in *Esquire*, while June 1's *Saturday Evening Post* would print excerpts from Wanger's. Skouras maintained Brodsky or Weiss (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 157, 192) knew nothing... 'they were completely ignorant'. They maintained their reportage was 'their personal, out-of-office and after-hours correspondence.' Royster (2003, p. 111) argued both books – much copied since – were 'sophisticated engines of Hollywood publicity' that cemented *Cleopatra's* celebrity and increased its box-office power.⁹¹ *Cleopatra's* publicity, planned and unplanned, was unparalleled.

The 4.5-kilogram publicity kit proclaimed: 'The Entertainment of a Lifetime' and 'The Film the Whole World Is Waiting to See.' Mirroring 1934, the 'Cleopatra look' revived bias-cut styles. Sassoon's 1963 Spring look introduced the geometric haircut: Revlon introduced gold and turquoise eyeshadow. 'Sphinx Eyes,' snake rings, and arm cuffs were soon fashionable, but such merchandising fell short of Zanuck's expectations. Still, *Cleopatra* reached \$20,000,000 pre-sales by June, although its costs were now \$43,000,000 (Lev, 2013, p. 256).⁹² *Cleopatra* predominated the openly hostile 5 June *My Fair Lady* (1964) press conference.⁹³ One interviewer asked Harrison if 'big stars' like him asked 'too much, too many concessions, become too difficult.'

Harrison inhaled deeply: 'What a question,' then spoke about his discipline as a theatre actor. The reporter persisted: 'Are stars generally difficult? Is that part of their trade?'

⁹⁰ See also Harris, 1990, p. 113-114; Sheppard, 1975, p. 324-326.

⁹¹ When Kubrick heard about the book, he fired Weiss (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:34:59).

⁹² See also Wyke, 1997, p. 107; Parish, 2006, p. 37; Kashner and Schoenberger, 2011, p. 46; Belcher, 2013.

⁹³ Audrey Hepburn was the film's \$1,000,000 star.

Irritated, Harrison asked: 'From whom did you hear that I was difficult in *Cleopatra*?... I think I would say I was the least difficult star in *Cleopatra*.'

Another interviewer asked if *Cleopatra* would be the greatest film?

Harrison replied: 'No idea. Haven't seen it. I'm going to New York, I hope it will be very good' (Unknown, 1963a, 0:02:00; 0:06:06; 0:09:24; 0:12:38). *Cleopatra* overshadowed the launch of Warners' major project.

Middle America now engaged with film criticism as never before. By 6 June, every American publication printed cinema reviews. Crist was part of many viewers' morning ritual on *The Today Show*. As America's first nationally known multimedia film critic, *The Herald-Tribune* was proud of Crist's 'talent and integrity' and her determination to resist 'inane pressure tactics.' Hollywood's interaction with criticism was changing (Roberts, 2010, p. 168-169).⁹⁴ Yet Canby (1963a) observed *Cleopatra* was the 'end of an era' even though audiences 'probably won't even know it.' Echoing Weiss, Canby thought 3 years of headlines had sounded the 'death rattle of a kind of old-fashioned, reckless filmmaking which, in *Cleopatra*, simply attained a scale never seen before.' For Canby, Wanger's account of 'a contemporary fiscal disaster [was] one of the most fascinating... ever written about Hollywood from the inside.' Meanwhile, Fox's requests for cash advances had forever changed distributor/exhibitionist relationships (*Variety* 1963bb).⁹⁵ Before *Cleopatra*'s premiere, the press already detailed how it was changing Hollywood.

With 3 days to go, Zanuck told *The Today Show* his work on *Cleopatra* was 'very small.' Wanger published his book on 11 June. His diary and correspondence were not 'a carefully reconstructed account of the film's production' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 376 and 379-381), but Cronyn (1991, p. 330-331) argued Wanger did not exaggerate events (Parish, 2006, p. 35). Wanger told Hyams: 'I think this will be one of the great films of all time and I don't want my name taken off of it. I want the world to know that I was the producer of this picture' (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:35:26).⁹⁶ Then Fox reversed its decision and held a press preview. Crist thought this an event in itself, she and her husband Bill took the day off to attend. She

⁹⁴ See also Silverman, 1988, p. 111-112.

⁹⁵ See also *Variety*, 1963aa.

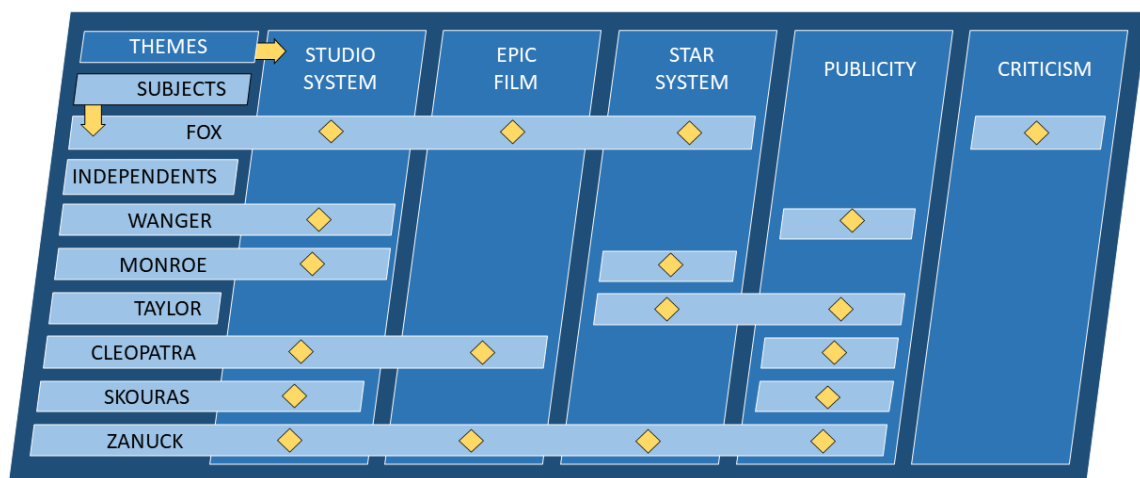
⁹⁶ Fox insiders anticipated his book would add \$10,000,000 to the box-office (Christopher, 2000, p. 71).

sat through it ‘stunned.... My most vivid memory is of walking down Broadway and suddenly realizing... Crowther was walking ahead of me, and then speculating with Bill on his reaction. My guess was, he couldn’t possibly have liked it, but I wondered whether he hated it as much as I did.’ Overnight, Fox stock dropped, Zanuck lost over \$1,000,000 in one day⁹⁷ (Guild, 1970, p. 253).⁹⁸ After 5 years, *Cleopatra* was about to premiere.

SUMMARY

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Thematic Summary Chapter 8

Figure 8.4



1962 was the studio system and Fox’s lowest point. Refusing to accept any blame himself, Zanuck blamed Levathes, Wanger, and Mankiewicz rather than Skouras. While Zanuck reinvigorated Fox, his desire for a simpler operation centred on more package deals did not fully embrace the changes Wasserman was leading. Wanger’s book exposed the old-style approach Fox had employed throughout *Cleopatra*’s production. Brodsky and Weiss captured a contemporaneous sense that *Cleopatra* was the last grand, foolish picture, indicating that it already represented the end of an era. Monroe’s death further stalled Zanuck’s recovery plans with only her insurance offering Fox any gain.

⁹⁷ ‘Congressional budget-cutters’ were obsessed with the film, following its costs ‘as closely as those of the US government.’ One congressman stated: ‘it occurs to me that we ought to look at this motion picture production business pretty carefully after reading of the cost of making *Cleopatra*, the only difference being that in the end *Cleopatra* might make money at the box-office, but we don’t have any box-office, do we?’ (*Variety*, 1963pp).

⁹⁸ See also Silverman, 1988, p. 112-113.

Zanuck took control of Fox anticipating *Cleopatra* would be a success. Mankiewicz understood his rough cut was not his final edit, but after seeing it – and following discussion with Rogell and Merman – Zanuck blamed Mankiewicz. Many earlier exchanges, together with Skouras blaming Wagner, contradicted Zanuck's stance. *Cleopatra's* company, headed by Taylor and Burton, objected to Mankiewicz' firing, once more confirming their sense of *Cleopatra's* quality. Wilder led an industry backlash, indicating that in his ruthlessness, Zanuck had misread the changing nature of Hollywood's relationship with independents, echoed by Zanuck and Mankiewicz' very public and personal argument.

Grand and foolish pictures were anathema to the Wall Street community taking over Hollywood. Zanuck's determination to release 1 not 2 *Cleopatra* films, erased Mankiewicz' attempt to adapt the epic film into a kind of franchise prototype. Zanuck also disliked Mankiewicz' reading of Antony, again not reflecting the more liberated outlook of cinema's younger core audience. Needing *Cleopatra* to be a success, but doubting it, Zanuck dismantled Mankiewicz' vision.

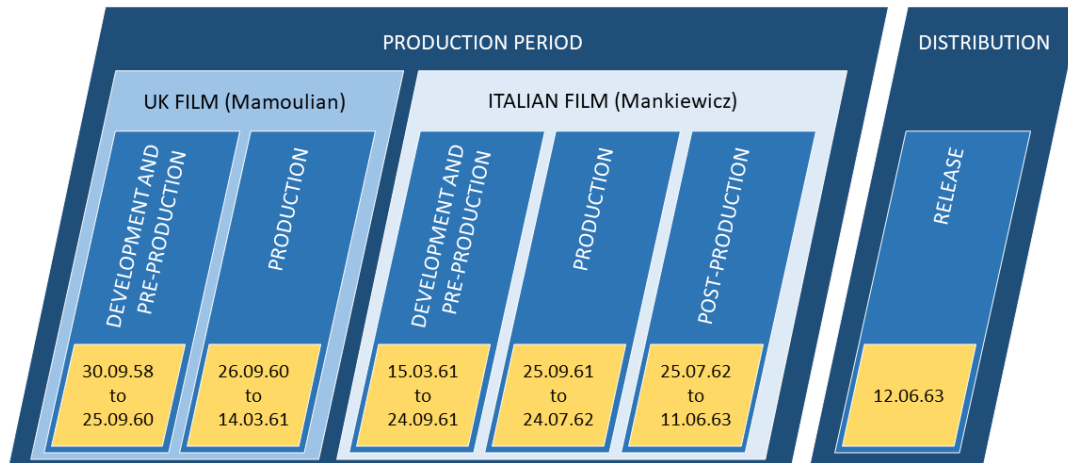
Eager to publicise *Cleopatra*, Fox ignored Harrison's contract, which as an independent artist gave him equal billing rights to Burton. Arguably the last major contract star, Monroe belonged to the old star system, but in death, she became an American cultural icon. Meanwhile, Wanger and Zanuck variously underestimated the depth of the Taylor-Burton relationship, which rather than fade after *Cleopatra* wrapped, captured headlines for decades ahead.

Omitting Harrison from *Cleopatra's* advertising campaign, revealed how Fox used the Taylor-Burton affair to 'sell' *Cleopatra*, which following their reconciliation reignited press interest. *Cleopatra's* exploitation lacked the oversight Todd had applied on *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956), for instance a *Cleopatra* soundtrack was an afterthought. Yet whether it was planned or unplanned, *Cleopatra's* advance publicity was unparalleled, even overshadowing the *My Fair Lady* (1964) press launch. Books about *Cleopatra* offended Skouras and Zanuck, but they increased its box-office. Throughout this, a new wave of film criticism emerged: now Middle America engaged with Hollywood as never before.

THE BREAKING OF SO GREAT A THING

(*Antony and Cleopatra* – Act 5, Scene 1)

Figure 9.1



Cleopatra's impact – short to medium-term – became apparent from its release until the end of the legal actions.

JUNE–DECEMBER 1963

On 12 June, the 8,000 people attending the charity benefit¹ premiere at the Rivoli included 100 of the world's press. A record-breaking 100 police on foot and horseback, controlled a jammed Broadway, cinemas on which dimmed their lights at 20:00 for a minute's salute (*Variety*, 1963oo).² Taylor and Burton did not attend (Cashmore, 2016, p. 150), as indicated on 5 June, Harrison (1990, p. 183)³ did. Bert Parks interviewed guests live on *The Tonight Show* (Bernstein, 1994, p. 382), announcing Mankiewicz as 'the multiple Oscar-winning director.... I hear we're in for a truly magnificent film tonight.'

¹ The event raised \$70,000 for the Will Rogers sanatorium at Saranac Lake, New York.

² See also Brodsky and Weiss, 1963, p. 175; Higginbotham, 1963, 0:00:20; Guild, 1970, p. 214.

³ See also Moseley with Masheter and Masheter, 1987, p. 221.

‘You must know something I don’t’ Mankiewicz replied, blindsiding Parks momentarily, who then asked how long it took to make *Cleopatra*.

Mankiewicz replied he could not remember ‘ever having been on anything else.’

Parks asked if Mankiewicz would personally control sound during the screening, referring to the last-minute nature of the cut.

‘I think everything connected with *Cleopatra* is beyond my control at the moment,’ replied Mankiewicz.

Struggling, Parks asked if the tension had gone, and Mankiewicz felt more at ease.

Mankiewicz concluded: ‘No ... I feel as though the guillotine were about to drop,’ leaving Parks ‘totally nonplussed’⁴ (Mankiewicz and Crane, 2015, p. 70).⁵ Mankiewicz blamed Zanuck for hammering *Cleopatra* ‘into pieces with that polo mallet he used to carry’ (Rothman, 2011, 0:23:37).

Forbidden to walk the red carpet or talk to the press, Wanger saw *Cleopatra* for the first time. Running 5 minutes longer than *Gone with the Wind* (1939), Wanger thought Zanuck’s ‘casual handling’ made *Cleopatra* look more like a rough preview cut, with much of the dialogue unclear. Still, he maintained there would ‘never be another motion picture like *Cleopatra*,’ just as there never was another woman like Taylor. It was not his desired ‘happy culmination of a distinguished career’ (Bernstein, 1994, p. 382).⁶

Unanimous critical praise of *El Cid* (1961) was a notable exception for an epic film; *Cleopatra*’s reviews on 13 June were mixed. Wood (1989, p. 174, 181) – echoing Mile’s comments about prodigality – argued, audiences thought the ‘gargantuan waste’ of good commercial epics was heroic if the expense integrated with the film; irresponsible if audiences read the expense as unredeemed. Critics divided over whether *Cleopatra* was heroic or irresponsible, while some admired the attempt. Rather than ‘rap’ *Cleopatra*, as Mankiewicz had feared, Crowther (1963) thought it ‘a surpassing entertainment, one of the great epic films of our day.... [a] history of mighty dimensions, human drama on a grand and noble scale.’ Then, referring to Kael’s new

⁴ Mankiewicz later described the premiere as the equivalent of ‘being carted to the guillotine in a tumbrel’ (Geist, 1978, p. 339-340).

⁵ See also Carter, 2008, p. 127.

⁶ See also Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 182; Parish, 2006, p. 37; Carter, 2008, p. 130.

wave of critics, added ‘Unless you are one of those sceptics [stubbornly predisposed to give] *Cleopatra* the needle.’

Crist (2020) – such a sceptic – argued that Mankiewicz had frustrated the demands of widescreen and denied audiences a ‘sense of size and power.... All is monumental – but the people are not.’ Crowther urged audiences to ‘forget the fantastic sum’ *Cleopatra* had cost, the lengthy production and its stars’ behaviour: Crist considered all of that and argued ‘the mountain of notoriety has produced a mouse.’ She stated that if people wanted to look at Taylor for 4 hours – in ‘draped and undraped physical splendour’ – then the movie would oblige. Canby (*Variety* 1963bbb) – noting *Cleopatra* was already the ‘ninth biggest moneymaking picture of all time... before its premiere’ – thought the budget visible throughout the film, praised the big scenes’ grandeur and the way the ‘film sweeps along with a very real sense of time and place, building to a climax that is one of inevitable tragic relief.’ Such reviews exposed the opposing forces in American film criticism.

The Afternoon Journal American and *The Afternoon World Telegram* thought *Cleopatra* ‘a magnificent spectacle;’ *The Daily News* thought it ‘wonderful’ (Guild, 1970, p. 218, 237). *Films and Filming* declared it never rose above the level of a low budget ‘Italian Hercules spectacular’ (Mann, 2009, p. 332). *America’s Legion of Decency* pronounced it ‘seriously offensive... because of its continued emphasis upon immodest costuming throughout its 4-hour running time’ (*Variety* (1963nn). Accurately gauging public opinion, Powers’ (1963) thought *Cleopatra* ‘not a great movie,’ but ‘a vast, popular entertainment that sidesteps total greatness for broader appeal.’ It would be ‘one of the biggest grossing pictures in Hollywood history... may be the biggest.’ Ignoring Kael’s conviction that film criticism should rail against conservatism, the conservative-thinking public agreed with Crowther not Crist. Powers was right, *Cleopatra* dominated the box-office.

As an epic, Crowther (1963) drew direct comparison to DeMille’s fake and ‘Cleopatra-a-lulu’ 1934 film, arguing Mankiewicz had created ‘thinking, throbbing people against a background of splendid spectacle, that gives vitality to this picture.’ Alpert (1963), in *The Saturday Review*, thought Mankiewicz ‘uneasy and uncertain in the spectacle medium,’ with scenes playing ‘far too slowly,’ but praised the ‘flamboyant entrance into Rome’ and the Tarsus scene, adding ‘all

the ornateness is not spectacle; it is background, and it obtrudes here far too often.’ Alpert concluded that *Cleopatra* had ‘impressive moments; and was ‘not a disaster. Nor is it any kind of triumph.’ Crist (2020) accepted nothing had been ‘spared on the sets and costumes’ but thought they never created ‘an illusion of permanence’ and she was not captivated by ‘a couple of parades and divertissements that Flo Ziegfeld or Busby Berkeley might well have masterminded’ she found the ‘multimillion-dollar parade’ a ‘mishmash of cavalry, burlesque-show girls’ that just lacked ‘a tenor singing A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody.’ Powers (1963) thought *Cleopatra’s* spectacle ‘probably the last of its kind ever to be seen on any screen. It is immense and breath-taking.’ As Harrison (1990, p. 182-183) argued, this ‘gargantuan epic changed forever’ how Hollywood viewed the genre because Hollywood and Wall Street stockholders thought *Cleopatra* irresponsible.

Mankiewicz’ script polarised critics. Noting their desire to put history on film, Canby (*Variety*, 1963rrr) argued that Mankiewicz and Wanger had not ‘extended the frontiers of cinema art’ but had – under ‘harrowing conditions’ – done ‘a very respectable job of spectacle making,’ creating a ‘remarkably literate cinematic complete re-creation of an historic epoque.’ The ‘samples of smart dialogue’ throughout the film did not always ‘come off’ and were ‘occasionally out of place,’ but signalled to ‘the film industry that something new in bright dialogue values has been added to the historic romance.’

Crist (2020) having hoped for ‘a fresh and sophisticated character-oriented approach to the story,’ thought *Cleopatra* ‘none of these.’ The dialogue was a ‘mélange of clichés and pompous banalities’ unworthy of Mankiewicz. *The New Leader* concurred: Mankiewicz, had ‘no genuine flair for the action-crammed historic canvas;’ Mankiewicz’ gift was ‘for the brisk comedy, which is of small avail here, and for witty repartee, which will not be squeezed from stones like... Taylor.’ *Sight and Sound* suggested the dialogue was ‘drastically inhibited by an awful awareness that it must risk comparison with Shakespeare and gropes helplessly after a tragic idiom of its own’ (Parish, 2006, p. 37).

As Morcillo (in Knippschild and Morcillo, 2015, p. 203) later commented, reviewers knew Zanuck had insisted on a 4-hour film, so recognised that ‘the savage cuts’ defeated Mankiewicz’s attempt to provide characters with credibility and depth.⁷ Even Crist (2020) ascribed *Cleopatra*’s ‘choppy incoherence’ and Antony’s ‘sketchy portrayal’ to the cuts. *Time* (1963) thought the film ‘raddled with flaws,’ lacking ‘image and action’ partly because of the edit. Zanuck’s insistence on a single 4-hour film undermined the cast’s sense that *Cleopatra* was a great film and compromised Mankiewicz’s reputation for elegantly written scripts.

Critics also responded to *Cleopatra*’s impact on the star system. As Miles (2011, p 189) later noted, with Fox emphasising Taylor’s ‘new superstar image as Lizpatra’ and asking audiences to find the ‘real Lizpatra lying behind the screen performance,’ reviewers read Taylor’s performance as ‘utterly of the present.’ Powers (1963) concluded that *Cleopatra* cemented Taylor as ‘the supreme star of the screen.’ Crowther (1963) thought Taylor’s Cleopatra ‘a woman of force and dignity, fired by a fierce ambition to conquer and rule the world,’ not an ‘ancient queen... in the quality of her thought.’⁸ *Newsweek* thought Taylor ‘not the worst actress in the world,’ she could ‘do an acceptable love scene’ and had ‘a modest gift for delivering witty dialogue’ (Sheppard, 1975, p. 331). Alpert (1963) thought her ‘unequal to the demands’ of Mankiewicz’ script, adding as ‘a creature of passion’ Taylor was ‘unconvincing, [and] as a woman of mentality a joke,’ which ‘hamstrung [Mankiewicz] from the very beginning.’ Thinking Taylor an ‘inadequate performer’ but recalling Wanger’s determination to cast her, Alpert concluded she was ‘the raison d’etre for the gigantic undertaking.’ For *Time* (1963), the “‘infinite variety” of the superb Egyptian’ was beyond Taylor, adding a much-repeated criticism that ‘she screeches like a ward heeler’s wife at a block party.’

Crist (2020) agreed. Taylor’s accent and acting jarred with Harrison and Burton. Her performance was ‘an entirely physical creature’ with ‘no depth of emotion apparent in her kohl-laden eyes, no modulation in her voice, which too often rises to fishwife levels.’ *Cue*

⁷ For example, in Mankiewicz’s script, Rufio – ashamed of his failure to prevent Antony’s army from deserting him – kills himself with his sword, but this was cut, so when Antony later says ‘I always envied Rufio his long arms’ before killing himself, it makes no sense. Landau thought the film was ‘given a bad rap at the time,’ because the public did not really see Mankiewicz’s vision on film (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 0:36:49, 1:39:18).

⁸ Kashner and Schoenberger (2011, p. 57) described Crowther’s review as an ‘effusive love letter.’

magazine doubted Taylor's 'emotional range... voice control or movement' stating she could not match Harrison's 'consistently... professional perfection (Kelly, 1981, p. 169). Taylor (1967, p. 195) argued 'the only things I am proud of, Fox cut out with unerring accuracy – namely, the core of the characterization.' *Cleopatra* was the 'most bizarre piece of entertainment ever to be perpetrated – the circumstances, the people involved, the money spent.' Re-awakening Taylor's fear that the public would blame her for any failure, Graham snidely remarked 'I'm wondering how many producers are still willing to pay her \$1,000,000 a picture' (Junor, 1986, p. 123).

Critics also attacked Taylor's physical appearance. *The New York Post* thought Taylor fell 'disastrously flat,' because the world-famous beauty was 'over the hill' (Guild, 1970, p. 237).⁹ *The New Republic* described her as 'a plump, young American matron in a number of Egyptian costumes and make-ups [who needed] to do no more than walk around the throne room to turn Alexandria into Beverly Hills.' On Television, David Susskind described her as 'overweight, over-bosomed, overpaid, and undertalented,' concluding, 'she set the acting profession back a decade' (Sheppard, 1975, p. 331).

Yet by the end of 1963 Taylor had earned an additional \$1,500,000 and – despite her fear – continued to command high fees.¹⁰ Critics wrote less about Taylor's performance, and more about the way she had changed the power of stars. As Bernstein and Studlar (1997, p. 1) concluded, Taylor – along with 'the market dynamics of mass media in the mid-twentieth century' – blurred the distinction between role and star, providing the 'necessary conditions for the formation of the celebrity.' By advancing Colbert's glamour and insouciance into 'the realm of excess and indulgence,' Taylor became a 'famous-for-being-famous and famous-for-being-overexposed icon.' *Cleopatra* therefore heralded the death of the studio-made 'star' (Solomon, 2001, p. 34-35).¹¹ The time of Monroe and the contract star gave way to the superstar, of which Taylor was the first significant example. As Cyrino (2005, p. 141) suggested, although *Cleopatra's* artists nearly destroyed a studio, they did not destroy the star system.

⁹ See also Hirsch, 1975, p. 103.

¹⁰ By the end of the decade, Fox paid her \$1,250,000.

¹¹ See also Ferris, 1981, p. 113.

Harrison's notices boosted his film career (Discovering: Rex Harrison, 2018). Crowther (1963) thought him a stunning 'statesman of manifest wisdom, shrewdness and magnanimity' and his 'faceted performance... the best in the film.' Crist (2020) thought only Harrison rose above the quality of the dialogue. *Time* (1963) praised his 'charming and surprisingly impressive Caesar.' Powers (1963) thought Harrison's performance 'crisp, humorous, authoritative' and that Harrison did it superbly. Alpert (1963) found Harrison 'eloquent, commanding, and assured.' Harrison, who had to fight for his likeness on Terpin's poster, ultimately benefitted most from *Cleopatra*.

Zanuck's attempts re-align Antony's weakness and descent¹² confused the critics. Burton later told Tynan: 'Antony is a man who talks excessively to excuse his own failure to become a great man. He's extremely eloquent, but at times inarticulately eloquent' (Cashin, 1982, p. 146-147). Crowther (1963) thought Burton 'exciting as the arrogant Antony' striving to be like his hero, but unable ever to be so. His tragedy was 'his incompetence to accomplish Cleopatra's bold design, while being inevitably locked to her – and she to him – by the bonds of love.' Powers (1963) thought Burton's Antony 'effective in a totally different way' to Harrison. Alpert (1963) found Burton 'eloquent but less assured' than Harrison, while Canby thought it ironic that the 'anticipated love scenes between Liz and Dickie' were *Cleopatra's* weakest (*Variety*, 1963rrr).

Warning audiences that Burton did not appear for the first 80 minutes, and only after another 75 minutes did he and Taylor embrace, Crist (2020) found their 'physical encounters... scarcely five degrees warmer than the Caesar-Cleopatra liaison – and that's a cool one.' Crist presumed 'the sexy bits ended up on the cutting-room floor,' but also thought Cleopatra's lack of mystique stripped away Antony's heroic stature, meaning there was nothing 'grand about his passion for Cleopatra and no grandeur in his destruction.' Harrison (1975, p. 193) noted that to counterbalance Caesar's character Mankiewicz portrayed Antony as 'an eccentric and a heavy drinker, who thinks he has won Cleopatra, whereas in fact Cleopatra has taken possession of him.' That failure was central to Mankiewicz' script, who thought

¹² Solomon (2001, p. 71-72) termed it, 'Antony starts at the bottom and falls sideways.'

Burton's 'remarkable performance' proved that 'the great intellectual epic was possible' (Bragg, 1989, p. 193). Zanuck's intervention confused the critics.

Following *The Longest Day*, Mankiewicz thought Zanuck – now regarding himself as a filmmaker – destroyed *Cleopatra* by focusing on the Cleopatra-Antony relationship but cutting the heroism underpinning it. Later, Taylor concluded 'all you see is [Antony] drunk and shouting all the time, and you never know what in his character led up to that. He just looks like a drunken sot.' Mankiewicz' Antony continued the trend for adapting concepts of masculinity. For instance, by developing the homosexual implications of the Masala (Boyd) and Ben-Hur (Heston) relationship; the Crassus (Olivier) and Antoninus (Curtis) relationship in *Spartacus* (1960) challenged the masculinity predominant in Hollywood (Elley, 1984 p,88-89). *Lawrence of Arabia's* (1962) suggested homosexual rape took this a stage further. Seen in this context, Zanuck's view of Antony was retrogressive.

Critics found part one 'competent and entertaining,' but thought part two went 'wildly wrong,' but it was Zanuck who cut so much of part two and so many of the supporting performances (Mankiewicz et al, 2011b, 0:43:30, 0:44:22, 0:46:58).¹³ Canby highlighted performances by McDowell, Landau, Cronyn, Haig, Stephens, and Berghof (*Variety*, 1963rrr), but Powers (1963) found the supporting roles underdeveloped, with only McDowall standing out. Crist (2020) admired McDowall's underlying shrewdness and thought Haig 'briefly interesting as Brutus,' but Cronyn 'oddly uncomfortable' and Brown's Priestess as 'strictly from Fu Manchu.' Zanuck's refusal to accept Mankiewicz' vision of Antony damaged the film's second half.

People attacked Crist and Crowther's ideas of good film criticism. Letters to *The New York Times* questioned Crowther's critical faculty: 'that a picture so patently bad, so unimaginative in camera technique and infantile in dialogue should receive such enormous praise from our most influential critics is beyond belief' wrote one (Lev, 2013, p. 256). Crowther imperiously argued that critics who disliked the film did not know what they were talking about (Guild, 1970, p. 238). Some suggested Crowther praised *Cleopatra* fearing its failure 'might kill the

¹³ See also Rubython, 2011, p. 510.

American movie industry,' but Crowther maintained he was 'very impressed by it as a motion picture epic.... Mankiewicz pulled out of this story a remarkable piece of work....

Unfortunately, the consequences of the Taylor-Burton romance, and the expense, made the intellectuals so ready to be supercritical. It came out with two strikes against it' (Cole with Hawkins, 2013, p. 119).

Crist also received complaints, and Fox refused to provide publicity materials for her 14 June television review. Crist therefore used a single still of the procession scene, pointing with a pencil to a tiny dot: 'See this? This is Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra, and if you look over here, that little speck is Rex Harrison.' This broadcast assured Crist's reputation. 'I became rich, famous, and beautiful. Anything after that was anti-climactic' (Silverman, 1988, p. 114-115). Fox fuelled the very public battle that followed by banning Crist from other screenings and calling her 'a snide, supercilious, sour bitch.' This captivated the public, so editors now appointed 'their own hard-to-please reviewers.' Ebert later cited Crist's review as the 'single most influential event in the history of modern newspaper film reviewing' (Roberts, 2010, p. 175). Within the week, Fox shares were 'the 11th most active stock on the New York Stock Exchange,' losing '\$2 per share.' *Variety* (1963zz) concluded Crist's review was 'a merciless rap [that] clearly didn't help the stock.'

Reading the reviews, a hysterical Taylor locked herself in her Dorchester suite for days (Spoto, 1995, p. 212-213). The 'fishwife' accusation hurt most (Rubython, 2011, p. 506) and she called Wanger, offering to redub the dialogue. Fox refused to spend more money (Sheppard, 1975, p. 332). Never having seen Taylor defeated, 'with tears in his eyes' Burton kneeled 'to beg for her hand in marriage' (Brown and Barham, 1992, p. 366). Zanuck's reason for opposing Mankiewicz' 2-film idea was utterly wrong.

On 18 June, *Variety* (1963aaa) announced Mankiewicz' departure from New York to spend 4-5 days tightening (rather than re-editing) his 246-minute cut prior to the LA premiere. Mankiewicz thought 'that any wholesale chopping of the film' was unnecessary. He did not 'anticipate cutting it by much more than 20 minutes.' Still 'dazed by all the hullabaloo surrounding the New York opening,' Mankiewicz was generally pleased with the critical reception, but noting that *Cleopatra* had had no try-out, added: 'I would've preferred to have

had a year to write the script, a year to build the sets, a year to shoot it and a year to edit it.' Mankiewicz was still trying to salvage his vision.

The weekend papers produced more reviews. On 19 June, *Variety* (1963ccc) printed a full-page ad headed 'Cleopatra conkers New York!' with straplines from 11 reviews, all positive, with Crowther's listed first and the *Daily News* review stating, 'Cleo Ranks Among Few Film Classics.' *Variety's* (1963yy) London reporter summarised the UK's critical reception, where historically reviewers disliked American epics. *The Daily Express* 'had some critical things to say but ... found it an absolutely gorgeous smash and I believe millions of filmgoers are going to think likewise.' *The Daily Mirror* thought Harrison led the cast with 'Taylor trailing far behind, beautiful but well beaten.' Asking if *Cleopatra* was worth the money *The Evening Standard* replied 'Yes, yes, yes!'

The Daily Herald thought *Cleopatra* above the average for epics and thought Burton gave the 'only real touching performance in the film.' *The Evening News* commented: 'Who is there, for heaven's sake, who won't pay a few bob to see a film costing millions?' *The Guardian* thought 'Taylor walks with kings but at all times keeps the common touch. She may be billed as the Queen of Egypt, but she is a universal working girl... in her Maidenform bra.' The American critics lamented the lack of DeMille elements, but UK critics found *Cleopatra* more appealing. *Variety* (1963ww) also reported on Wanger's 'serious reservations' about the cut of *Cleopatra*, but thought it was set for 'a long, profitable run at the Rivoli' given the audience reaction. The Rivoli's advance, as well as 73 other cinemas around the world, had already seen the film's box-office reach \$20,125,000 (*Variety*, 1963xx). Wall Street's nervousness was unfounded, the public continued to buy tickets.

Cleopatra's Los Angeles benefit premiere was at the Pantages cinema on 20 June (Sheppard, 1975, p. 329-330).¹⁴ By 26 June, *Cleopatra* was top box-office in LA, taking \$72,000 that week

¹⁴ It was a fundraiser for the Music Center Building Fund was the first of 9 separate benefit showings. Tickets for the sell-out event were \$250, but one benefactor supposedly paid \$100,000. During the intermission Rosalind Russell announced the event had raised \$1,094,403.06 - the largest sum ever raised by a benefit premiere, and which paid for the building of the Ahmanson Theater of the Music Center (Sheppard, 1975, p. 329-330) Landau and Harrison attended 2 LA premieres, each for different charities. After second showing Harrison said to

(*Variety*, 1963eee). However, in New York, Zanuck agreed to angry stockholder demands for redress from Taylor, so instructed lawyers to sue her and Burton for \$50,000,000¹⁵ for their ‘deplorable and amoral conduct.’¹⁶ The suit cited Taylor ‘suffering herself to be held up to scorn, ridicule, and unfavourable publicity as a result of her conduct and deportment.’ Soon, Taylor and Burton countersued, then Fisher sued Fox for a proper share of the grosses.

During July, *Variety* (1963d)¹⁷ reported on record-breaking sales across America. For the Washington and London premieres – 6 weeks after the 246-minute New York premier – Mankiewicz produced a 227-minute version, but some audience members complained about the reduction (Unknown, 1963b).¹⁸ Ignoring them, prior to its grind release – with Cinemas wanting to ‘cram in as many performances during the day as they could’ – Fox produced a 192-minute version¹⁹ (Belston and Geagley, 2011, 0:01:41; 0:02:14 and 0:02:52).²⁰ Cinemas might have wanted more showings of *Cleopatra*, but the public did not object to its length. Seeing this reduced cut for the grind release, Crowther was enraged ‘at the mutilation that has been committed upon this film’ (Munn, 2008, p. 125).

Legal arguments continued. On 23 July, denying that Brodsky was sent to Rome because *Cleopatra* was not getting enough publicity, Skouras wrote that Fox customarily assigned a publicity man to any location production and that Ascarelli, assisted by his 7-man staff, was responsible for ‘entire publicity and public relations’ (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 159). On 26 July, Nizer confirmed he would vindicate Skouras’ position and his deep hurt over ‘unjust vituperative attacks.’ Nizer characterised Wanger as a ‘faithless employee, who, after

Landau: “Well Martin I think I was a bit off tonight.” Landau recalled that Sinatra attended and was very complimentary, while Hitchcock sent him a fan letter (Mankiewicz et al, 0:31:40 and 0:32:35).

¹⁵ This was an appeal against the morals clause, though they later lowered the demand to \$44,000,000 (Bret, 2011, p. 159).

¹⁶ Fox later reduced their demand to \$44,000,000.

¹⁷ See also *Variety* 1963e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p q, r, s, t, u, v, w, dd, ee, ff, gg, hh, ii, jj, kk, ll, mm

¹⁸ See also Carter, 2008, p. 164.

¹⁹ The edits drops the motif of Cleopatra seeing visions of the future in the fire, even though all the scenes were shot (Belston and Geagley, 2011, 0:01:41; 0:02:14 and 0:02:52).

²⁰ Spencer archived all the material should Fox want to re-cut it or use the material as stock footage. Subsequently that footage has been lost, so as Bernstein (1994, p. 384) concludes ‘All we can do is view what is available... [to] get an idea of what could have been the greatest epic of all time.’

receiving huge compensation, [tried] to exploit [his] association with the company for [his] profit' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 162-163).²¹

On 29 July, Skouras announced an action against Wanger for 'libellous statements made about Skouras in Wanger's recently published paperback book.' There was an accompanying counterclaim to Wanger's suit against Fox, Zanuck, Wilson, and Skouras. Skouras maintained Wanger's book was 'filled with inaccuracies, falsehoods and distortions, flatly contradicted by the record and contrary to Mr. Wanger's own statements in correspondence written during the production.' The book was 'a malicious and wholly groundless attack upon [Skouras] as a film executive, and also as to [his] integrity and reputation as a man.' It was Wanger 'who did not accept his responsibilities' because his attitude was 'reckless and wanton.' Wanger had spent money 'lavishly, without any thought of economy...' Skouras thought him more interested in how 'much more money the company would spend' (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 164-165). On 31 July, Wanger noted that Skouras had 'enjoyed an outstanding reputation in the motion picture industry,' but argued his own excellent name and reputation were critical to his career. Demanding 'trial by jury,' Skouras requested 'punitive as well as compensatory damages' of \$2,000,000, and the dismissal of Wanger's complaint (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 166-169). The litigants fought for their reputations.

Having sold-out a month in advance, Taylor hosted the Bolshoi Ballet (Geist, 1978, p. 344) at *Cleopatra's* 31 July London premiere (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:39:50).²² Taylor described the film as the 'worst experience' of her career and 'just ridiculous and idiotic.' Outside, she told the press the 'final humiliation was having to go and see it,' but dutifully watched it (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:40:18) then hurried back to the Dorchester Hotel and threw up (Carter, 2008, p. 130-131). Seeing only a 192-minute cut – half of what she had filmed – Taylor barely recognised it.

²¹ That day Lionel Newman recorded the film's theme as a love song for the soundtrack. The lyrics by Jonny Mercer entitled 'The Nile' (Thielmann 1963c) were about 'the timelessness of the river' suggesting 'human vanity' (Eskew, 2016, p. 302).

²² Kashner and Schoenberger (2011, p. 47) stated that Zanuck forced her to attend.



Figure 9.2

Taylor's arrival at London's Dominion Cinema (now the Dominion Theatre) for the UK premiere of *Cleopatra*. Fox had coerced her to attend and this was the first time she saw the film, which was so radically cut from Mankiewicz' original 4-hour plus version. Taylor was appalled at the result (Alamy, 2023).

The second wave of British reviews on 2 August were mixed. *The Sunday Telegraph* wrote: 'Seeing *Cleopatra* at long last is rather like watching the birth of an elephant, in each case, the interest is clinical rather than aesthetic. In each case, the gestation period runs into years. And in each case, the end product is big, shy and clumsy. All things considered, I prefer the elephant' (Rubython, 2011, p. 507). Mirroring Crist, *The Times* wrote: 'Seldom can such a mountain of a film have given birth to such a mouse of a performance' (Sheppard, 1975, p. 331). Winckles – from Fox's London office – wrote to Skouras expressing his worry about the 'considerable undercurrent of disappointment with the picture.' He feared that 'adverse word of mouth' would damage interest (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 169). In America, Kael accelerated her attack on Crowther as a 'stern and unwavering Monsignor.' Crowther's ideas were 'arcane and didactic and cheated the public's trust in him.' He misrepresented the films and characters in them through his own moral compass (Roberts, 2010, p. 179). The critical argument continued.

Skouras addressed legal issues while *Cleopatra* continued to lead the box-office. On 7 August, Skouras' legal team urged him not to sue Brodsky and Weiss because their 'personal correspondence' read as a compilation of anecdotes previously seen in gossip columns. They had been positive about *Cleopatra* describing it as 'the greatest picture in the history of motion pictures' and they described Skouras as 'one of the great men in the industry,' whose resignation saddened the authors but prevented the villains from winning. Treves was the real

villain, and Levathes the ‘Brutus to Skouras’ Caesar,’ while Taylor and Burton’s antics read as childish (Carter, 2008, p. 164-165). Skouras did not change his mind. On 15 August, Zanuck declared Simon and Schuster had no right to indict an entire industry by advertising ‘an irresponsible book written by a couple of “small fry” in the publicity organization’ (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 169-170).

On 26 August, Skouras wrote to Zanuck about ‘our suit’ against Wanger, hoping that ‘within a week or 10 days my suit against Weiss and Brodsky and Simon and Schuster and... Treves as conspirators, will be filed.... Throughout... our long relationship any time you were in difficulties, and you called on me, I did everything possible to be helpful.’ Skouras and Zanuck appointed a legal team. On 29 August, Nizer agreed that Brodsky and Weiss had libelled Skouras, who had cause for action against them, Simon and Schuster, and possibly even Treves. Brodsky and Weiss had ‘violated basic ethical considerations’ by revealing ‘confidential matters learned during their paid employment.’ Nizer thought the book ‘obvious trash’ and not Brodsky and Weiss’ correspondence yet advised Skouras not to sue ‘because it would dignify the authors (perhaps even rekindle sales)’. Meanwhile, replying to Winckles, Skouras thought the UK’s mixed reviews were quite normal, and that word of mouth was excellent, so the picture would do ‘tremendous business,’ as it had in New York: ‘everybody wants to see this picture and that pleases me very much’ (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 170-174). Skouras the Chairman needed *Cleopatra* to succeed, which the press about the books supported, but Skouras was deeply wounded personally.

Cleopatra’s box-office success and legal actions continued. Having paid in advance for *Cleopatra*, 4 large San Francisco cinema chains sued Taylor, Burton, and Fox jointly for \$6,000,000 for allegedly turning *Cleopatra* into an ‘inferior attraction.’ Fox, they argued, had withheld ‘crucial information’ by not saying the ‘script was written day-to-day.’ Fox countersued.²³ Wanger was angry with Fox because he felt the ‘great praise for the “spectacle” and its lush performance’ was entirely due to him. He cited DeCuir’s original sketches and plans as proof and that all his ‘fighting during the film has proven that I was right

²³ A year later, Portland Paramount Corporation in Oregon filed a \$44,653 suit against Taylor and Fox to recover lost revenue ‘because of Miss Taylor’s notorious and scandalous conduct,’ and her statements ‘that the movie was of inferior quality’ (Wanger and Hyams, 1963, p. 180).

and instead of acclaiming me for having given them this film they are crucifying me and restricting me from going ahead in production. I really want to expose them and get what's coming to me in salaries and damages' (Bernstein, 1994, p. 384-385). The more success *Cleopatra* enjoyed, the more legal action it attracted: there were 17 suits and countersuits in process.

On 4 September, *The V.I.P.s* (1963) publicity promised 'the most talked-about, the most read-about, the most famous couple in the entire world... together for the first time in a modern love story.' The critical reception was lukewarm, but the Taylor-Burton relationship drew audiences, helping *The V.I.P.s* (1963) to gross \$15,000,000²⁴ (Munn, 2008, p. 129).²⁵

Writing to his legal team on 26 September, Skouras argued that with many critics praising Brodsky and Weiss' book, it could not be ignored. He wanted Fox to file the suit against Brodsky, Weiss, Simon and Schuster, and Treves, but if Fox refused, he would do so personally. Tellingly, this confidential exchange revealed Skouras' perception of events during July 1962. Treves had threatened Skouras with a lawsuit if he did not agree to become 'the Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the company, with... Levathes president in name only.' It was Gould who wanted to stop *Cleopatra's* production, and with other directors *The Longest Day*. Rosenman decided to dismiss Wanger and visited Skouras in hospital to seek his approval. Skouras warned him it 'would be a terrible mistake, especially since the picture would be completed in another 4 weeks.' Skouras then offered to 'pay out of my own pocket Wanger's salary... necessary to complete the picture' (Parish, 2006, p. 36). Skouras' explanation of how rival factions had frozen him out of the decision-making process proved much of what Wanger, Brodsky, and Weiss had published.

As 1963 ended, *Cleopatra's* impact on Fox and some of its key players continued. By 3 November, Wise was impressed enough by Lehman's screenplay and Rodgers' score to direct *The Sound of Music* (1965). On 22 November, filming in Mexico, Burton – who through

²⁴ Five times its budget. However, for 5 years, regardless of their reviews, each Taylor-Burton film took over \$10,000,000 at the box-office (Hirsch, 1975, p. 104; Sheppard, 1975, p. 339; Ferris, 1981, p. 126-127; Spoto, 1995, p. 212; Munn, 2008, p. 129; Cashmore, 2016, p. 153-154).

²⁵ See also Hirsch, 1975, p. 104; Sheppard, 1975, p. 339; Ferris, 1981, p. 126-127; Spoto, 1995, p. 212; Cashmore, 2016, p. 153-154.

Camelot had grown close to the Kennedys – heard of Kennedy’s assignation and cried on Taylor’s shoulder (Rubython, 2011, p. 514-515). Production ended 8 days later, but the Taylor-Burtens remained in their location home for Christmas (Rubython, 2011, p. 515). On 5 December, Sybil announced her divorce, which Burton obtained in Guadalajara.²⁶ Taylor then instructed her lawyers to free her from Fisher, who wanted more money before signing; undaunted, Taylor asked Sharaff to design her a wedding dress (Kelly, 1981, p. 171).²⁷ Skouras’ deposition of 19 December made the wild claim that Wanger had conspired with hostile board members’ and with Brodsky and Weiss to ‘embarrass him’ (Bernstein, 1994, p. 385-386).

On Christmas Eve, Cukor completed shooting *My Fair Lady* (1964), the budget for which had risen to \$17,000,000 (Wolfe, 2006, p. 540).²⁸ In Mexico, Burton told Taylor’s parents, ‘we will wait a month before marrying, for the sake of decorum—what little decorum is left now’ (Spoto, 1995, p. 209). On Christmas Day, Fox released *Move Over Darling* (Gordon, 1964, Melcher-Arcola Productions), a revised version of *Something’s Got to Give* (Lev, 2013, p. 253).²⁹ Even though *Cleopatra* was still pre-eminent at the box-office, television, film-processing, music publishing and oil investments helped Fox make a net profit of \$9,100,000 in 1963 (Wyke, M. 1997, p. 107).

1964

In 1964, Hollywood released slightly more films than in 1963 (Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 165). Zanuck - who had asked for films that could be shot in America – greenlighted *The Sound of Music* (1965), shot in Salzburg; *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965) shot in Italy; and *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (Annakin, 1965, Fox) shot outside London. Each were big pictures requiring lengthy productions, giving Fox a production gap in 1964, forcing Zanuck to cut costs and sell assets to keep Fox afloat. Zanuck hoped using the *West Side Story*

²⁶ Frosch delivered Sybil the documentation ending her marriage on 20 December (Rubython, 2011, p. 499-500).

²⁷ See also Bragg, 1989, p. 224-225; Rubython, 2011, p. 508-509.

²⁸ When told Cukor threatened to re-shoot the Ascot sequence, Warner ordered a bulldozer to raze the Ascot set (Wolfe, 2006, p. 540). He did not want any suggestion that the film was out of control.

²⁹ It starred Doris Day and James Garner.

(1961) team³⁰ for *The Sound of Music* (1965) would boost Fox's financial recovery³¹ (Gomery, 2008, p. 254),³² but as 1964 began, *Cleopatra* had nearly recovered half its cost, keeping Fox solvent, just (Bernstein, 1994, p. 384).

Paying Taylor \$250,000 for her memoir,³³ Harper and Row demonstrated that Taylor's celebrity continued to outweigh any objections to her behaviour. Taylor filed her divorce petition on 14 January, with Burton thinking Fisher's settlement demands 'in the realm of the fantastic and quite intolerable.' Taylor thought Fisher's demands 'hallucinatory,' but agreed to release some of the money from MCL Films on the condition he would 'never do anything in the future to embarrass or exploit her,'³⁴ and Fisher reluctantly agreed to relinquish Maria, who Burton now adopted. On 28 January, with Burton beginning 4-weeks' *Hamlet* rehearsals in Toronto, Taylor told Canadian reporters 'Richard and I love each other, and we want to get married as soon as possible. I go where Richard goes. We want to be like other people, and we don't enjoy being stared at. But there's nothing we can do about it now.' On 11 February, Ohio Congressman Michael Feighan asked the US Secretary of State to revoke Burton's visa because of his adultery with Taylor.³⁵ Around this time the press coined the caption 'Dickenliz,' defining the Taylor-Burton mystique (Sheppard, 1975, p. 348, 390).³⁶

In *Cleopatra*, Taylor had been the star; Burton now equalled her. On 25 February, although they held the curtain for 40 minutes because Taylor was late, Burton opened in *Hamlet*. Cronyn (1991, p. 356) recalled: 'The entire undertaking was enveloped in the mystique of the Burton-Taylor romance.... A replay of the hysteria that had existed throughout the world press

³⁰ Lehman had also written the script for *The King and I* (1956).

³¹ Disney agreed to show Wise some scenes from *Mary Poppins* (1964). Wise secured Andrews (2019, p. 34, 36) for the lead role.

³² See also Guild, 1970, p. 251; Solomon, 2002, p. 153-154.

³³ One review called it 'thin, superficial, and prattling.' The L.A. Times added: 'If we are to judge her by this book, we can only find her guilty of shallowness, poor taste, poor writing, and vanity' (Sheppard, 1975, p. 390). It 'disappeared without making a ripple' (Heymann, 1995, p. 272-273; Kelly, 1981, p. 191).

³⁴ The legal terms prevented him from publishing his autobiography for over 20 years. He did publish in 1981, leading Bret (2011, p. 118, 159) to describe Fisher as a 'deeply unpleasant individual: brash, boastful and big-headed.'

³⁵ Backing Feighan, some newspapers wanted *Hamlet* banned from Broadway, calling it 'a perfectly shocking play,' only pushing ticket sales even higher.

³⁶ See also Cottrell and Cashin, 1974, p. 294-295, 299-301; Heymann, 1995, p. 268; Spoto, 1995 p. 214-215; Rubython, 2011, p. 528, 532-533; Porter, 2012, p. 529.

during the latter half of the filming of *Cleopatra*.³⁷ The 4-week Toronto run grossed \$400,000, earning Burton \$60,000. Mixed reviews on 27 February were generally positive about Burton, less so about Gielgud's modern-dress production, but they still added an extra week to the run.³⁷ 2 days later, Taylor rang Philip Burton, knowing he and Burton had not spoken for 2 years, but also knowing Burton wanted to discuss *Hamlet* with his mentor. Philip Burton's loyalties were torn, until Sybil told him: 'Of course, you must go. He loves you' (Cashin, 1982, p. 138).³⁸ Dickenliz were unassailable.

In March, Warners bought the movie rights for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* thinking it a 'great vehicle for Bette Davis and James Mason.' They hired Lehman to produce and write the script. On 5 March, the Taylor-Fisher divorce was granted, with Fisher receiving just \$500,000. Then on 15 March, Taylor and Burton married in their suite at the Ritz Carlton Hotel.³⁹ After the following night's curtain call, Burton spoke. 'Some of you have come here to see Alfred Drake; some have come to see Eileen Herlie; some have come to see Hume Cronyn; and some have come to see Elizabeth Taylor. Now, for the first time on any stage, Elizabeth Taylor has come to see you.' Taylor walked on stage to a standing ovation. Then quoting *Hamlet*, Burton declared, 'I say we will have no more marriages' earning 6 more curtain calls. Such moments fuelled their celebrity, so when they flew to Boston on 22 March and security failed at Logan Airport (Harris, 2008, p. 73)⁴⁰ people grabbed at Taylor's (1967, p. 149-151) hair for souvenirs. *Hamlet's* Boston opening on 23 March therefore required more police control. Burton received standing ovations and excellent notices and earned a further \$21,000 (Junor, 1986, p. 134-135).⁴¹ Whatever trials Dickenliz experienced, they triumphed.

³⁷ During the Toronto run, Taylor celebrated her 32nd birthday at a second night party held on stage. Her cake read: "To our mascot and den mother—love and happy birthday—The Company" and using Hamlet's sword, mimicked Burton as she said 'Now might I do it pat, now he is a-praying—and now I'll do it' and cleaved the cake in two (Alpert, 1987, p. 138-139).

³⁸ See also Cottrell and Cashin, 1974, p. 302; Junor, 1986, p. 131; Jenkins, 1988, p. 194; Rubython, 2011, p. 534-535.

³⁹ Sharaff's low-cut canary-yellow chiffon design echoed the gown Taylor wore in her first scene with Burton in *Cleopatra*.

⁴⁰ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 350; Junor, 1986, p. 133; Cronyn, 1991, p. 357; Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 198-199, 240, 242; Rubython, 2011, p. 536-537.

⁴¹ See also Cashin, 1982, p. 138.

Less triumphant was the premiere of *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) on 24 March. Plummer (2010, p. 362, 374-375) recalled: ‘at the box-office it was a flop. My God! All that expense! Was the world tiring of epics? Or was it the quality of the writing that let the side down? I never understood, with all that money, why it wasn’t spent on top-notch writers.’ Over-confident, following *El Cid*’s (1961) success, Bronston cast Loren for \$1,000,000 and spent \$26,000,000-\$28,000,000 on the film, earning a fraction of that at the box-office, destroying his financial agreement with his backers (McIntosh, Mizrahi and Rodriguez, 1993c, 0:19:49, 0:38:05). As a producer of epics, Bronston’s *King of Kings* (Ray, 1961, Samuel Bronston Productions) – co-released with MGM – had been a moderate success, *El Cid* (1961) was his greatest, but *55 Days at Peking* (1963) disappointed, so when *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) then *Circus World* (Hathaway, 1964, Samuel Bronston Productions) failed (Pirie, 1981, p. 289) Bronston’s studio collapsed.

The epic’s status as Hollywood’s prestige genre was ending, with commentators variously citing *Cleopatra* as the cause. Solomon (p. 86-90) suggested that audiences ‘had grown utterly weary of pompous trumpet fanfares and shiny marble columns.’ However, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) and Huston’s *The Bible: In the Beginning* (1966) were both in production before *Cleopatra* premiered, meaning that as ‘4-hour, multimillion-dollar ancient spectacles’ they were already out of date before their release. Yet Bronston’s 188-minute nominal adaptation⁴² of Gibbons multi-volume epic, had an excellent cast,⁴³ technical strength, and Tiomkin’s score,⁴⁴ but the strong love story at the heart of *El Cid* (1961) was missing. Over-shadowed by *Cleopatra*’s love story – on screen and off – *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) failed to attract audiences. While *Cleopatra* may have exhausted the epic genre, it was Bronston’s slow-paced film that sounded its death knell.

Wyke (1997, p. 185) suggested that Mann attempted to challenge the dominant Hollywood approach by moving away from ‘earlier Cold War narratives of Christianity triumphant.’ Richards (2008, p. 93) concurred, arguing that epics moved away from the Cold War ‘Romans versus Christians conflict,’ with Christianity having little place in the film. However, the film’s

⁴² It focused on the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. *Gladiator* (1999) told the same story.

⁴³ Loren, Guinness, Boyd, Plummer, and Mason.

⁴⁴ The film’s only Oscar nomination was for Tiomkin’s score.

publicity framed it as a DeMille-style blockbuster, with ‘lavish and gigantic sets, mammoth battle sequences, power struggles, and an ill-fated love story,’ and critics saw such old-fashioned spectacle as ‘all pomp and poppycock.’

Ironically, British critics praised the film; *The Evening Standard* wrote: ‘the epic that has everything... magnificent sets, spectacular action, acting that proves... [that] only British actors should play Roman patricians – a story that grips without wrenching history in two, and even... more than a modicum of visible and audible scholarship.’ Crowther (1964) thought it a ‘mammoth and murky accumulation of Holly-wooden heroics and history... bulldozed into a movie by... Bronston and his director.’ The script ‘failed completely to shape a drama that has human interest or even sense.’ Despite his battle with Kael for critical supremacy, the public shared Crowther’s opinion on both *Cleopatra* and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964), flocking to one, but not the other.

On 26 March, Wise (2010, 0:07:23) began principal photography in Todd-AO on *The Sound of Music* (1965). Andrews (2019, p 46, 49) expecting Fox to be bustling with activity, thought ‘it seemed eerily quiet.... Fox was virtually bankrupt... very little else was happening there.’ On 9 April, *Hamlet* opened on Broadway, 204,000 people paid \$1,500,000 to see the 17-week run. A filmed version screened at 1,000 cinemas boosted gross takings to \$6,000,000 earning Burton \$900,000.

On 13 April, *Cleopatra* – nominated for 9 Academy Awards, but not Best Actress – won Best Cinematography, Best Art/Set Direction, Best Special Visual Effects, and Best Costumes. Best Picture went to *Tom Jones* (Richardson, 1963, Woodfall Film Productions) and Best Actor to Sidney Poitier not Harrison, Burton was not nominated. McDowall thought that Mankiewicz not being nominated for direction was political, Fox ‘just refused to put Joe’s name forward, or Richard’s.’ McDowall himself was the victim of a clerical error nominating him in the wrong category. Fox publicly apologised⁴⁵ but all too late (Graham, 1984, p. 186).⁴⁶ By 15 June,

⁴⁵ ‘We feel it is important that the industry realise that your electrifying performance as Octavian in *Cleopatra*, which was unanimously singled out by the critics as one of the best supporting performances by an actor this year, is not eligible for an academy award nomination in that category. Your performance was classified in the Best Actor category due to a regrettable error on the part of 20th Century-Fox. Upon discovery we notified the

Harrison was back in Rome to star opposite Heston in *The Agony and The Ecstasy* (1965). For all its notoriety as the film that nearly broke Fox, *Cleopatra* was still making money and its stars were unscathed.

On 21 June, copying Disney, Wasserman opened the Universal Studios Tour, adding another profitable arm to the MCA conglomerate (Gomery, 2008, p. 214). By July, emulating Wasserman, other international conglomerates were acquiring film companies. Executives who knew nothing of filmmaking now replaced old studio managements, restructured studios to align with their parent corporation's policies and expected them to 'guarantee' box-office hits (Parish, 2006, p. 3).

By 3 July, focused on controlling location shoots and lacking money, Fox urged Wise to finish filming in Salzburg, which he did when a break in the weather allowed him to capture the last 20 minutes he required (Matessino, 1994, 1:02:22). By 3 August, with most Fox films shooting abroad, Richard Zanuck realised there was very little production on the backlot, so authorised the building of the prison set for *Von Ryan's Express* (Robson, 1965, Fox), tripling the set budget, but boosting Fox's image within the industry (Willett, 2007, 0:07:40). Fox was recovering, but no longer led the industry.

In late August, inspired by a press photograph of Taylor angrily pointing her finger, Lehman began negotiations with her and Burton to appear in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (Nichols, 1966, Warners). Holidaying on the Queen Elizabeth 2 on 7 October Taylor and Burton joined Reynolds and her new husband in their first-class suite. Reynolds described her and Taylor giggling nervously until Taylor commented 'Who the hell cares about Eddie?'⁴⁷ (Reynolds and Columbia, 1988, p. 221).⁴⁸

Academy Award Board of Directors, but due to their by-laws, it was too late for you to be re-classified. Therefore, all votes cast for you in the supporting category will be disqualified. Please accept our heartfelt apologies' (Sheppard, 1975, p. 327, 334).

⁴⁶ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 327, 334; Cashin, 1982, p. 138-139; Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:41:45, 1:43:32; Cyrino, 2005, p. 148; Cole with Hawkins, 2013, p. 116.

⁴⁷ Reynolds recalled walking to the dining room with Taylor, which hushed as they entered. 'By that time, we were all feeling no pain and laughing at Richard's witty asides.' During dinner Taylor and Reynolds went to the 'ladies' room' and 'twenty-five other women got up and followed us. They all tried to walk into the powder room with us. There was a line halfway across the lobby. I said to Elizabeth, "You go first, and I'll hold your bag."

Harrison attended *My Fair Lady's* (1964) New York premiere on 21 October (Moseley with Masheter and Masheter, 1987, p. 228), a film seemingly out of step with younger audiences, yet it made a profit (McGilligan, 1991, p. 279, 291)⁴⁹ reinvigorating the musical genre (Hollywood Singing and Dancing Episode 9, 2008). By December, Lehman had appointed Nichols as director and cast Segal and Dennis in the supporting roles (Spoto, 1995, p. 221) for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966).⁵⁰ *Cleopatra* had no negative effect on its stars.

Carry On Cleo (Thomas, 1964, Studio Canal) premiered on 10 December. Having seen the excesses at Pinewood, Rogers conceived his *Cleopatra* parody while drinking in the studio bar. Rothwell's script lampooned entire scenes, such as Cleopatra bathing in asses' milk,⁵¹ and played the carpet scene twice: once 'for real' and once with Caesar seeing it in a vision that recalled Taylor's fire scenes. Rogers used many of the Fox costumes from Berman's costume agency⁵² and borrowed establishing shots from Pascal's film. One title card joked about Hollywood's claim to represent historical reality: 'whilst the characters and events in this story are based on actual characters and events, certain liberties have been taken with Cleopatra' (Cull in Joshel et al, 2001, p. 167-171).⁵³ Fox disliked the film.

Increased profits, as 1964 ended, suggested Hollywood's recovery. *Viva Las Vegas* (Sidney, 1964, MGM) and *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* (Walters, 1964, MGM) led MGM's revival; Disney released *Mary Poppins* (1964); United Artists released *From Russia with Love* (Young, 1963, UA) and *Goldfinger* (Hamilton, 1964, UA); and Edwards directed the first Pink Panther film (Karney, 2005). Hollywood's new model was to release fewer films but make each larger

Elizabeth went into the bathroom and while I was waiting outside the door, one woman tapped me on the shoulder, and said in a loud whisper: "How can you even talk to that woman?!" Behind her another woman spoke up: "Yeah, we've never forgiven her, and we never will!" Behind the second woman a third woman piped up: "Do you think she'd sign my autograph book?" Reynolds told them Taylor was very nice, and had a divine husband" (Sheppard, 1975, p. 380; Reynolds and Columbia, 1988, p. 221; Amburn, 2011, p. 222).

⁴⁸ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 380; Amburn, 2011, p. 222.

⁴⁹ See also Parker, 1989, p. 216.

⁵⁰ See also Ferris, 1981, p. 149.

⁵¹ The Carry On team used skimmed milk to shoot the scene and were alarmed when it went bad after a few hours under the studio lights.

⁵² Francis de Wolff, whose scene Mankiewicz had cut, appeared as the galley commander Agrippa, wearing the same costume he wore as Achilles in *Cleopatra*.

⁵³ Rothwell bet the studio manager he could 'make an entire film about Cleopatra in the time that it took the Twentieth Century Fox team to build a single set.' He won his bet (Cull in Joshel et al, 2001, p. 167).

attractions with broader popular appeal. *Mary Poppins*' (1964) \$31,000,000 gross was greater than *Cleopatra*'s first year box-office. Hollywood now focused on blockbusters – Zanuck's big picture idea.

1965

Recognising these changes, January's *Time* called Wasserman the 'saviour of Hollywood' (Bruck, 2004, p 249-250). Following his lead, Fox accelerated its television production to 10 hours of prime time a week for the 3 major networks (Gomery, 2008, p. 255). Meanwhile American television converted to colour (Monteith, 2012, p. 74), countering Hollywood's use of Technicolor.

Fox responded to *Carry On Cleo* (1964), telling a British court on 21 January that its poster was a deliberate parody of Fox's Terpnig poster, threatening the advertising campaign for *Cleopatra*'s mid-1965 UK grind release. In what the press dubbed 'the battle of the two Cleos,' Mr Justice Lowman heard Fox's argument that at 'enormous expense' it had 'produced a film called *Cleopatra*' and employed Terpnig to paint a picture of a scene depicting Cleopatra in the person of Taylor and Antony in the person of Burton. Fox had the rights to the painting and any alterations including the addition of Harrison.⁵⁴ *Cleopatra* had played at London's Dominion Theatre, and various other cinemas, since its 31 July premiere. Premiering in December, *Carry On Cleo* (1964) went on general release in North London on 17 and 18 January 1965 and was due for release in South London 24 and 25 January, then UK wide. Therefore, *Carry On Cleo* (1964) would go on general release before *Cleopatra*, so even though a parody, Fox argued the two matching posters⁵⁵ infringed copyright. The judge granted 'an injunction until judgement in this action or further order.' Ultimately, the Carry On team withdrew their poster (20th Century Fox Vs. Anglo-Amalgamated).⁵⁶ Fox fiercely protected its *Cleopatra* income.

⁵⁴ The case files actually states they added Mark Antony in the person of Rex Harrison.

⁵⁵ Barrie matched with Taylor, James with Burton and Williams with Harrison.

⁵⁶ See also Cull in Joshel et al, 2001, p. 169



Figure 9.3

The original *Carry On Cleo* (1964) poster (Alamy). Clearly a parody of the Terpning poster (see Figure 8.3).



Figure 9.4

An alternative poster for *Carry On Cleo* (1964) (Alamy).

The Sound of Music (1965) premiered on 5 March, its location photography and powerful score cut through the radical taste of the age. *The Sound of Music* (1965) 'didn't just rescue the studio from the brink of financial ruin, it helped bankroll films for the next 20 years. Between 1966 and 1972, it was the all-time highest-grossing film' (Carr with Strauss, 2006, p. 112).⁵⁷ Its initial general release lasted a record 57 months earning \$72,000,000 in domestic rentals. Learning from its errors with the *Cleopatra* soundtrack, Fox sold over 1,000,000 copies of *The Sound of Music* (1965) in its first month. Brown recalled: 'The picture started

⁵⁷ See also Solomon, 2002, p. 156-157; Gomery, 2008, p. 255; Lev, 2013, p. 265-266.

slow. The premiere party was like a wake,' with Crowther and Crist 'fulminating, as though we'd committed some crime against humanity' (Silverman, 1988, p. 122-123). Crowther praised Andrews's 'radiant vigour, her appearance of plain-Jane wholesomeness and her ability to make her dialogue as vivid and appealing as she makes her songs,' but added the film was 'always in peril of collapsing under its weight of romantic nonsense and sentiment.' Crist wrote it was 'for the five-to-seven set and their mommies who think their kids aren't up to the stinging sophistication and biting wit of *Mary Poppins*.'

Kael called it 'the big lie, the sugar-coated lie that people seem to want to eat... Wasn't there perhaps one little Von Trapp who didn't want to sing his head off, or who screamed that he wouldn't act out little glockenspiel routines for Papa's party guests, or who got nervous and threw up if he had to get out on a stage?' Thinking her review inappropriate 'for a mass-audience magazine,' Kael's editor fired her (Roberts, 2010, p. 159):⁵⁸ *The New Yorker* employed her (Silverman, 1988, p. 122).⁵⁹

Once again, the critics and the audience did not agree, but as Pickard (1978, p. 452) explained: 'Taylor cost Fox a fortune, Andrews earned one.' Skouras' May 1960 gamble had finally paid off. On 5 April, Andrews won Best Actress for *Mary Poppins* (1964) (Moseley with Masheter and Masheter, 1987, p. 230), Harrison (1975, p. 217) won Best Actor for *My Fair Lady* (1964), and Cukor gained his only Oscar for Best Director (McGilligan, 1991, p. 291-292).⁶⁰ On 22 June, *Von Ryan's Express* (1965) premiered, also aiding Fox's recovery (Willett, 2007, 0:12:55).

Cleopatra's cast fared better than its creative team. Taylor and Burton began 3-weeks of intensive rehearsals for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966) on 6 July. Knowing it was 'an atom-bomb project,' Lehman protected the closed set with security guards (Morley, 1989, p. 145).⁶¹ In June, Wanger had felt his attorneys had 'no heart' for his lawsuit (Bernstein, 1994,

⁵⁸ See also Lev, 2013, p. 266.

⁵⁹ Mankiewicz commented: 'The critic has now become a performer. He has an agent. He gets booked. He or she has to create a box-office name and demand'.

⁶⁰ Around this time, staying in New York, Mankiewicz visited Harrison to propose a film adaptation of Jonson's *Volpone*, updated, rewritten, and renamed *Mr Fox of Venice*. 'After a couple of hours of producing odd scenes like rabbits out of a hat, he had me hooked' (Wapshott, 1991, p. 258).

⁶¹ See also Sheppard, 1975, p. 386-387.

p. 386), but by 13 July it was in process. Writing to Fergusson, Herbert C. Earnshaw described Skouras doing ‘extremely well in handling more of the rather complicated problems’ and that Wanger was jarred by Skouras’ testimony ‘to the very bottom of his high button shoes.’ To intimidate Wanger, Nizer sent him a proposed retraction statement⁶² (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 186-187) that Wanger never released.

On 16 September, *The Agony and The Ecstasy* (1965) premiered, not an epic but a large-scale costume drama shot in Italy and costing \$7,000,000. While visually impressive, its narrative did not harness the power of the bestseller upon which it was based and it lost money (Solomon, 2002, p. 155),⁶³ but Fox could now withstand a box-office miss. Back at in Cinecittà by 20 September, Harrison shot Mankiewicz’s updated version of *Volpone* called *The Honey Pot* (1967, MGM). The 5-month shoot was difficult⁶⁴ and Mankiewicz ‘a changed man... far less relaxed... much more easily irritable, and less tolerant of everything.’ DeCuir – once more art director – recalled Mankiewicz saying, ‘I know you’re going to see Darryl in Paris, and I know they still have those clips.’ Thinking of the film Mankiewicz had lost ‘broke’ DeCuir’s heart (Wapshott, 1991, p. 259-260).⁶⁵

On 14 October, Wanger and Skouras released a joint statement announcing the discontinuance of Skouras’ libel action concerning Wanger’s book, because Wanger announced his withdrawal of all statements in his book. However, Wanger’s statement⁶⁶ – written by Nizer and Abrams (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 189-190) – did not state the book was

⁶² ‘Walter Wanger, producer of the film *Cleopatra*, today announced a full retraction of all statements and inferences in his book “My Life with Cleopatra” and in a condensed version of the book published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, which reflect adversely upon the personal integrity or professional reputation of Spyros P. Skouras, Chairman of the Board and former President of Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation. Mr. Wanger stated that he is now convinced, upon reviewing all the evidence, including many internal documents from the Fox files, made available to him since his book was written, that he was mistaken in criticising Mr. Skouras’ actions in connection with the production of *Cleopatra*.’ The statement continued to apologise to Skouras and withdraw his book’.

⁶³ See also Lev, 2013, p. 261.

⁶⁴ The cinematographer died half-way through; Hayward’s husband died in the United States, so she had to return for the funeral; Cliff Robertson attempted suicide.

⁶⁵ See also Geist, 1978, p. 329, 350-351.

⁶⁶ ‘I want to express my deep regret to Mr. Skouras that anything I have written in my book and magazine article entitled “My Life With Cleopatra” has done him any injustice and I withdraw any such statement as I hold Mr. Skouras in the highest regard both personally and professionally. I regret that anything I have written has cast a cloud over his outstanding reputation as one of the acknowledged leaders and pioneer executives of the motion picture industry’ (Chrissochoidis, 2013b, p. 189-190).

inaccurate. Still, Wanger lost his credibility as a producer.⁶⁷ Taylor and Burton finished shooting on 13 December, 35 days over schedule, jointly earning an additional \$1,000,000 (Ferris, 1981, p. 152-153). They told Lehman this was the smoothest and most rewarding experience in their careers (Spoto, 1995, p. 224). Fox and *Cleopatra's* stars were unaffected, Wanger and Mankiewicz were not.

Lean's *Doctor Zhivago* (1965, Warners) premiered on 22 December. Bolt's screenplay defined the kind of epic Lean had been developing since *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957). There was scale in stories about relatively modern people, sometimes real, sometimes not. *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) challenged Hollywood's post-war sense of masculinity but was a great success for MGM. By the end of the year, Fox's revenues split 63.9% for theatrical film rentals; 11.4% for feature film television rentals; and 24.7% for television programmes. The Zanucks no longer owned enough stock to control Fox, because as conglomerates continued to absorb studios, investors wanting profits now dominated the Fox board: they decided to sell *Cleopatra* to television for airing in 1972 for a reported \$5,000,000 (Gomery, 2008, p. 255).⁶⁸ Zanuck's control of Fox was slowly eroding.

1966

In 1966, MGM resisted takeover; Gulf + Western acquired Paramount; Columbia offered its stock on the market; Warners went into partnership with CBS (Monaco, 2003, p. 30). Although Zanuck increased corporate profits to over \$15,000,000, as Gomery (2008, p. 255) noted, he was not Wasserman. Zanuck invested those profits in 3 big-budget musicals⁶⁹ but each lost money. Zanuck lacked a full overview of operations which Schenck and Skouras had always overseen (Monteith, 2012, p. 80): Zanuck needed somebody like Skouras.

⁶⁷ Wanger argued that the lawsuits demonstrated that a 'definition of the producer's function in Hollywood' was elusive. Fox tried to show that Wanger had acted irresponsibly; referring to the phrase 'industry custom' in his contract, Wanger argued Fox had given him the status of producer but not the authority to carry it out. 'Skouras and Wanger agreed the producer was "responsible" for everything in a film's production, but once the questions became more specific, they had no consensus.' What was clear was that Wanger did not fit the Fox house-style of a producer (Bernstein, 1994, p. 385).

⁶⁸ See also Solomon, 2002, p. 152-153.

⁶⁹ *Doctor Doolittle*, *Star!*, *Hello Dolly!* (1969).

During 1966, *Cleopatra*'s production finally concluded. On 5 January, at the Beverly Hills Hotel, the Burtons began 50 hours of oral depositions for their Fox lawsuit. Taylor hastened its conclusion arguing they had to travel to Oxford in February. Her legal team described her undergoing '12 days of boring and tedious questioning' and accused Fox of deliberately annoying and harassing her. The Fox team replied this was preposterous and that Taylor and Burton's 'irresponsibility and illicit conduct directly or indirectly caused expense of more than \$1,000,000,' citing the Easter weekend visit to Portofino as them 'sneaking away' (Sheppard, 1975, p. 391-392).

On 1 February, Mankiewicz and Matthews celebrated the birth of their daughter (Dick, 1983, p. 19), and Hopper died (Cashmore, 2016, p. 7). With Parsons she had made and destroyed careers (Sennett, 1998, p. 57-58) and created a 'double vision of stardom, a shadowy sense that it was not always as bright and clean and carefree as the picture stories in the fun magazines insisted' (McCann, 1988, p. 17-18). Completely ignoring her impact on the star system, Hopper (and Brough, 1963, p. 324 and 327) wrote: 'The stars were asked to stop wearing the golden glow of gods and goddesses and look like plain folks, as homey as apple pie and lawn mowers.... Realism strangled the dream stuff, and it's slowly slaughtering Hollywood.' She described MGM and Fox being driven to near bankruptcy 'thanks to the present, overpriced star system' and criticised the use of foreign locations because of the 'peccadilloes of foot-loose stars and producers who hanker for far-off places.' Few lamented Hopper's demise.

On 18 April, Fox won the Best Picture Oscar for *The Sound of Music* (1965) (Pickard, 1978, p. 479), the first since Mankiewicz' *All About Eve* (1950) (Lev, 2013, p. 266). Richard Zanuck saw this as a great comeback (Matessino, 1994, 1:15:54). On 21 June *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966) premiered grossing \$40,000,000 (Cashmore, 2016, p. 170). Taylor turned Crist's 'fishwife' accusation to her advantage, winning critical acclaim with a younger movie-going audience for challenging the convention of stardom by playing an unglamorous and anti-heroic character (Hirsch, 1975, p. 113-115).⁷⁰ Then, by October, the Taylor-Burtons and Fox

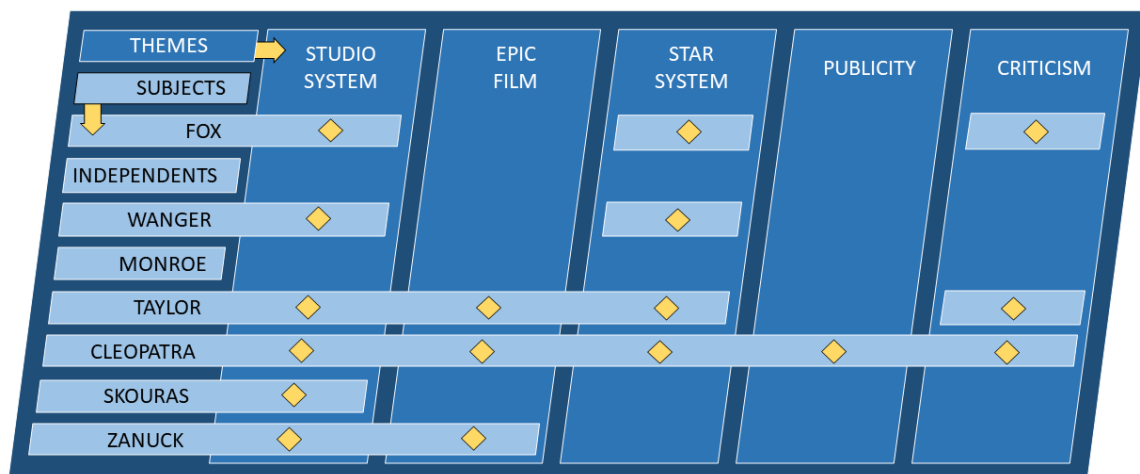
⁷⁰ See also Monaco, 2003, p. 129.

withdrew their legal actions (Bragg, 1989, p. 226-227). All 17 legal actions were resolved without financial settlement. *Cleopatra's* production was finally over: its impact was not.

SUMMARY

UNRAVELLING CLEOPATRA – Thematic Summary Chapter 9

Figure 9.5



Cleopatra's medium-term impact on Hollywood was evident in the themes and subjects explored in Chapter 3. As noted, the themes are institutions or systems affecting the entire industry and function irrespective of individual studios and productions. The subjects are persons, institutions or ideas specifically related to Fox and *Cleopatra*.

THE STUDIO SYSTEM

Post-Paramount-Decree, Hollywood relied on fewer films to earn more income so required a new operational model, which ultimately became the horizontally integrated system, that by October 1966 had not emerged fully. However, studios had adopted Wasserman's package system, and his takeover of Universal convinced other conglomerates to acquire studios. Wasserman built on Zanuck's 'big picture' idea and on *Quo Vadis?* (1951) blockbuster status with *Jaws* (1975) (Gomery, 2008, p. 200). *Cleopatra* premiered midway through this period of flux. Between 1950 and 1975, every studio tried to generate more income from fewer films:

all studios committed to big-budget movies. These came with the inherent risk of a runaway production. In the early 1960s this could easily have been one of several films – *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962) for instance – but *Cleopatra's* circumstances were so exceptional, Fox lost control. As Hollywood changed, *Cleopatra* was anathema to the emerging horizontal system: Wall Street financiers did not regard *Cleopatra* as the last 'grand foolish picture,' it was a potent warning against the hubris that believed 'grand foolish pictures' were to be admired. If *Gone with the Wind* (1939) was the greatest expression of that belief and the apex of Hollywood's golden age, then *Cleopatra* came to represent its nadir.

FOX

The combination of a significant change process, *Cleopatra's* production, and Zanuck's departure created a febrile environment within Fox's management. Skouras' response was to sell William Fox's 450-acre backlot while he searched for the next income-generating project. *Cleopatra* did not cause that sale, but absorbed the funds it created, undoing Skouras' attempt to rescue his company, and exposing Fox's every weakness, forming factions within its board. Fox's executive lacked a common purpose. Skouras – lacking production experience – persisted on working with the central producer model rather than acknowledge developments across the industry. As the factions divided over *Cleopatra*, it symbolised the Fox executive's fundamental lack of a cohesive vision.

EPIC FILM

Fox's decision to – eventually – make *Cleopatra* as an epic embodied that lack of vision. Fox had little choice, but this decision coincided with American cinema audiences beginning to tire of epics. DeMille's revival of the epic as Hollywood's prestige genre of the 1950s captured Selznick's spirit and spoke to the sensibilities and values of America's Post-War/Cold-War generation: epics declared Hollywood's uniqueness in its competition with television. By the time Fox chose to make *Cleopatra* as an epic, cinema's new audience did not share those Post-War/Cold-War sensibilities.

The deep financial crisis that forced Fox to make *Cleopatra* as an epic simultaneously denied Mankiewicz the necessary planning time. Yet Mankiewicz sought to combat the decline of the epic: he knew *Ben-Hur* (1959) had broken away from DeMille's highly theatrical approach; that *Spartacus* (1960) had eschewed biblical sources; that *El Cid* (1961) had set intimate narratives against spectacular backgrounds. Mankiewicz saw how to change the epic and – reflecting Shakespeare – imagined 2 films, which Fox never officially approved. Mankiewicz also challenged predominant ideas about masculinity through Cleopatra's world vision and Antony's weakness. However, Zanuck insisted on cutting the 2 films into 1 and tried to re-write Antony's character, damaging Mankiewicz' attempt to sustain the epic form. Followed by the slow and poorly written *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964), and with a new generation of film goers rejecting the epic, the form lost its popularity. It is not true to say that *Cleopatra* ended the epic, but truer to say *Cleopatra* failed to sustain it.

STAR SYSTEM

Wasserman's package system radically re-invented the star system with all film talent becoming increasingly independent. The De Havilland Decision had begun a process of stars reclaiming their ownership of the monopoly on their talent, not the studios. Needing to reduce expenditure, studios embraced independence. However, this meant star salaries would rise: Holden's \$1,000,000 contract made Taylor's \$1,000,000 contract inevitable, paving the way for Loren in *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) and Hepburn in *My Fair Lady* (1964). The public had always expected its stars to live glamorous and luxurious lives, but \$1,000,000 contracts symbolised the conspicuous consumption at the heart of 1960s American culture. *Cleopatra* was a milestone in female casting that Hollywood could never reverse, affirming Wasserman's package system.

INDEPENDENTS

Independent talent was key to the new order. *Cleopatra* was nominally an independent film, but Skouras' belief in the central producer model saw him replace Zanuck with several Heads of Production, each of whom failed to work effectively with independents. Fox did not work

collectively with Wanger, Mamoulian, or Mankiewicz to create the film, nor regarded Wanger, Wald, or Zanuck as independents, evident when Nizer described Wanger as a 'faithless employee.' Fox failed to follow the example of Universal's relationship with Douglas, the producer and star of *Spartacus* (1960).

Fox's failure to acknowledge Wanger as an independent producer and to recognise *Cleopatra* as an epic affected the film's development. Even though Fox liked DeCuir's grand designs, Skouras saw *Cleopatra* as an old-style studio production, creating a breakdown between Fox and its creative team. Fox was quick to adopt aspects of working with independent talent if they saved money but saw no reason to support Taylor as she faced various issues, nor support its contract stars, chiefly Monroe. Fox expected Wanger, as their independent producer, to support and discipline Taylor, even though the levels of support required exceeded the ability of any single person. Fox did not recognise the changes wrought by Wasserman's package system, maintaining a deeply patrician approach to the talent it engaged.

WANGER

During his career, Wanger – often drawn to stories about strong female characters in realistic settings – struggled to manage large complex productions. His vision for *Cleopatra* failed to match Skouras'. Consequently, when Wanger, reading in bed alone, suffered a severe heart attack on 18 July 1968, his obituaries called him 'Hollywood's most extravagant producer.' Concluding Fox had won, Bernstein (1994, p. 390 and 398) regretted that was how Wanger was remembered: of all *Cleopatra's* participants Wanger suffered most. Wanger's decline – professionally and privately – began with *Joan of Arc* (1948), none of his subsequent successes recaptured the prestige of his earlier career. Wanger's determination to cast Taylor as *Cleopatra* after seeing *A Place in the Sun* (1951) fuelled his belligerence about the film, setting him in opposition to Skouras and Adler. By the cruellest of ironies, when Fox finally agreed to make *Cleopatra* as the epic Wanger had always conceived, Mankiewicz dominated the film, reducing Wanger to an executive producer function. *My Life with Cleopatra's* (Wanger, 1963) honest account of events surrounding *Cleopatra* was famously the first book about the

making of a film published before the film's release, but it inadvertently advertised Wanger's failings to the entire industry: his career never recovered.

MONROE

Having employed her under the old star system, Fox disregarded Monroe as an independent talent, as Universal had done with Stewart, or as Fox with Taylor. Monroe often compared herself to Taylor, recognising her as a younger star posing a threat to Monroe's position as Hollywood's most popular female actor. The more *Cleopatra* financially affected Fox, the greater the sense of rivalry Monroe felt, and the more Fox expected Monroe to make another film. Given her personal dilemmas, Monroe resisted, compounding Fox's impatience with her. Because Monroe veered between Fox and MMP films Fox did not support Monroe when she most needed it. Fox's lack of creative or managerial oversight failed to protect its best asset by making poor choices for Monroe after *Some Like it Hot* (1959). Fox's ill-conceived disciplinary action – Levathes' firing of Monroe in June 1962 – was at best poor management, and at worst ended Monroe's life.

TAYLOR

Better suited to the taste of America's new cinema audience, Taylor achieved the independence both she and Monroe sought. *Cleopatra* marked a significant turning point in Taylor's career, a significant change in how studios employed female stars, and how audiences connected with them. Taylor – personifying conspicuous consumption – spoke directly to the 1960s audience which accepted her behaviour, enabling her to personify Dyer's superwoman star type and become the greatest female star of the mid-20th century. An aggressive press facilitated this, so her stardom owed as much to her talent on screen as to her personal life off screen. Despite her affair with Fisher, audiences flocked to see *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958). Her near-death experience in London initiated a rapprochement with those who had pilloried her, and her first Oscar. Her affair with Burton provoked outcry but increased their celebrity. Audiences did not penalise her, they admired her, meaning Taylor effected a paradigm shift, shaping her career and *Cleopatra*. Mankiewicz's script captured the 'Lizpatra' phenomenon,

creating an extra-cinematic discourse that ensured *Cleopatra's* box-office success. It also ensured that no matter what Taylor did subsequently, her performance as Cleopatra remained infamous, iconic, and the peak of her career. Her second Oscar for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966) played on the public's fascination with her and Burton, initiated during *Cleopatra's* production. Taylor may have been *Cleopatra's* raison d'être, but *Cleopatra* defined Taylor.

PUBLICITY

An increasingly voracious press placed Taylor and *Cleopatra* under unparalleled scrutiny, catalysing her paradigm shift and forcing Hollywood to change how it promoted its stars. Parsons and Hopper – appointed by the studios – unwittingly brought about the demise of studios' control of publicity. Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960) had shown the louche world of photojournalism in a dream-like way, but the *Cleopatra* company lived through the inevitable nightmare of stars becoming ever-more accessible. For Taylor and Burton, with their every public moment under scrutiny, the protection the old studio system would have given them evaporated. The more Fox spent on *Cleopatra*, the more it needed to assure its box-office, so the more it publicised *Cleopatra*. The more Fox publicised *Cleopatra*, the more the public wanted to know, so the press revealed more news, often provoking stronger reactions from the public and increasing production costs, meaning that Fox needed to assure *Cleopatra's* box-office. Exacerbating this chain reaction was Fox's fear that if Taylor offended the public too much, they would shun the film.

CRITICISM

Cleopatra's release marked the first time the American public recognised a shift in film criticism. Critics like Kael and Crist wanted to overhaul film's critical discourse: Crowther wanted criticism to be polite and – in his case – avuncular. Crowther and Crist's *Cleopatra* reviews embodied the opposing arguments: Crowther considered *Cleopatra* a great work; Crist thought it a poor return for 5 years' press coverage and expense. A conservative American public accepted Crowther's perception, but for the first-time – through Crist's

review – saw it was possible to review a film within its production context. Crowther’s later *Bonnie and Clyde* (Penn, 1967, Warner Bros.) review was a ‘self-written ticket to retirement.’ Thinking him ‘out of touch,’ *The New York Times* forced Crowther to step down (Roberts, 2010, p. 173).⁷¹ Kael and Crist were significant critics for the next two decades. Crist’s review negatively affected Fox stock until public interest in the film reversed the fall. Had the public agreed with Crist, Fox would not have survived. *Cleopatra*’s critical reception was turbulent, not because of what was written, but because of the contemporaneous battle being waged over criticism.

CLEOPATRA

Mankiewicz aimed to challenge previous stage and screen depictions of Cleopatra as a femme fatale, but Taylor’s casting and events during filming only compounded the idea. Playwrights like Shaw; novelists like Haggard; historians like Volkmann and Franzero; and filmmakers – from Melies’ very first film through to *Cleopatra* (1917) – developed the femme fatale reading. Bara’s vamp persona connected the excesses of the actor playing Cleopatra, to the excesses of the character, and Fox’s excessive budget linked the film’s expense to the excess of the story’s historic period. By 1963 the established pattern was for publicity to centre on Cleopatra’s wickedness and its similarity with the woman playing her. Equally, there was an expectation – re-enforced by the scale of the many other epic films – for the treatment to be lavish and spectacular. Yet Skouras – still seeing *Cleopatra* as a low budget movie like *The Egyptian* (1954) – appointed Mankiewicz as director to produce a small intimate drama. However, seeing the maelstrom of publicity around Taylor and the impact of *Ben-Hur* (1959) and *Spartacus* (1960), then later *El Cid* (1961), Mankiewicz recognised *Cleopatra*’s epic potential.

So did the Fox board which – desperate to release a big-budget film to rescue its studio – cancelled Skouras’ *Greatest Story Ever Told* project, switching its funds and focus to *Cleopatra*. This was not a strategic and well-planned decision, but – given the failed UK production and

⁷¹ Executive editor Turner Catledge compared Crowther’s *Cleopatra* review with his damning review of *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and thought ‘he’s just simply tired after doing the same thing all these years. He’s sixty-three, you know. Times are changing and we have to change, too.’ Kael attacked Crowther, while Alpert, Crist and Sarris agreed he had outlasted his time (Roberts, 2010, p. 173).

an insufficient insurance payment – a matter of financial necessity. Fox could not afford to cancel *Cleopatra*, linking studio and film inexorably. Soon Fox felt the impact of Taylor's private life viewed through the lens of Rome's press, and lost control of the production, which Fox failed to recover because everything was newsworthy, from Taylor and Burton walking down the Via Veneto, to Harrison suing Fox for failing to match his likeness to Burton's. Given the chaos in Fox's management, *Cleopatra's* impact on the studio was profound. In the subsequent power battle, *Cleopatra* was simultaneously blamed for Fox's failure and hailed as one of the 2 films to rescue Fox.

Mankiewicz made only 3 more films before his death in 1993. *The Honey Pot* (1967) drew praise for its eloquent dialogue, but disliking Mankiewicz's jumbled script, the studio demanded substantial cuts (Wapshott, 1991, p. 260).⁷² Mankiewicz' script revealed how much *Cleopatra* haunted him. For instance, responding to the character McFly, making a comment about the difference between hitting a jackpot in Las Vegas and becoming a star in Hollywood, Harrison's character replied: 'One's given to understand that some of the luckier players receive several hundred thousand dollars per film.'

McFly responded: 'Some are worth it.'

Harrison continued: 'And that a few in time acquire fortunes of several millions?'

Later, Hayward's character exclaimed: 'Let's call the newspapers and maybe some of those darling Italian photographers with their busy little cameras.' While shooting *The Honey Pot* (1967) at Cinecittà, Harrison realised Mankiewicz' pain at the destruction of *Cleopatra*. Only with his final film, *Sleuth* (1972), did Mankiewicz earn an Oscar nomination once more, but he did not win.

SKOURAS

Fox's success immediately after the Paramount Decree stemmed from Skouras and Zanuck working together. Skouras was an excellent distributor as seen in his promotion of CinemaScope, but Zanuck drove Fox's core business. Adler, Goldstein, then Levathes all lacked

⁷² Crowther thought Mankiewicz had written and directed 'a sleek and saucy simulation of contemporary high comedy [but] what might have been a brisk and brazen satire forms into a prolix and slow comedy mystery' (Moseley with Masheter and Masheter, 1987, p. 233).

Zanuck's judgement or oversight, so when Fox most needed product to draw audiences, Skouras could not provide it. His focus on *The Greatest Story Ever Told* clouded his ability to see *Cleopatra* as an epic. Those wanting to take-over Fox, exploited this weakness. Skouras died on 15 August 1971, hoping that the world would remember him as the man who saved Hollywood with CinemaScope (Chrissochoidis, 2013a, p. 155). That same day, ABC finally aired *Cleopatra*. Taylor watched it with 'the kids,' Burton did not. The next day Taylor told him it wasn't at all bad 'marvellous spectacle and all that' (Williams, 2013, p. 437).

ZANUCK

Zanuck – who was working independently on *The Longest Day* and held more Fox shares than anybody else – finally decided to stage his return. His own resignation had removed the creative force Fox most needed, but equally he needed to recover his form, which he did with *The Longest Day*. Throughout, Zanuck monitored Fox from a distance, and as the end of *The Longest Day* neared, Sinatra impelled Zanuck to act. Zanuck's purchase of shares and assurances to Monroe indicated he had already planned his takeover, including making Skouras Fox chairman to increase his chances of success. Zanuck waited for the moment where Fox most-needed rescuing, coinciding with the end of the *Cleopatra's* shoot.

Zanuck then changed *Cleopatra's* course. He and Mankiewicz had clashed over films previously, but Zanuck's objection to Antony's character was a significant disagreement. Knowing *Cleopatra* had to make money, Zanuck quashed Mankiewicz' 2-film idea, arguing – incorrectly – that if Taylor and Burton were no longer together when the second film was released nobody would care to see it. Nor did Zanuck understand that audiences would identify with Antony as a weak man: they did not need the hard-edged masculine figures Zanuck admired and captured in *The Longest Day*. Zanuck's insistence on a single, long film forced Mankiewicz to remove the observations and insight many characters offered about Antony. The first half was nearest to Mankiewicz' intentions and received the strongest praise from the critics: the critics did not like the second half that Zanuck insisted on changing. Guild (1970, p. 197) argued, Zanuck was 'ultimately vindicated' because *Cleopatra* took \$62,000,000 worldwide and a further \$7,000,000 from sales to television, making Fox a \$2,000,000 profit.

The public flocked to see *Cleopatra*, disproving Zanuck's argument against Mankiewicz' 2-film idea.

Zanuck needed to save Fox, but other than *The Longest Day* and *Cleopatra*, he lacked product, until films in 1964 and 1965 helped Fox trade out of its loss. For a supposed flop, *Cleopatra* helped to keep Fox afloat until *The Sound of Music* (1965) completely reversed Fox's fortunes. Zanuck's success was short-lived: although none of the big losses Fox made on *Doctor Doolittle* (1967), *Star!* (1968), and *Hello Dolly!* (1969) were of *Cleopatra*'s scale, they revealed Zanuck's dated approach. On 7 April 1971, Zanuck resigned (Gussow, 1971, p. 320) becoming Chairman Emeritus the next month. He died on 22 December 1979 (Donnelley, 2000, p. 92). In 1983, Mankiewicz acknowledged that Zanuck 'seemed to instinctively, and immediately, know what was wrong or right about a project or a scene. I always thought he was at his best at the very first reading of a new screenplay, the first time through' (Behlmer, 1993, p. xix). Nobody, least of all Zanuck, did that with *Cleopatra*.

SUMMARY

In the medium-term *Cleopatra* affected each theme and subject (Figure 3.1). Fox released *Cleopatra* when the studio system was midway through the changes wrought by the Paramount Decree. Wasserman's package system was established but horizontal integration had yet to take full effect, although some studios were already changing, Fox was slow to adapt. *Jaws* (1975) finally cemented Zanuck's 'big picture' idea into the industry's fabric, but *Cleopatra*'s reputation as a runaway production symbolised everything the Wall Street financiers controlling Hollywood deplored.

Fox was slow to adapt because its management lacked a cohesive vision: emerging factions coalesced around *Cleopatra*, evident in the delay to acknowledge it as an epic film and Fox's failure to allow Mankiewicz the time to prepare for its shoot. Mankiewicz's 2-film concept, for which he never sought permission, aimed to combat the decline of the epic but *Cleopatra* failed to sustain it.

Taylor's \$1,000,000 contract was a milestone for Fox, that also made Wasserman's package system an irreversible change, because it entrenched the independence of talent in the studio system. Fox struggled most to accept independence, only adopting approaches if they saved money, but not really engaging with talent as truly independent. Fox's patrician approach resisted change, so Fox failed to recognise Wanger's independent status. Equally, Wanger's belligerence about casting Taylor set him in opposition to Skouras, shaping the entire production.

Fox also failed to adapt how it managed its contract stars. It saw Monroe as means to make money and failed to recognise its responsibility to a star that had earned them millions. Fox repeatedly ignored and demoralised Monroe, so if Monroe did commit suicide Fox's treatment of her was undoubtedly a major factor. If Monroe did not take her own life, Fox still treated her cruelly.

Fox's engagement with Taylor was in direct contrast. Taylor's incarnation as 'Lizpatra' and the paradigm shift she effected consolidated her status as a superwoman star. The combination of extra-cinematic discourse and media saturation ensured *Cleopatra's* box-office success and Taylor's status as the mid-century's most famous female actor. The price Fox paid was to be locked into a vicious cycle of needing to publicise *Cleopatra* to ensure it recovered its costs but increasing its costs by doing so. Emphasising this connection between publicity and expenditure then exposed *Cleopatra* when it came to the film's critical reception. A conservative American public ignored the negative criticisms, but still acknowledged the changing nature of film criticism.

Like some of his critics, Mankiewicz lamented the fact that his film failed to counter the femme fatale reading of previous interpretations. However, Fox's desperation to release a big-budget film to rescue its finances – without the required planning – ultimately re-enforced the notion that *Cleopatra* films were about excess. Meanwhile, with the Taylor-Burton affair on every front page worldwide, the character and the actor playing her were linked once again. Mankiewicz was never able to achieve his ambitions for the film.

All of this was set against the background of a powershift from Skouras to Zanuck. Together they had led Fox to great success, but without the other, both had weaknesses. Skouras needed Zanuck's expertise in production, but once he became studio president, Zanuck lacked the business oversight Skouras had always provided.

SHE HATH PURSUED CONCLUSIONS INFINITE

(*Antony and Cleopatra* – Act 5, Scene 2)

Zacky, Burns, and Bider (2001) claimed that *Cleopatra* was ‘a film that changed Hollywood forever.’ Understanding to what extent that is true explains *Cleopatra*’s long-term impact. Occurring midway in the change to Hollywood’s operational model, *Cleopatra* marked not only the end of the old system, but also what Hollywood needed to do to move to its next one.

For any film, the greater its budget, the greater the risk if it becomes a runaway production. What Schatz (1998) called the ‘genius of the system’ usually avoided runaway productions, but the system failed outright with *Cleopatra* (Gomery, 2008, p. 254) because Fox failed to adapt. Austin (2020) described how the *Cleopatra* cast and crew thought Fox blamed Monroe for bankrupting the studio not *Cleopatra*, and feared Fox would cancel *Cleopatra*, which they believed would be a success. Austin also expressed the opinion that *Cleopatra* was a unique job, for as Lopez (2010) – describing *Cleopatra*’s ‘slave-laboured lavishness’ – explained, it ‘still blows you away, especially when you get to see it on the big screen.... After four hours of hand-made spectacle, you can’t help thinking, they just don’t make ‘em like that anymore – and probably for good reason.’ The good reason was the need to balance the cost of telling the story with the likelihood that enough people would want to see it to recover those costs. This was the same problem that Lerner observed with *Camelot*, ‘whether there was too much story to tell... to reach the end of the journey, or if the same story could be told with fewer incidents, or if the journey was simply too long in the first place.’

For *Cleopatra*, the added complication was that the epic had shifted to a more realistic and less episodic form. Mankiewicz knew the only way to tell a complex story like *Cleopatra* to an early 1960s audience was a 2-film solution. He could not go back to the DeMille approach of a

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series of set scenes lacking character background and depth.¹ Mankiewicz's failure to achieve his desired outcome decided *Cleopatra's* critical reputation, but also revealed Hollywood's direction of travel. Applying Lerner's logic, if it was no longer possible to tell epic stories, even with longer running times, then Hollywood would have to tell different stories.

Cleopatra failed to sustain the epic because the public no longer wanted to see epics. As *Psycho* (1960) had demonstrated and as Canby (Bruck, 2004, p 249-251) noted in November 1969, audiences wanted different kinds of film, 'smaller, more idiosyncratic, culturally attuned movies, like *The Graduate* (Nichols, 1967, Lawrence Truman Productions), *Midnight Cowboy* (Schlesinger, 1969, Jerome Hellman Productions), *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1969, Pando Company Inc.). Films still had epic dimensions, but their nature changed. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and *The Longest Day* had scale, but their stories were more contained. Musicals – such as *My Fair Lady* (1964) and *The Sound of Music* (1965) – became the prestige genre for a short time, as they had after the decline of the silent epic. The Bond films invigorated the idea of the franchise, then – finally solving the big picture idea – Wasserman released *Jaws* (1975). Earning a previously unheard of \$260,000,000 box-office gross. *Jaws* (1975) revealed that big pictures were not about their scale, but about their breadth of appeal. After *Cleopatra*, the nature of the stories Hollywood told, and how they told them, changed.

Building on *Jaws* (1975) and Bond, Hollywood began using blockbuster titles and franchises to draw audiences, so the *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, or *Jurassic Park* franchises have been key lynchpins in studio marketing campaigns for decades. Franchises allow studios to tell longer stories by breaking up their narrative into manageable parts, as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* films attest.

Despite the Oscar-winning *Gladiator* (1999) and the poorly received remake of *Ben-Hur* (Bekmambetov, 2016, Paramount/MGM), Hollywood has not revived the epic genre. Yet many blockbusters have epic qualities in their scale, narrative, and in the heroism of their main characters. Most significantly, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has generated an unparalleled

¹ This had been the accusation critics had made about *The Ten Commandments* (1956), and as noted above, *Cleopatra* (1934) was largely episodic in structure and cursory in its characterisations.

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cycle of films and associated television series. As of December 2022, of the worldwide top 25 highest grossing films of all time, 8 were Marvel titles (the-numbers.com, 2023). Marvel has played out Mankiewicz' idea of telling 1 story across episodes on a grand scale.

Lopez' (2010) comment that they 'just don't make 'em like that anymore' also reveals that Hollywood stopped making films with thousands of extras. The advent of computer-generated images enabled *Gladiator* (1999) to achieve the scale of *Quo Vadis?* (1951) without the cast. Therefore, while *Cleopatra* was not the last film of scale, along with *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) it marked the end of a method of production. Only *Gandhi* (Attenborough, 1982, International Film Investors) has since boasted a cast of 300,000 for the film's funeral scene, achieving that because 200,000 of the extras volunteered to appear in the film because of their respect for the Mahatma (IMDb.com 2023).

What has affected *Cleopatra's* long-term reputation is the mythology that still surrounds it. Some 40 years after it premiered, Fox still marketed *Cleopatra's* home viewing releases as the film that nearly broke Fox. This was Zacky, Burns, and Bider's (2001) focus. A decade later Rothman's (and Lewinson, 2010) focus was *Cleopatra's* runaway production. Yet with *Cleopatra's* 2012 Blu-ray re-issue, focus shifted towards *Cleopatra's Missing Footage* (Belston and Geagley, 2011) and the idea of reconstructing Mankiewicz' vision. With some director's cuts reclaiming a film's reputation, *Cleopatra* is now Mankiewicz' lost masterpiece. Reconstructing it has proved impossible because Fox destroyed the cut elements, but it demonstrates an attempt to reposition *Cleopatra*.

Such repositioning is possible because critical opinion about the film remains divided. Bernstein (1994, p. 383) thought *Cleopatra* 'neither the greatest film ever created, or the gaudiest, but not the dismal fiasco that was always possible.' When reviewing the first DVD release of the original theatrical version Elley (2001) concluded that for 'all its visual opulence' the film 'has size but little stature and is 2 separate movies rather than a cohesive whole.... It starts as a Shavian exercise in political-sexual irony and gradually morphs into sappy melodrama.' King (2001) disagreed, arguing 'the film was not a bad film. It was not a flop. It was too expensive. It was a financial mess, but it made \$24,000,000 [sic] on its initial release. It was one of the top 10 grossing films of the '60s. It was by no means a failure on any level. It

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is one of the most beautiful films ever shot. It has some incredible performances. It is very intelligently written and deserves to be seen.’ Later, Carter (2008, p. 162-163) argued that ‘outside its temporal context,’ *Cleopatra* was a ‘mediocre-to-good’ symbol of an old-fashioned, 2,000-artisans-at-work process. Then Miles (2011, p 204-205) argued that Zanuck’s intervention neutered Mankiewicz’ attempts to revive the genre, dividing the critics.

As familiarity with *Le Scandale* recedes, disentangling *Cleopatra* from its mythology, it is possible to see *Cleopatra* in the sequence of films initiated by *Samson and Delilah* (1949). It was not a masterpiece, but outside its temporal context it is still a significant entry in the epic genre. In the long-term, allowing for the melodramatic mores of the early 1960s, it remains a staggering attempt. Crist refused to separate *Cleopatra* from its context, but with audiences no longer knowing that context, Crist’s review is locked in its time.

Crist’s context was the relentless press coverage. As Brodsky recalled: ‘we were supposed to try to keep it quiet, which was ridiculous. Once it broke and broke wild, there was no stopping it’ (Zacky, Burns, and Bider, 2001, 1:04:53). As Mann (2009, p. 8) concluded, the Taylor-Burton affair created ‘a market for scandalous, often telephoto, pictures of the private lives of stars.’ Blindsided – as Fox and other studios were – Hollywood had to find new ways of managing press coverage of their stars while simultaneously promoting their films: one was a control process, the other a marketing one. This was a major shift from the press and publicity of Hollywood’s early years. Hollywood always had to manage news items,² but the incessant Taylor-Burton coverage required a new kind of control for which Hollywood was ill-prepared: even Beatlemania was not that intrusive.

Horizontal integration brought together more film and television studios, so television became a major film promotion tool. *Jaws* (1975) was not the first film to use television advertising, but it was the first to use short stinger trailers to permeate the market, an approach mirrored in today’s social media. No film since *Cleopatra* has endured quite the same amount of coverage because Hollywood has gradually learned how to separate film promotion from artist management: *Cleopatra* revealed the need to separate the two.

² For example, the Fatty Arbuckle rape accusation.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, *Cleopatra* – the last epic made within a studio system that had peaked in 1939 – was a symptom of Fox's outmoded and patrician approach to making films. A lot of older men made decisions that did not speak to the younger cinema-going audience, so Fox could not control *Cleopatra* and certainly not halt the freefall affecting all Hollywood. Rothman's (2011, 0:27:10) argument that *Cleopatra* remains a fascinating subject is not just because it is 'a tale of ambition and politics, of lust and betrayal, of the ultimate destruction of an empire born of over-reaching, miscalculation, and love,' it is also because *Cleopatra* was a unique moment in cinema history. A uniqueness deriving from an infinite variety of events and forces that are unlikely ever to be repeated, but for 60 years it has served as a reminder to Hollywood studios of their worst fear.

Mankiewicz warned and pleaded with Fox repeatedly, but the destruction of his film marked the remainder of his life. *Cleopatra's* closing narration captured Mankiewicz' wish to reference Plutarch and his own desire for a film that nearly killed him, but more prophetically it spoke of the end of Hollywood's golden age.

'And the Roman asked "Was this well done of your lady?"

And the servant answered, "Extremely well. As befitting the last of so many noble rulers."

86,806 words

BIOGRAPHIES

The following biographies provide background for key persons in the production history.

THE CAST

ELIZABETH TAYLOR

Elizabeth Rosemond Taylor was born in England to American parents who returned to America at the outbreak of World War II. Hedda Hopper aided Taylor's mother to win roles for Taylor in several films, including *Lassie Come Home* (Wilcox, 1943, MGM) and *Jane Eyre* (Stephenson, 1943, MGM). Her breakthrough role was in *National Velvet* (Brown, 1944, MGM). Thereafter, she worked as a child star until appearing with Clift in *A Place in the Sun* (1951), in her first 'adult' role (IMDb.com, 2023). By the time she made *Raintree County* (1957) – again with Clift – she was married to her second husband Michael Wilding, during which they separated, and Todd proposed to her.

RICHARD BURTON

Born as Richard Jenkins into a working-class, Welsh mining family (Taraborrelli, 2006, p. 169), Burton's aptitude for study won him various scholarships. His grammar schoolteacher, Philip Burton fostered the young boy (Burton eventually took his name as his stage name) and helped him win an Oxford scholarship. There, Neville Coghill cast Burton in *Measure for Measure* (Mann, 2009, p. 309-310) and neutralised his Welsh accent. After university, Burton debuted in Liverpool in Emlyn Williams' *The Druid's Rest* and later appeared in Williams' *The Last Days of Dolwyn* (1948, de Grunwald Productions) where he met Sybil Williams whom he later married (Cashmore, 2016, p. 109). Burton's success as a stage actor led to his casting in *My Cousin Rachel* (1952) and later in *The Robe* (1953), both for Fox. Surprisingly, Burton refused a Fox contract in favour of returning to the Old Vic Theatre in London to play in its Shakespeare season (Bragg, 1989, p. 121). He was later cast in as *Alexander the Great* (Rossen, 1956, C. B. Films) which did poorly on release, making Burton wary of historical epics. Many box-office flops marked this phase of Burton's film career, until *Look Back in Anger*

(Richardson, 1959, Woodfall Film Productions) revived it. The offer to play Arthur in *Camelot* therefore arrived at an opportune moment (Rubython, 2011, p. 387).

REX HARRISON

Born Reginald Carey Harrison in Huyton, Lancashire to Edith Mary (Carey) and William Reginald Harrison, a cotton broker, Harrison changed his name to Rex as a young boy, knowing it was the Latin word for 'King.' His first stage role, at age 18, was at the Liverpool Rep Theatre, but his West End debut was Rattigan's *French Without Tears*. Harrison's stage career gathered momentum and eventually Fox contracted him. His first Fox film was *Anna and the King of Siam* (Cromwell, 1946, Fox), followed by *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (Mankiewicz, 1948, Fox), Harrison's first time working with Mankiewicz (IMDb.com, 2023). Harrison asked to leave his contract early, which he did, owing Fox money. In November 1952, hearing of a picture deal with Harrison and Warner's, Schreiber reminded Ferguson that Harrison still owed Fox money. Ferguson (1952) replied that Harris – Harrison's MCA agent – had acknowledge that Warner's were aware of the deal. This conflict with Fox coloured Skouras impression of Harrison. So did Harrison's personal life, which was filled with marriages and affairs, but when actor Carole Landis committed suicide – suggesting it was because Harrison had ended their affair – his film career stalled. Harrison then accepted the role of Higgins in *My Fair Lady* on Broadway, recovering his popularity with the public (*Discovering: Rex Harrison*, 2018).

RODDY McDOWALL

Born in Herne Hill, London, 10-year-old Roderick McDowall's first film was *Murder in the Family* (Parker, 1938, Fox). On 7 February 1941 Thomas A. McDowall – a merchant seaman – and Winifred L. McDowall – an Irish-born, aspiring actress – signed McDowall's first contract with Fox (1941). McDowall subsequently played Huw in *How Green Was My Valley* (Ford, 1941, Fox). When he was 18, he moved to New York, where he worked on stage and in 1949 became a U.S. citizen (IMDb.com, 2023). He first worked with Taylor in *Lassie Come Home* (1943) after which they were life-long friends. He also appeared with Burton on Broadway in *Camelot*.

HUME CRONYN

Canadian born, Cronyn – and his wife Jessica Tandy – were long-time friends of Mankiewicz, who was holidaying with them when he was asked to travel to New York to discuss directing *Cleopatra*. His casting of Cronyn was partly to ensure he was surrounded not only by family, but also friends he trusted. Mankiewicz offered Cronyn the role of Sosigenes in *Cleopatra* as an Egyptian Polonius, ironically Cronyn later appeared on Broadway as Polonius in Burton's *Hamlet*.

MARTIN LANDAU

Born in Brooklyn, Landau began working as New York Daily News' staff cartoonist and illustrator. He made his stage debut in 1951 in *Detective Story* at the Peaks Island Playhouse, Maine and his off-Broadway debut that year in *First Love*. After working at Lee Strasberg's Actors Studio, Landau made his movie debut in *Pork Chop Hill* (Milestone, 1959, Melville Productions), but his first significant role was in *North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1959, MGM) in which Tom Mankiewicz and his father saw Landau and were impressed. Discussing *Cleopatra* casting, Tom reminded Mankiewicz that he had told both his sons 'I'm gonna use that guy in my next picture' (Mankiewicz et al, 2011a, 1:08:05). Mankiewicz cast Landau as Rufio, demoting Stephens to the role of Germanicus.

CLEOPATRA CREW

WALTER WANGER

A graduate of Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, at the peak of his career Wanger earned more than MGM studio head, Louis B. Mayer. His career had started at Paramount, but in time he became an independent producer, with his first fully independent film being *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (Hathaway, 1936, Walter Wanger Productions), released by Paramount as its first Technicolor feature. Later films included *Stagecoach* (Ford, 1939, Walter Wanger Productions) and *Foreign Correspondent* (Hitchcock, 1940, Walter Wanger Productions). Such was Wanger's standing within the industry that he served as the President of Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences twice between 1939 and 1946 (IMDb.com, 2023).

JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ

While working at MGM, studio chief Louis B. Mayer forced Mankiewicz to work as a producer not as a writer or director. Mankiewicz therefore moved to Fox, to be a writer-director, where he worked with Zanuck. When he found Zanuck's interference too much he decided to become independent, establishing Figaro Productions (IMDb.com, 2023). Skouras thought Mankiewicz's experience of directing Taylor would make for an easier production for *Cleopatra* (Cashmore, 2016, p. 362).

FORREST E. JOHNSTON

Known as Johnny, Johnston first worked with Mankiewicz on *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954), then later with Wanger on *I Want to Live!* (1958) both for Mankiewicz' Figaro Productions.

THE STUDIO

SPYROS P. SKOURAS

Spyros Panagiotis Skouras, the son of a local shepherd, was born in Skourahorian, Greece. He had initially studied for the priesthood but travelled to America with his brothers. First, he worked as a bus boy in St. Louis, while he studied English, business practices, accounting, and law. In 1912 the three brothers purchased a rundown nickelodeon in a poor St Louis neighbourhood. They later bought and refurbished the old Grand Central Theatre in St. Louis. Eventually they operated 650 theatres across America. After World War I, during which Skouras served in the Army Signal Corps, the brothers sold their theatre franchise in 1928 to Warner Brothers. Skouras and his younger brother George accepted roles in Warner's distribution business, while Charles Skouras became president of National Theatres Inc. Skouras left Warner's in 1931 for Paramount, but the next year moved to Fox Metropolitan Theatres in New York, turning around that business with such assurance that in 1942, with Zanuck serving in World War II, Skouras became Fox president (IMDb.com, 2023).

DARRYL F. ZANUCK

Born in Wahoo, Nebraska, both of Zanuck's parents had abandoned him by the time he was 13. He joined the U.S. Army aged 15 by lying about his age and fought in World War I. He

BIOGRAPHIES

turned his many experiences into stories for publication, then later adapted these into film treatments. This initially semi-literate boy discovered his gift for writing movie plots and worked with the likes of Sennett, Syd Chaplin and Laemmle at Universal. Zanuck's first major success was the Rin Tin Tin series for Warners, for whom he became head of production aged 23 (Solomon, 2002, p. 39-40; Lev, 2013, p. 16).

BUDDY ADLER

Born in 1909, Adler worked as a writer before joining MGM in 1936 as a producer. Returning from World War II, he moved to Columbia, winning the Best Picture Oscar for *From Here to Eternity* (Zinneman, 1953, Columbia) (IMDb.com, 2023). Adler signed a deal with Fox on 13 May 1954 and joined Zanuck's staff on 25 April 1955. Zanuck suggested Adler as his replacement as Head of Production on 12 April 1956 (Solomon, 2002, p. 120).

PETER LEVATHES

Levathes was a Greek American and prizewinning Harvard scholar. Brodsky and Weiss (1963, p. XI) described him as a trainee and disciple of Skouras. Trained as a lawyer, Levathes had left Fox to work in advertising, but returned to head Fox's television production. Brodsky and Weiss stated that at the time their story began, Levathes was the choice of the anti-Skouras element in the board, who had enabled him to ascend to 'a vice-presidency as the executive in charge of production... a title never completely owned by those who had come between Darryl F. Zanuck and himself.'

INDUSTRY FIGURES

LEW WASSERMAN

Within 5 years of his parents fleeing Russia, Lew Wasserman was born in the Jewish ghetto of Cleveland on 22 March 1913. By 12, working as a movie usher, he developed a love of film. In 1928, unable to afford College, he worked as a publicity director for Cleveland's Mayfair Casino. He married Edie Beckerman on 5 July 1936, aged 23. In December 1936, Jules Stein summoned Wasserman to Chicago. Stein instantly hired him as head of advertising (Gomery, 2008, p. 205-206).

WILLIAM WYLER

German-born to Jewish parents, Wyler's mother was a cousin of Universal founder Carl Laemmle, so when Wyler emigrated to America in 1920, aged 18, he began work as an errand boy in Universal's New York office. Eventually, Wyler was second only to Ford as Hollywood's most successful director, winning 3 best director Oscars – Ford won 4 times. Wyler's contract with Samuel Goldwyn saw him direct *Wuthering Heights* (1939, The Samuel Goldwyn Company) and *Jezebel* (1938, Warners), but Wyler's first Best Director Oscar was for *Mrs. Miniver* (1942, MGM), after which he served in World War II in the Army Air Corps. Wyler's first picture upon returning from World War II was *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946, The Samuel Goldwyn Company), which won Wyler his second Best Director Oscar. Wyler's approach as a director was to shoot scenes over and over to capture the exact performance he wanted: Heston experienced this while working on *Ben-Hur* (1959), which won Wyler his third Best Director Oscar (IMDb.com, 2023).

GEORGE STEVENS

Born in Oakland, California, Stevens was one of Taylor's preferred directors and was a meticulous craftsman who took great care when creating his films. Along with fellow Signal Corps veterans Capra and Wyler, Stevens founded Liberty Films to produce movies that they felt addressed the human condition. Taylor first worked with Stevens in *A Place in the Sun* (1951) and then in *Giant* (Stevens, 1956, George Stevens Productions). With *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), for Fox, Stevens directed the first Hollywood film to address the Holocaust, but the time it took to craft, and its cost, added to Fox's reservations about Stevens' production of *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) (IMDb.com, 2023).

PRESS AND CRITICS

PAULINE KAEI

Born on 19 June 1919 to Jewish Polish immigrants, Kael was raised on a farm in California. She attended the University of California at Berkeley from 1936 to 1940 and began freelance writing in 1953. She made headlines with her reviews, for example by calling Charlie Chaplin's *Limelight* (Chaplin, 1952, Charles Chaplin Productions), 'Slimelight' (Roberts, 2010, p. 154).

JUDITH CRIST

Born in New York, Crist attended Hunter College and then Columbia University and joined *The Herald-Tribune* as a reporter in 1945. She was the first female film critic to have a national profile and the first to appear on syndicated television (Roberts, 2010, p. 165-166).

LOUELLA PARSONS

Born on 6 August 1881, Parsons began her career as a movie columnist for the *Chicago Record Herald*. By 1923, she used her radio show, *Hollywood Hotel* to promote William Randolph Hearst's lover, Marion Davies. Hearst later appointed her as Hollywood's first syndicated gossip columnist (Rollyson, 2014, p. 22; Sennett, 1998, p. 53).

HEDDA HOPPER

Born on 2 May 1885, Hopper began playing bit-parts in Hollywood, but by 1936 wrote for the weekly magazine *Movie Classics*. By 1938, she had a syndicated column for the *Los Angeles Times*. Hopper's support for the HUAC saw her target specific Hollywood figures and films if she thought them 'un-American' (Rollyson, 2014, p. 16; Cashmore, 2016, p. 71-72).

SHEILAH GRAHAM

Graham, born Lily Shiel in Leeds, England, on 15 September 1904, was originally an actor. Later she became a writer and gossip columnist. She supported Monroe, but clashed with Taylor (Rollyson, 2014, p. 14).

TAYLOR'S CIRCLE

MIKE TODD

Although no official records exist, Cohn (1956, p. 9) and Todd and McCarthy (1983, p. 13-14) agree that Avrom Hitsch Goldbogen was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on 22 June 1907. His childhood nickname was Toat, which later became Todd. At 5-years old, Todd worked as a pushcart peddler (Allan, 2011 [1961], p. 109), often earning more money than his rabbi father (Mann, 2009, p. 187-188). Having worked in construction, and then vaudeville and theatre, Todd became a major contributor to technical innovation in the film industry (IMDb.com,

2023). Todd was flamboyant and brash in the media's gaze, exploiting every opportunity to display his conspicuous consumption. Many attributed Taylor's penchant for exhibitionism to Todd's influence (Cashmore, 2016, p. 364).

KURT FRINGS

Small and compact, with jet black hair and a quick temper, Frings was a former lightweight boxing champ from Cologne, Germany. He eventually represented Brando, Audrey Hepburn and her husband Mel Ferrer, Lucille Ball, Dorothy McGuire, Hume Cronyn, and his wife Jessica Tandy.

DICK HANLEY

Originally from Los Angeles, Hanley worked for MGM and then as Todd's secretary's assistant. After Todd and Taylor married, Hanley became couple's factotum. It was Hanley and Kennamer who told Taylor about Todd's death. When Hanley appeared on *What's My line?* in March 1960, he was described as 'Elizabeth Taylor's Secretary' (Cashmore, 2016, p. 360).

REX KENNAMER

A physician from Pittsburgh, whose clients included Hudson and Sinatra (Cashmore, 2016, p. 362). When Clift was severely injured in a car accident on 12 May 1956, Taylor met Kennamer at the crash site. Kennamer was the person who found Clift crumpled in a heap on the floor of the car. Clift supposedly opened his eyes and recognized Kennamer, then gasped 'Doctor, I'd like you to meet Elizabeth Taylor. Elizabeth, this is Dr Kennamer' (Heymann, 1995, p. 140). Later, Kennamer supported Taylor at Todd's funeral.

EDDIE FISHER

Born in Philadelphia, on 10 August 1928, the fourth of Joseph and Katya Fisher's seven children, Edwin Jack Fisher (1981, p. 13) described moving home twenty times during his childhood. He also described his father as 'a nasty, abusive man, a tyrant,' explaining Eddie's later attachment to Todd. By the time he met Taylor, Fisher was a major chart success and married to Debbie Reynolds. Parsons and Hopper had billed them as America's Sweethearts, although their marriage was far from perfect: by the time Todd died, the Fisher-Reynolds

marriage was breaking down, but this was never reported to the press. Instead, Reynolds was portrayed as the cheated wife, generatING the idea of Taylor as a homewrecker.

MONROE'S CIRCLE

GEORGE CUKOR

George Cukor was born in Lower East Side, Manhattan, New York as George Dewey Cukor. Gay, Cukor was often termed a woman's director, because he excelled in scenes with women talking together in domestic interiors. For this reason, Selznick made him director of *Gone with the Wind* (1939), but later fired him fearing Cukor's pacing was slow. However, Cukor's career continued to enjoy success with films like *The Philadelphia Story* (1940, MGM) and *A Star Is Born* (1954, Transcona Enterprises) (IMDb.com, 2023).

KEY SOURCES

Here are fuller texts of the sources cited in the production history. They are arranged chronologically.

CAST LIST – MAY 1960

In January 1961, Wanger gave the May 1960 cast list to Mankiewicz (Roberts, 1960). Stating Cleopatra as 'cast', it outlined Nora Roberts' casting suggestions, who worked for Stuart Lyons. Significantly some of roles do not appear in Mankiewicz's cast, while many of the actors named do, not necessarily in the role listed here.

Caesar	Olivier, Gielgud, Redgrave, and Trevor Howard
Antony	Finch, Burton. Keith Michell, John Neville, Finney, O'Toole. Donald Houston, Ian Bannen, Richard Johnson, Michael Craig and Gary Raymond
Ptolemy	Michael Carida or Jeremy Spenser
Pothinus	Ralph Richardson, Hordern or Wolfitt
Apollodorus	Marius Goring or Patrick McGoohan
Ramus	Mark Dignam or Laurence Naismith
Marcus Brutus	John Clements, James Donald or Alec Clunes
Cassius	Anthony Quayle or Emlyn Williams
Octavian	Robert Stephens or Michael David
Achillas	Harry Andrews
Theodotus	Cyril Luckham or Felix Aylmer
Iras and Charmian	no suggestions
Enobarbus	Paul Rogers or Bernard Miles
Quintas	Alfred Burke or Stephen Murray

KEY SOURCES

Sebek	William Devlin
Septimus	Martin Benson
First Secretary	Jack Gwillim
Rufio	Russell Napier
Lucius	Jeremy Brett or Alan Bates
Casca	Geoffrey Keen
Decimus Brutus	Lawrence Hardy or Douglas Wilmer
Metellus Cimber	Robert Harris
Cinna	Lockwood West
Claudius	William Lucas
Pilas	Duncan Lamont or Michael Golden
Caesarion	no suggestions
Priest	Walter Hudd or John Le Measurier
Mehas	Hugh Cross or Charles Houston
Poulis	John Richardson
Roman Artisan	George Woodbridge
Artisan's Wife	no suggestions
Small boy	no suggestions
Milas the Slave	Patrick Troughton
Architect	John Welsh or William Squire
Court Chamberlain	Ralph Michael or Henry Oscar
First advisor	Robert Brown or Laurence Payne
Second advisor	Noel Howlett
Chief Priest	Charles Carson or Ernest Thesiger
Master of Ship	Nigel Stock or Norman Mitchell
Envoy from	Ronald Allen or Terence Longdon
Octavian	
Proculus	Anthony Newlands or Ernest Clarke
Legeros	Ian Hendrie or Robert Arnold

TAYLOR CONTRACT – AUGUST 1960

Taylor's 11 August 1960 contract (20th Century Fox, 1960a) can be summarised as follows.

The contract engaged Taylor to render her services in the leading female role of Cleopatra in connection with the motion picture tentatively entitled *Cleopatra*. Shooting would start 4 weeks after completing *Butterfield 8* (1960). Taylor would work for 6 weeks free of charge then for 10 weeks at \$12,500 – a total of \$125,000 – then once past the guaranteed picture period her rate of pay would be \$50,000 for each full week, again payable in weekly instalments. The same rate would apply for any additional retakes. Taylor would accrue no additional compensation for any of her services rendered at night or on Sundays or holidays or after the expiration of any particular number of hours or services in any period.

Fox did not require Taylor to render her services on Sundays and she would only work at night if principal photography required it. Taylor would always have a minimum rest of 12 hours between calls and no photography day would exceed 8 hours. Taylor was not required to work one day during any menstrual period but promised to make up any lost time at the end of the guaranteed period. Taylor was to report at Fox's studios, or elsewhere as designated, at 10:00am each day. If Fox felt that emergencies necessitated an earlier start-time they would notify Taylor the previous night.

The contract agreed that Taylor's services were special, unique, extraordinary and their intellectual character involved skill of the highest order, giving them peculiar value, the loss of which could not be reasonably or adequately compensated in damages in an action at law. Taylor granted Fox the exclusive right to photograph or otherwise reproduce all or any part of the artist's performances, acts, poses, plays and appearances of every kind and nature made or done by the artist in connection with the picture and to exhibit the results. Taylor also granted Fox the right to use her name and reproductions of her physical likeness and reproductions of her voice for the purpose of advertising and exploiting the picture. The contract allowed for Fox to use of the services of others to double or dub her and it also had the right to 'cut, edit, add to, subtract from, arrange, re-arrange, shorten and revise the picture in any manner it may in its sole discretion determine, and from time to time to change

KEY SOURCES

the title thereof, but in no event could the picture be cut to run for less than 75 minutes.' Fox also had the right to place in its film library for further use, any scenes photographed for the picture in which Taylor was not readily recognisable.

Taylor agreed to perform in good faith and to the best of her ability; and to comply with all reasonable directions, requests, rules, and regulations of Fox in connection therewith, whether or not the same involved matters or artistic taste or judgement. She agreed not to render any services with any other company and agreed, if requested, to travel as a passenger in an airplane operated by an airline regularly carrying passengers on scheduled flights, but not travel by air at the risk of Fox terminating the agreement. Fox could secure insurance with Taylor's assistance, such as submitting to usual medical and other examinations and by signing such applications and other instruments as may be required by such insurance company for such insurance. Taylor must also maintain the good standing of Screen Actors' Guild, Inc. She also agreed to aid Fox in making applications for passports, visas, work permits etc.

Regarding Taylor being or becoming incapacitated; the impairment of her voice, facial or physical disfigurement; the interruption of production by fire, flood, etc. all would lead to the cessation for a period of 1 week or more. This was 'force majeure.' However, Taylor's wilful failure, refusal, or neglect, otherwise than by reason of disability, to report or render her services when and as required hereunder would be an event of default. Fox could in these instances suspend her. Any such suspension would cease when events causing it ended, if a disability or disfigurement ended. Fox had the right to terminate the agreement: if a disability or disfigurement continued for 5 or more consecutive days or aggregate of 10 or more days, if any force majeure events continue for 6 or more consecutive weeks etc. This gave Fox the right to abandon or postpone the production, substitute another person in the role.

Fox was to furnish all modern wardrobe and wearing apparel reasonably necessary for the role to be portrayed by the artist. Fox agreed to pay Taylor \$3000 per week for all living expenses, including foods and lodging and provide her with a Rolls Royce and fulltime chauffeur. Fox would pay the cost of first-class round trip, transportation from Los Angeles, California, to London England, or such other place as may be designated by Fox, for 4 adults including the Artist and 3 children.

KEY SOURCES

Taylor's credit was to be billed in type size not less than 100% of the type size used for the title of the picture and her name would be billed in first position above the title of the picture. If the name or likeness of any party connected with the picture, other than any co-star, the director, author, or producer thereof appeared in any trailer or teaser advertising the picture, then Taylor's name and/or likeness would likewise appear and with greater prominence than that of such other party. Taylor could approve the selection of a stand-in. Fox would provide Taylor with a star's dressing room 'if available at the place where principal photography takes place, and a portable dressing room on the set where the picture was being shot.' Fox agreed to give Taylor a 16MM print of the picture after the picture had been made available for general release. Taylor could also approve all portrait and production stills in which she appeared. The contract also stated that Fox would not require Taylor to render any services within the territorial limits of the United States.

If Taylor needed to consult with Frings, Fox agreed to pay the first-class round-trip transportation of said agent from Los Angeles, California, to such location and the incidental expenses of said agent in connection with such trip; provided, however, that the obligation of Fox under this paragraph would be limited to 1 such round trip to such location.

MONROE LETTER TO STRASBERGS – FEBRUARY 1961

Hastily written and clearly in a highly emotional state, Monroe wrote this note to the Strasbergs. The errors were exactly as Monroe wrote them (Taraborrelli, 2009, p. 351).

'Dear Lee and Paula, Dr Kris has had me put into the New York Hospital—pstikiatric division under the care of two idiot doctors, they both should not be my doctors. You haven't heard from me because I'm locked up with all these poor nutty people. I'm sure to end up a nut if I stay in this nightmare, please help me Lee, this is the last place I should be—maybe if you called Dr Kris and assured her of my sensitivity and that I must get back to class . . . Lee, I try to remember what you said once in class "that art goes far beyond science" And the science memories around here I'd like to forget—like screaming women etc. please help me—if Dr Kris assures you I am all right you can assure her I am not. I do not belong here! I love you

KEY SOURCES

both Marilyn. P.S. forgive the spelling—and theres nothing to write on here. I'm on the dangerous floor its like a cell, can you imagine—cement blocks they put me in her because they lied to me about calling my doctor and foe and they had the bathroom door locked so I broke the glass and out side of that I havn't done anything that is uncooperative' (Summers, 1985, p. 200).

WANGER'S BUDGET ESTIMATE – NOVEMBER 1961

This budget was Wanger's own personal estimate of 11 November 1961 (Wanger, 1963, p. 107-108).

Scenario	93,285.11
Director	608,007.30
Producer and Assts	183,879.47
Producer and Directors Sectys	27,233.94
Cast	2,622,700.00
Seen. Dir. Cast	-3,535,105.82
Music	88,160.00
Re-recording	68,400.00
Titles, Inserts, Fades	50,000.00
Projectionists	2,253.50
Editorial	78,418.31
	-287,231.81
Art Costs	206,274.60
Set Costs	2,981,992.00
Lighting Platforms	29,052.00
Striking Costs	273,582.00
Miniatures	400,000.00
Spec. Photographic Effects	44,065.68

KEY SOURCES

Dance Director and Staff	60,550.00
Staff	321,266.77
Extras	1,324,537.32
Standby Labor and Material	161,481.11
Camera	140,544.64
Sound	56,706.65
Electrical	396,051.79
Mechanical Effects,	135.823.0
Set Dressing	527,532.84
Animals and Action Props	417.600.00
Women's Wardrobe)	1,211,900.00
Men's Wardrobe)	
Make-up and Hairdressing	138,771.07
Prod. Film and Lab. Work *,	250.0.00
Stills	47,600.00
Transportation Cars, Trucks	241,200.00
Talent Tests	2,894.97
Insur. Tax. Fringe Benefits	506,233.04
Location Expense	510,317.85
Miscellaneous	870,033.25
Stage Rentals	136
Totals	15,214,348.21

BURTON'S PRESS STATEMENT – FEBRUARY 1962

Although approved by Burton for release on 19 February 1962, he later retracted the statement saying it had been released in error by his press agent (Rubythor, 2011, p. 453).

‘For the past several days uncontrolled rumours have been growing about Elizabeth and myself. Statements attributed to me have been distorted out of proportion, and a series of

coincidences has lent plausibility to a situation which has become damaging to Elizabeth. Mr. Fisher, who has business interests of his own, merely went out of town to attend to them for a few days. My foster father, Philip Burton, has been quite ill in New York and my wife, Sybil, flew there to be with him for a time, since my schedule does not permit me to be there. He is very dear to both of us. Elizabeth and I have been close friends for over 12 years. I have known her since she was a child star and would certainly never do anything to hurt her personally or professionally. In answer to these rumours my normal inclination would be simply to say no comment, but I feel that in this case things should be explained to protect Elizabeth.'

VATICAN LETTER – APRIL 1962

Published in the Vatican's weekly Osservatore Della Domenica on 12 April 1962, this letter did not name Taylor directly, but was clearly about her (Rubython, 2011, p. 461).

'Dear Madam: When a short time ago you said that your marriage (the fourth, to be exact) would last a lifetime there were those who shook their heads in a rather sceptical way. We, always willing to believe the best, kept a steady head and didn't say a word. When afterwards you even went so far as to adopt a baby girl, almost as if to make more stable a bond which had no natural children, we really believed for a moment that things could have changed. But children, they say, count little, whether they are natural or legal children, and for illustrious ladies like you there is no child that counts. "My marriage is dead and buried," you apparently had the bad taste to say. And how about that for a lifetime which you declared three years ago? Does a lifetime mean only three years? And if your marriage is dead, then we have to say, as they say in Rome, it was killed dead. The trouble, my dear lady, is that you are killing too many of them. Even considering the one that was finished by a natural solution, there remain three husbands buried, with no other motive than a greater love that killed the one before. But, if we start using these standards and this sort of competition between the first, second, third, and the 100th love, where are we all going to end up? Right where you will finish—in an erotic vagrancy (we don't even want to use the word sentimental because that would seem a little bit too optimistic) without end or without a safe port, in which three years

means “for a lifetime.” It may well be that the next “for a lifetime” will get shorter and shorter to a year or maybe a year and a half, if everything goes well. The new “for a lifetime” appears to have almost officially started. Here and there remain coquettish displays of a modesty which does not exist. And your poor children, both your own and the one you took away from an honest institution? If nature does not allow you any more children, you at least should not go around asking for them, turning them into half orphans, orphans of live fathers and of mothers remarried for the second, third, and fourth time. But don’t these institutions think before handing out children to somebody? Don’t they ask for any moral references? In Italy such institutions are very demanding, and they do very well. They do not let themselves be seduced by money or fame but get down to hard facts and investigate the seriousness of the people. They can refuse a child to a capricious princess and entrust it instead to a farmer’s wife with a clear conscience. These children need an honoured name more than a famous name, a serious mother more than a beautiful mother, a stable father rather than a newcomer who can be dismissed at any time.’

ZANUCK’S PLAN FOR FOX – JUNE 1962

Published on 6 June 1962, this plan speculated how Zanuck might react were Skouras no longer Fox President. It marked the public initiation of Zanuck’s plan to claim the Fox presidency (Gussow, 1971, p. 241-242).

‘If and when Spyros decided that he wanted to step out of the presidency, I would present the following concrete recommendations based on the industry as it exists today. Whether or not I become the President is actually immaterial. I own with my family about 280,000 shares of stock, and the voting control of it all. I have a personal interest in the survival of the Corporation as well as a certain amount of pride in what was once described as “the best operating Studio in the industry.” I also have selfish interests ... I would close the Studio and only complete the films that are either already in production or committed for.... I would sell the Studio to the Fox Realty Company or a third party. During the transition period, the President of Fox, who should also be in my opinion, the Chief Producer, would take four or even six months to not only complete and edit the films already in production, but to weed

KEY SOURCES

out the misfits and to study story properties and make future constructive production plans ... I firmly do not believe that our world grosses will suffer radically even if we do not start another picture in the next six or eight months.'

TOP GROSSING MOVIES 1964-1977

Taken from thenumbers.com (2023), from 1949 to 1962, of the top 3 grossing movies for each year, the epic genre dominated, along with Disney feature cartoons and one or two musicals. Following Cleopatra's release, until 1977 there was only 1 year featuring an epic and 1 year there was a re-release of Gone with the Wind (1939). Of the remainder, there were 4 years with musicals, but then the form declined in popularity. In 3 years, the Bond franchise dominated, but following Jaws (1975) the science fiction movie dominated.

Year	Rank	Title	Genre	Gross Box-Office
1964	1	Mary Poppins	Musical	\$102,272,145
	2	My Fair Lady	Musical	\$72,000,000
	3	Goldfinger	Bond	\$51,100,000
1965	1	The Sound of Music	Musical	\$163,214,286
	2	Doctor Zhivago	Historical Drama	\$111,721,913
	3	Thunderball	Bond	\$63,600,000
1966	1	The Bible: In the Beginning	Epic	\$34,900,023
	2	Hawaii	Drama	\$34,562,222
	3	Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?	Drama	\$33,736,689
1967	1	The Graduate	Comedy	\$104,302,826
	2	The Jungle Book	Musical	\$98,361,937
	3	Gone with the Wind (re-release)	Historical Drama	\$64,222,222
1968	1	Funny Girl	Musical	\$58,500,000
	2	2001: A Space Odyssey	Sci-Fi Drama	\$56,715,371
	3	The Odd Couple	Comedy	\$44,527,234

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1969	1	Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid	Western	\$102,308,900
	2	The Love Bug	Family	\$50,576,808
	3	Midnight Cowboy	Drama	\$44,785,053
1970	1	Love Story	Drama	\$106,397,186
	2	Airport	Thriller/Suspense	\$100,489,150
	3	M*A*S*H	Black Comedy	\$81,600,000
1971	1	Billy Jack	Western	\$98,000,000
	2	Fiddler on the Roof	Musical	\$78,722,370
	3	Diamonds Are Forever	Bond	\$43,800,000
1972	1	The Godfather	Drama	\$133,698,921
	2	The Poseidon Adventure	Action	\$93,300,000
	3	What's Up, Doc?	Comedy	\$57,142,740
1973	1	The Exorcist	Horror	\$193,000,000
	2	The Sting	Comedy	\$159,616,327
	3	American Graffiti	Drama	\$115,000,000
1974	1	Blazing Saddles	Comedy	\$119,500,000
	2	Towering Inferno	Action	\$116,000,000
	3	The Trial of Billy Jack	Action	\$89,000,000
1975	1	Jaws	Horror	\$260,000,000
	2	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	Drama	\$108,981,275
	3	Shampoo	Comedy	\$49,407,734
1976	1	Rocky	Drama	\$117,235,147
	2	To Fly! (IMAX Film)	Documentary	\$86,600,000
	3	A Star is Born	Drama	\$63,129,898
1977	1	Star Wars Ep. IV: A New Hope	Sci-Fi Adventure	\$195,728,453
	2	Close Encounters of the Third Kind	Sci-Fi Adventure	\$166,000,000
	3	Saturday Night Fever	Drama	\$137,778,374

AUSTIN INTERVIEW

At the time of the interview, Ray Austin (2020) was 88 years old. During his 63-year career he had made over 300 hours of TV. The interview took place on Zoom and the following transcribes the key points of the interview. The points are arranged chronologically, but rather than being a full transcript, this text draws out only the recollections pertinent to the making of Cleopatra (1963).

‘We had such an array of cast which kept coming backwards and forwards from England to work on bits and pieces. Great names.’

‘Fortunately for me Richard was a great mate, I'd known him, I'd worked with him a lot doing stunts and one thing an another, ‘cause I started off in the stunt work before I became a writer and a director.’

‘My greatest mate in it was Roddy McDowell, we go back to 1954/55 in Hollywood with Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, and all those... Roddy was always a big laugh.’

‘Elizabeth, I knew very well through Roddy and everything, they were child actors together, but Roddy was a great guy.’

‘[About Rooney, McDowell, and Taylor] I'd hear them talk about the time they were fed pills to keep them on set ... they were money machines.’

‘The UK shoot I just went on as a stunt man, because a stunt man called John Sullivan used to double Richard was running it there when it was at Pinewood ... I was just a stunt guy, I didn't get the arranger job on it, because I didn't have an in on the production at that time. As you know then the rain came and that set was ripped to pieces, I mean there was nothing hardly left of it, every piece of plaster that was put up was all fallen down. It was rotten. As far as we knew, as the kids working on it, it was cancelled. End of subject. And then the word went out they were going to start up again and they were going to start in Rome. I didn't think any

more of it because John Sullivan would have employed me if they were taking stuntmen out to Rome for it, so I put a cap on it for a couple of days, and then I got a call. I went to The White Elephant which was a restaurant in Curzon Street and I went that night and Richard Burton was there and he said that he was going to do *Cleopatra*... and Rex is going to do it as well. And I knew Rex as well. So, I thought 'Christ that is incredible,' so I thought 'I've got to get in on this - I'll speak to John Sullivan' who had moved on to another film, and Stuart Lyons who was the casting director was an old friend and his wife Mary Selway.... So, I called Stuart Lyons and asked him if the stunt co-ordinator's job was going and he said I'll get back to you and he did and said yes.... Make your way to Cinecitta. I made my way to Stuart Lyon's office in Pinewood because they were still clearing stuff out of Pinewood, and I signed a contract, and I had the OK then to take over 4 people with me. I took over Romo Gorrara who became my assistant on it, and Romo spoke Italian fluently because he is Italian.'

'They gave me a beautiful apartment on the Via Solaria, I couldn't believe the apartment I got, it was absolutely incredible. I moved in and started to try to sort it out under Ray Kellogg, Ray Kellogg who I knew from America. Ray Kellogg had been director and second unit director on some of the western stuff I did in Hollywood. So, I knew Ray. So, I started working with him.... He was really a visual effects man, Ray, in the old days, but he directed as well, and he was the second unit director. He used to walk around all day with a cowboy hat on - sunglasses and cowboy hat. And I started the work under his direction... Romo was my interpreter, and he was also Ray's [Kellogg] interpreter for a while when Ray didn't have his guy. And that's how I got in to Cinecitta and so on. And I was pleased because Elizabeth was on it, I knew Elizabeth, so I was going into home ground. I knew most of the stars who were there.'

[talk about the rep company mentioned in Angela Douglas's biography – Ray talked about actors being brought in for one line here and there] 'And they were called back.... the saying came out was ... 'if you sit on the Via Veneto in the evening in Rome you will meet someone you know.' It still happens with us [he and his wife] why I don't know – but at the time of *Cleopatra* you would, because the Via Veneto was full of the Repertory company that was always stuck there. So, you'd be sitting there drinking coffee and you'd see these faces come by ... It'd be like sitting in Chelsea somewhere.... But a lot of those actors paid their own way backwards and forwards because they got fed up of staying there. But then they would be

called back, because someone would go through a script and say ... I mean ridiculous – oh he should be in the background.... Stupid decisions were made day after day.

I know that the script was not finished. I know that they were writing stuff and sending it over all the time in pouches and one thing or another. And also you had the writers out there [Ray couldn't remember the names] ... that happened, you know and most of the time [Mankiewicz] was like a bear with a sore head, except when he was with his buddy Rex. I mean hm and Rex you know they seemed to have an affinity thing going on. Which I think Richard used to hate sometimes, because Richard was always left on the side-line ... but bear in mind Richard made a rod for his own back there because him and Elizabeth, all that was going on, so everybody was sort of off of him ... you would find you were on the set and Mankiewicz would be talking to Harrison or one of the others in the background and you'd always see Richard at the side, sitting on his own.. until Elizabeth arrived or anything like that. He isolated himself a little bit. I think he isolated himself mainly with the men because they were all pissed off, because they really wanted to screw Elizabeth their selves. There was a jealousy thing going on there between a lot of the actors. But Richard Isolated himself a lot and he was drinking one hell of a lot.'

'Bear in mind Elizabeth already had the tracheotomy through getting pneumonia, so now there was a rule, it said in her contract that said she wouldn't come on to the forum set unless it was dry for three days... it had to be three days dry on the forum set before she would go on it...'¹

[Referring to the affair] 'they say he instigated it ... alright so they got together. How, I still don't remember, I think it was in the intercontinental that they got together, because I know he was well up and happy, but Elizabeth was the one who had the power and pulled the strings to make everything else happen When she got her railway carriage – she got a railway carriage on the set - who sanctioned Richard to have a railway carriage? Elizabeth. Who sanctioned the concertina between the two carriages should be butted up together? They put a strip of railway lines down on the back of the forum set, which wasn't used. Her

¹ As noted in the contract – see Appendix 2, there was no such rider.

carriage came in, then the other carriage came in and they were apart? 14/15 feet apart. But there's those concertinas between the carriages and two days later they were pushed together. Elizabeth was the only one who had the power for this, no one else had the power to do this. If shooting stopped, if shooting stopped and [Mankiewicz] said right that's it and everything stopped you can bet your life it was Elizabeth because of not feeling well or not wanting to do something or disagreeing with the script... it was her. Because she changed, Elizabeth changed because when I first knew Elizabeth, she was a lot lot younger like Judy Garland who I knew so well – she wasn't dominating like that and then she found her power. And her power was big, very big.'

'What Elizabeth was in her early career Monroe was all the way through her career – she was bullied, told what to do everything, Elizabeth found her power. She stated to find her power I think after *Butterfield 8* ... she was shrewd, she was accomplished, and she was very business-like. Still, She was very likable Elizabeth ... on the general term of things she was a nice person – you joked, she laughed, you would have a lot of fun – a lot of fun, but when she got on the set... she had a childish power. Hard to describe. When she'd come out on to that set, she was still the little Elizabeth, but underneath it you knew that she was going to do something in a minute. You know start rehearsing the first line, but you knew something was going happen – it would be something like 'I don't like that. I can't say that. I don't like that. I don't think it would happen that way. But there was a very nasty thing that happened on that movie, which no one knows about, I don't think anyone knows about it. When Ray Kellogg had the heart attack I took over, so-called director of second unit – I wasn't the director, I was carrying on what Ray had got me doing. So I carried that on and everybody kept it quiet that Ray had had a heart attack – he didn't really want it to get out so it was never really publicised that he had had a heart attack..... He had to get out, so he was shipped out and I was the only one left they who knew exactly what we were doing.

I had a lot of extras on that set. Most days there I had over 4,000 people on that set.... That's a lot of 'em. For the first 9 days nobody had any costumes they were all there in their [civvies]... but when we got the costumes, I saw a guy in the middle of a lot of people dressed in costume in civilian clothes with like a script standing amongst them talking and I said to Romo 'who's that?' Cause there's so many hundreds of people there, hundreds of people. So, he says 'I

don't know, I'll go down and ask.' So he goes down to find out, because I want to – this is my set, all these people are mine so I want to do a job and I know what that job is because Ray has been making me do it for days and days and days and then he left and I'm doing it on my own day by day by day. And Romo came back and said 'he's an historian.' So, I said 'get him out of there, he's not supposed to be here.' So, he went down and the guy went, So any way, what the guy did, he found his way around and spoke to someone who was close to Elizabeth.... He got to Elizabeth, and he told Elizabeth that the archway that we are going to pull her through, was not built until 300 years after. This suddenly – this was silly, she was going to be pulled through an archway that didn't exist as Cleopatra. She went to Mankiewicz about it and told Mankiewicz and 'all this is not right. There's so many things that are not correct in history about what we are making.' And one hell of a row erupted about how this guy got on the set and – well anyone could get on the set – how the guy got on the set, and the trouble it was going to cause, and she was wanting the script changing and they weren't going to have an arch way and all this. And I mean it got very ugly for about two days with these arguments going on about the authenticity of the script and what was known. I mean I didn't know, none of us knew the Archway didn't exist for 300 years [Arch of Titus].'

'No one I think has ever seen all the material that was shot on that movie. [Mankiewicz] shot 6 hours. There was so much stuff that was never in the movie and that has never seen the light of day. When I started the rehearsals with Ray. We had 100 trumpeters around the top of the steps ... we had 100 trumpeters – with a trumpet that went all the way round their body – on pedestals and the pedestals were about 8 feet high, that was never in the movie. That went out of the movie.... [Hermes Pan] had 100 veiled dancers at the beginning of the procession before the horses came in all dancing up to Caesar. That disappeared, some of the dancers were left decorating the balustrade and one thing and another. And a lot of it we had to cut out because a lot of the dancers used to sunbathe at Ischia beach at the weekends and they all had bra marks on them, it was ridiculous. You see these girls turning round and they'd got bra marks on them. There was a lot of funny things happened like that. That's when we shot that, in 63 [sic] we did the forum set, we shot it, I rehearsed it for 2½ weeks after Ray disappeared and I did the last rehearsal, then he came in and shot, and I just took a back seat and stood back and now and again I was asked a question. Very seldom asked anything because it was all laid on, I had it all worked out with drumbeats. I'll never get a job like that

again in my life. I mean it was an incredible job. When I was rehearsing that and I used to shout cut, it used to echo around the set because you can imagine 3,000 or 4,000 people there and a voice in a loud hailer saying cut no one ever heard it.... To actually stop it happening took about 7 or 8 minutes because people were still acting.

When we first started, with Ray, getting everybody together, we knew how many people we wanted so there were people out like tipsters or theatre scouts in Rome trying to get people be extras.... There were so many people you needed, Cinecittà was used to movies but not on that scale. First of all, Mankiewicz wanted I think it was 400 black slaves, there weren't 400 who we could use as black slaves in Rome. No way. So the idea was, the same as what we did on Spartacus, is spray everybody in the morning in the tent, spray 'em black.... Stuart Lyons found out... and he was dealing with the extras guild in Rome. [They] would not stand it, so as you know in the sequence we've got black and white people pulling [Taylor] in. One of the guys was blacked-up who was a friend of Elizabeth's, because he was a dancer in New York. When they lift her up – the 6 guys lift her up – and bring her down ... one of those guys was blacked up ... camera right second guy in, I think.'

'[Mankiewicz] wanted 100 drummers on horse. So, we had a horse, with a drum on each side of it, and the guys playing, with armour. He wanted these as well. Zebras. 20 Zebras, they were donkeys painted with stripes. You couldn't get Zebras. It was impossible to get Zebras, it was not possible. So, there was all these factors when Ray and I started ... I was down the line with Ray. I laid it all on, but he had all these assistants but down the line it came, Ray Austin, Ray Austin can take care of that.... So, we got it all worked out. Now Ray would disappear, he'd go to his office, and I would start. First of all, I started with my slaves pulling that in, the sphinx in, because first of all we only had rope, we didn't have the bars, we didn't have the toggle on those bars. We just had rope. We'd now got 500 people... we were 4 abreast and we went back a long way. So, we just had ropes, these long pieces of rope and they had 'em on their shoulder and I had a drummer, with a drum beat and it used to start 'cinque, sei, sette, otto, boom boom.' We did all this before we got the equipment, so I've got these playing around with ropes. Then we decided we weren't going to bring the extras in for those backgrounds because all the other was too important. So now trumpeters, the trumpeters

had to get up on these [pedestals]... at the top they were about 24 inches by 24 inches, that's' all.

So, I get them all up round, round all the way round except the entrance and by the time I'd got round and looked at it this guy got down because he wanted to pee. That guy over there was tired, his legs hurt. I mean I could never get everybody up there all at the same time. It was driving me insane these stupid things that were going on. Hermes then would want the set for the dancers because he wanted to rehearse the dancers with the veils. He never had any veils so they had these pieces of stuff, and Hermes was upset with them because he couldn't find enough dancers there. He was picking extras out that they had to get in for these dancers.'

'Once I rehearsed that first part he would say 'Cut! Finish!' Everybody would go back, it would take a day, day and a half to get all those people back.... I never had the crowd, never had the extras yet, because the extras would be in the way, you know.... I went up to Stuart Lyons' office because I wanted to get Romo an extension to stay out longer because he was going to do another job. And he was my lifeline because he spoke Italian. I used to say something a microphone and he would translate it....

There was a back part of the forum set where the camera position was really, facing the arch. Behind that set there was a fence and a field, and the field went back to the road that leads to the airport. I looked down there and there was a pathway through the grass.... Romo and I went down there, and we looked and the fence you could pull back. So, I said, something's fishy here. I said there's nowhere to go over here, but why is it all worn out? But what they were doing the extras mainly the people that were... extras in the background that weren't connected with the intricate stuff like pulling the ropes or playing trumpets. They would come in, get their chit in the morning, go round the back of the set, and they'd go back into town, spend the day there and they'd come back in the evening and get their money. They were sneaking out. Because by this stage I have about 1,000/1,500 on the set all doing different things.... So, they close the fence up and what they started to do was give them a half chit that they would only pay if they had the other half chit with them.'

[About the sense that Wanger appeared but didn't do much] 'You've got that exactly right, He would appear, and everybody would think that this is it, because he would walk around with a lot of people around him... and then his big thing would be the Via Veneto.... We all used to go to a bar – Dave Crowley, the American Bar ... we'd all get down there at night ... you'd see him there, you'd see him with an [group] of people around him. But I would say your estimation is right... he didn't want the problems of what was going on there. He wanted the accolade of it, obviously, because he was the man. I think he just did tours I saw him twice. But I know he was there on the main set, but I was out on the forum. He came to the forum once but not when I was running it, when Ray Kellogg.'

'We moved a body of people in one shot at one corner of the forum and there was a boy and a girl screwing on a bale of straw behind the scaffolding. I mean it was crazy... I had binoculars, so I could look before I did anything, because I had a crane, I sat on a big crane. I'd look through binoculars at that and see two of the slaves with sunglasses, and maybe one's got a watch on, the other one a wedding ring. It happened all the time. You'd spot people. You'd see a woman dressed in a top all ragged and pull and her hair and that and someone would move out the way and she had a pair of jeans on. I'm telling you; it sounds silly but this what it was. It was so many many people.'

'I was going to do what we called my dress rehearsal, which was going to be everything. Stuart Lyons came down, Mankiewicz was going to come down and watch it, because he was going to shoot it obviously.... Elizabeth decides that she wants to do it. So, I saw her the night before with Richard. I said, "Do you want to do this?"

She said, "Yes... and I spoke the Cinematographer and he wants me to wear a gold shawl, so it gave him a feeling of what it looks like."

I said "Elizabeth, it's going to be a nightmare. You've got no idea how many people are going to be on that set."

"I've heard" she said "I've heard. I want to do it." So, she is going to ride that sphinx down – she is the only actor there. Well, there were other actors there, but they'd just want to come and watch. So, we got it all ready and we're going to do this at 11 o'clock.... The first final rehearsal of what Mankiewicz is going to film. 14 35mm cameras and I think there was about 22 16mm

cameras.... Jack [Hilliard] was there with me obviously, cause he was the one who decided what the lighting was going to be when they did it. Elizabeth's in place, everybody's in place. At this time, we still had drummer, we still had zebras and we still had Hermes with his dancing ladies. All that was there.... And so, we started we've got a megaphone, I'm on the camera on a crane and we started, 'cinque, sei, sette, otto,' boom, boom [this is Ray recalling the drum beat]. Now I've got everybody with toggles on the leathers, all coming down. Boom. They come in through the arch and I'm watching it through the camera. I'm looking at the drummers, it is going well.... At last, at the other side of the archway I can see Elizabeth – she kept her word, she's come out – and she's sitting on top of it with a shawl. And I'm watching. Boom. All going well. Hermes dancers were coming it was – I'd rehearsed this – Ray. I'd done this, I'd done this. Nearly 4,000 5,000 people. And I'm on this fucking camera. It's marvellous. Boom. And I look again. Boom. And I see that the archway is coming with her. The arch is coming as well as her. Boom, and it's still coming.... One of the back wheels and the pin that went through the back wheel had caught on the scaffolding at the back of the archway because it wasn't backed up straight. Every night it always backed in perfect someone had done it slightly off.... And everybody is cheering, the drum is beating, we had play back of trumpeters all going but above all this, to this day I swear this now, I heard above all this. 'Fuck you Austin, get me off of here. Fuck you.' Its Elizabeth. 'Basta! Cut! Finire!' It took about 8/9 minutes for everybody to stop because everybody is still acting. No one was listening. It would stop and the arch way is turning and turning. I mean it did stop, and I mean Mankiewicz thought it was funny, but he was in on Elizabeth's side. She was so pissed; she never spoke to me for two days. I saw her on the Via Veneto, not that night, but the night after, and she [gestures her sticking up two fingers at him].'

'When we saw dailies on this.... Because there were so many cameras... I think we were in there two days looking at all the stuff. We did see people with sunglasses, people with watches, with wedding rings, engagement rings, which didn't matter because you would just cut it out. There was so much material.... It was ridiculous, but I mean there was a car in there, they saw a car.... Someone had parked their car in the opening.... But it was an incredible sequence. It's an incredible sequence.'

'The second time we did a nearly dress rehearsal, we had all the slaves and the toggles and bars and with the four across. In the front row, there was a slave, that I spotted, and I thought it was a joke. I thought someone's having a joke and it was Jack Palance. In the first four, Jack Palance and I said to Romo 'what's' going on?' I thought that Richard and Rex were messing me about and that having a giggle. 'Jack Palance' I said 'there.' They looked, they said 'Christ yeah.' So Romo goes down says to come back and see me. And it wasn't Jack Palance, the guy's Italian. So, I said 'what's the story?' so he says, 'he's Jack Palance's double....' Anyway, they fired the guy, because Jack Palance's manager paid this guy not to be an extra. He used to wander around the streets of Rome, not having to work because he was paid a daily salary by Jack Palance's management.... not to be an extra.'

'Watching [Mankiewicz] work, watching him direct and work, without knowing what I know now or knew towards the end of the show, I would say that he was determined to put history on film. He was determined to make it the thing what happened. I didn't know at that stage that these things were not correct, that certain people and the writers had got it wrong in so many ways. But what he was doing was true to him. That was the way I felt – he was intense, with Elizabeth, of giving directions or talking about scenes. I got the feeling he wanted to show us what really happened in that room or that hall. I would say he was very sincere about it.'

[Asked about the sense that they were all making a great film] 'Oh yes.'

[Was there a positive feeling on set or negative] 'positive. Always, always positive, you were surrounded with – all the things, and the bits and pieces that went with it, the art department and the sets that were built and the costumes. The costumes were incredible. And the armour and that, you had to feel that you were going to be proud of this. You know when you had those kids that come off the streets, the soldiers I had and that on horseback. They came in off the streets and what have in their jeans and once they put all that stuff on, I mean they changed, they were proud.... No, I think everybody was proud and knew it was going to be a success.'

‘Hermes Pan and I had this conversation because he said ‘the quality of this stuff is marvellous, and I wanted to do more dance sequences.’

‘The only impact [the affair] had as far as I was concerned, or I noticed. It didn’t concern me because I wasn’t the director. But the impact was that she was late more often... also if she was late, we knew why because they were in those fucking train carriages. And that was the reason why and they were pissing around, or they were still on the Via Veneto at 1 o’clock in the morning sitting there drinking.... I wouldn’t have said anything to her because most of the time I was there as well. But a resentment started because everybody would be waiting for her to come in and sometimes it never happened, so they would all get out their gear and we’d not do that scene today. That happened quite a few times. That was put down to Richard and her.’

‘I think everything stems from Elizabeth’s attitude on the day. No one else had the power... You know, Martin Landau tripping on the steps and that would not make any difference, he’d pick himself up and be done.... No one had the power except Elizabeth, with her bad throat, her contract conditions to cause such disturbance. If there was a disturbance for [Mankiewicz] it was because of what was happening to her. And her disturbance would be that the people were not treating Richard right. You look at a lot of stills shots I saw back on those days.... Richard was nearly always on his own. He’d gone aside from other people. He was still buddies with Rex and other people, and Martin and Roddy. Roddy and he used to get on very well.... we rehearsed a sword fight one day Richard and I – we were rehearsing a sword fight and he wasn’t even with me – he was with me and suddenly wham he hit me and he cut me here [right forefinger knuckle]. Blood spurting out, I had to go the first aid and they stitched it and brought a doctor in because he had cut a tendon – and he said to me after ‘Ah I’m so sorry I wasn’t thinking, I wasn’t thinking.’ I said ‘what were you thinking of?’ he said ‘I don’t know I just wasn’t thinking [sword moves] 1,2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4. My head just went. I’m sorry I’m sorry.’ And bear in mind he was drinking an awful lot... Why when he was supposed to be so happy, I’ll never know....

On *V.I.P.s* he and Elizabeth were different people. We used to sit in the back of that Rolls Royce in the airport waiting to do the shot pulling up at the entrance. And we’d sing cockney

songs – until the day he slagged a policeman off and we had to stop... we got thrown out of the airport... I pulled up to the front of the hotel and a policeman said something as he got out of the car and Richard turned round and started effing and blinding at him one thing and another and anyway, he called the inspector and they closed us down, wouldn't let us in the hotel. Big apologies had to be done and one thing and another. Dear little Margaret Rutherford went home again and couldn't care less.... Richard and Elizabeth were different on that picture, they were both still drinking badly.'

[On the affair] 'Roddy and I had this conversation – and he swore to me he did not know – that Elizabeth engineered that their two suites at the intercontinental were next to each other. And he would never say, because we thought that Elizabeth manufactured the fact that those two suites were next together. Now those two suites were the presidential suite, one of them was and the presidential suite had a doorway into the other suite.'

[Asked about timing and the villa] 'Yes but she kept the intercontinental as well in case she didn't want to go back. Because if she wanted to dine in Rome or the Via Veneto ... she wouldn't want to go back to the villa. That was kept for her, she didn't keep it, the company kept it....'

[When asked about the Burton comment about screwing Taylor in his Cadillac] 'He would never have done that... listen they tried to still keep it a secret when they had the carriages... why would they do that? I don't think it's possible. They were still playing the innocent and if she was late and Mankiewicz said were you with Richard – in a nice way - ... She would say he does his own thing.'

[Were you aware on the set that Fox was in trouble?] 'Yes, oh yes. When they went to Ischia to shoot the boat arrival, and they got there and the storm had ripped all that down – all gone, and Mankiewicz just stood there and said rebuild it... turned round and walked away. As simple as that. People then started to think back to England and that rebuild of that set. "No don't rebuild it, let's cancel the movie. No let's move to Rome." A lot of people said this is never going to be shown. Especially a lot of the actors... like Martin [Landau]. It's never going to be shown. This has got to be in trouble, this is costing a fortune. And it was a lot of money

in those days. The Fox were blaming it on Marilyn Monroe and the other picture [*Something's Got to Give*] they were saying that she was going to bankrupt them. No, the word was out, people were scared that the film was never going to be made. And then the word started to come out about the material that we had.... The word got around that we have enough here for two Cleopatras. He shot so much stuff.

[About the 2-film idea] 'He could have got the idea at any time to do that himself, because that was one of the sayings on the set, you know, we've got enough film shot here already to make two movies. It was always being said, always being said... even the Italians were saying it, not that it was ridiculous but that they knew that they had been shooting so long, in so many countries that it was going one and on and on... you've got enough film there for two movies.... It was so vast, so vast.... It was breathtakingly vast. When I first sat on that crane camera for the full-dress-rehearsal when she screamed at me, I looked at the forum, waiting for me to say go... it was incredible.'

FILM CHRONOLOGY

The following places the films mentioned in the production history in chronological order and provides brief explanations of their impact on Fox, *Cleopatra*, and its cast and crew.

Cleopatre Melies produced this 4-minute film, the first to
(Méliès, 1899) feature Cleopatra on film (Pina Polo, p. 190-191 in Knippschild and Morcillo ed., 2015).

Ben-Hur The first film version of the Ben-Hur story, a 15-
(Olcott and Rose, 1907, Kalem minute film that covered the basic plot elements.
Company) This was the first film to question who owned the film rights to a novel. It also spawned the silent epics that followed. A print of the film still exists (Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 48; Solomon, 2001, p. 6).

Antony and Cleopatra A short film treating the second half of the Cleopatra
(Blackton and Kent, 1908, Vitagraph) story, America's library of congress holds a print of the film. The film starred Maurice Costello and Florence Lawrence (Solomon, 2001, p. 6; Wyke, 1997, p. 76).

Cleopatra Produced by Pathé in France (Hall and Neale, 2010,
(Andréani and Zecca, 1910, Pathé p.22).
Frères)

Cleopatra A 100-minute version of the film, the first full-length
(Gaskill, 1912, Helen Gardner Players version of the film and based on the Helen Gardener
Pictures) Players' stage production (Solomon, 2001, p. 63). A copy of the film still exists.

*Marc'Antonio e
Cleopatra*

(Guazzoni, 1913, Società Italiana
Cines)

A 72-minute version of the film produced by Roman production house Cines, rival to the Pathé studio in France (Wyke, 1997, p. 76). A copy of the film still exists.

Quo Vadis?

(Guazzoni, 1913, Società Italiana
Cines)

One of the first 2-hour films ever made and the first treatment of the *Quo Vadis?* story. This Italian version was cut in 1914 into a shorter film under the title *The Sign of the Cross*. A copy of the film still exists.

Giulio Cesare

(Guazzoni, 1914, Cines)

A 112-minute film, with a semi-documentary style. It was the first to feature a lavish triumph scene, establishing a trope for later Hollywood films (Solomon, 2001, p. 59-60).

Cleopatra

(Edwards, 1917, Fox)

The first Fox treatment of the Cleopatra story and starring Bara. Fox turned it into one of the first 'superpictures,' with an unprecedented \$500,000 and releasing it as a roadshow (Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 42, 45). Following 2 fires, only 20 seconds of the film still exist.

The Ten Commandments

(DeMille, 1923, Paramount)

De Mille proposed the subject to Paramount for a \$1,000,000 budget. On its release it broke the box-office record for any film to date (Toeplitz, 1974, P. 42, 43).

Ben-Hur

(Niblo, 1925, MGM)

This film was intended as the first release of the newly formed MGM studio. It ran over budget and needed to reshoot before it could premiere. The film did not break even until its reissue in 1930, even though it was a box-office success (Hall and Neale,

2010, p. 48).

The Last Days of Pompeii

(Gallone and Palermi, 1926, Società Italiana Grandi Films)

Running at just over 3-hours, this Italian-produced film failed at the box-office bringing about the end of the silent epic genre (Solomon, 2001, p. 82-83).

Sign of the Cross

(DeMille, 1932, Paramount)

DeMille's first talking picture set in the ancient world. It starred Colbert as Poppaea, whose performance angered the league of decency (Wyke, 1997, p. 92-94), and in part led to the appointment of Joseph Breen as the Production Code Administration chief who then enforced the Hays Code. (Cashmore, 2016, p. 1).

Queen Christina

(Mamoulian, 1933, MGM)

Wanger's first film working for MGM. Mayer signed Wanger for \$2,000 per week (Schatz, 1998, p. 162). Mamoulian directed the film marking the first time he worked with Wanger.

Cleopatra

(DeMille, 1934, Eureka Entertainment)

The first talking version of the Cleopatra story, again returning DeMille to the ancient world and reuniting him with Colbert as the lead actress. This was the last film released before the production code came into force, meaning the film faced no restrictions (Feeney, F. X., 2009, 00:01:52).

Gone with the Wind

(Fleming, 1939, Warners)

Selznick's near 4-hour epic film that as Basinger remarked, challenged running time, budget, scale and even censorship. Selznick had taken great risk to produce it and in doing so created a film virtually unique in the annals of Hollywood, setting the standard for decades (Leva, G. and Nasr, C., 2009, 01:02:41).

- Caesar and Cleopatra*
(Pascal, 1945, Granada Ventures) Costing a then record £1,278,000, it was the most expensive British film to date, leading to questions in the House of Commons. (Richards, 2008, p. 151). However, other than the film's final battle scenes, the film is not an epic, but an adaptation of Shaw's play (Solomon, 2001, p. 67).
- Dragonwyck*
(Mankiewicz, 1946, Fox) Mankiewicz's first film as writer and director, and one that established his focus on strong female characters 'who emerge from the confines of their society' (Lower and Palmer, 2001, p. 76-77).
- Captain from Castile*
(King, 1947, Twilight Time) Fox addressed post-war union conflict by moving productions outside Hollywood, leading eventually to the use of foreign locations. Some parts of this film were shot in Mexico (Lev, 2013, p. 107). Today, the film's interpretation of the Conquistador Cortez is questionable, but the story aims to tell the story of the conquest of Mexico through the titular hero played by Tyrone Powers, Fox's biggest male star at the time. The 2-hour 20-minute running time made this a large picture, and it was the popularity of this film that led Zanuck to formulate his 'big picture' idea.
- Joan of Arc*
(Fleming, 1948, Walter Wanger Productions) Wanger's first fully-fledged independent film, for which the \$4,500,000 negative cost made it more expensive than *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Following audits by the Internal Revenue Service, Wanger's income soon evaporated, compounded by RKO's refusal to give the film a roadshow release (Bernstein, 1994, p. 243-244, 257-258-244). Bergman was Oscar nominated along with 6 other nominations, but not for best picture.

Samson and Delilah

(DeMille, 1949, Paramount)

DeMille engineered the return of the ancient epic with this film, which became Paramount's highest grossing film with – by 1955 – domestic rentals of \$7,976,730 and \$6,232,520 overseas. The film inspired many other epics (Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 136). The real aim of *Samson and Delilah* (1949) was to challenge the rise of television.

All About Eve

(Mankiewicz, 1950, Fox)

Mankiewicz' 'meditation on the nature of women' (Custen 1996, p. 338-339), had a 5-act structure that anticipated *Cleopatra* (Dick, 1983, p. 20). Running for 130 minutes, it garnered 14 Oscar nominations, finally breaking *Gone with the Wind's* (1939) record of 13, Mankiewicz and Zanuck won for screenplay and direction, and best picture respectively (Custen, 1996, p. 342). The film also featured Monroe in an early supporting role, so marked the only time Mankiewicz worked with her.

Winchester '73

(Mann, 1950, Universal)

The film for which Wasserman won for James Stewart a deal that made Stewart Hollywood's highest-paid star (Schatz, 1998, p 469). Directed by Anthony Mann – who later directed *El Cid* (1961) – for *Winchester '73* (1950) Stewart earned \$600,000 bringing about the end of long-term studio contracts (Cashmore, 2016, p. 90).

A Place in the Sun

(Stevens, 1951, Paramount)

Taylor's first movie with Stevens as director and opposite co-star Montgomery Clift (Hirsch, 1975, p. 50). It was also the first time Taylor appeared in an adult role and through filming she grew to admire Clift's approach to acting (Taylor, 1988, p. 80).

Quo Vadis?
(Le Roy, 1951, Warners)

Following a 6-month shoot and costing \$7,000,000, LeRoy's film was a direct homage to DeMille's epic film template. It was shot on location at Cinecitta Studios, which MGM had helped to rebuild. Press releases focused on the film's 'colossal' nature and emphasised the cast of thousands and many sets and costumes, yet Mayer, as studio head, argued: 'never was the time more opportune to make such a film, when the world is once more confronted with the struggle of material and spiritual values,' capturing the idea that the ancient world spoke to the contemporary one. Despite its critical mauling, it made over \$21,000,000 worldwide (Richards, 2008, p. 59), leading Variety to term it 'a box-office blockbuster' (Hall and Neale, 2010, p. 138), the first film earning description.

My Cousin Rachel
(Koster, 1952, Fox)

Burton's first film for Fox, following a lucrative sub-letting deal with Korda for Burton to appear in 3 films for £100,000. Co-star, De Havilland, did not warm to Burton's direct approach, but the quality of the rushes led Zanuck to sign Burton for *The Robe* (1953), and led to Parsons describing Burton as the 'hottest thing in Hollywood' (Jenkins, 1988, p. 92, 101).

This Is Cinerama
(Cooper, 1952, Cinerama Productions Corp.)

Todd premiered the Cinerama process with this film, the star feature of which was the roller coaster ride (Todd and McCarthy Todd, 1983, p. 242-243). The critical reception likened the premiere to the introduction of sound (Lev, 2003, p. 115), but Todd saw the flaws in the 3-strip process, so left the Cinerama company to find a 1-camera/1- projector solution (Cohn, 1956, p. 332-333).

*Gentlemen Prefer
Blondes*

(Hawks, 1953, Fox)

Monroe's last film before the launch of CinemaScope. Her 'supporting role' to headline star Jane Russell ultimately stole the movie. Monroe also worked with choreographer Jack Cole for the first time (Rollyson, 2014, p. 11).

Julius Caesar

(Mankiewicz, 1953, MGM)

Mankiewicz shot the film in black and white, later arguing that colour would have destroyed the assassination scene (Dauth, 2008, p. 198). The critical reception found the second half sluggish, pre-shadowing the response to *Cleopatra* (Geist, 1978, p. 229-230).

The Robe

(Koster, 1953, Fox)

The first film made in CinemaScope and starring Burton, it was a major success, repaying the investment of the many cinemas that converted their screens (Lev, 2003, p. 118). Costing \$4,100,000 it earned \$31,000,000, making it Fox's most successful film to date. To meet public demand, Fox did not release it as a roadshow, but went straight to general release (Lev, 2003, p. 118-119, 172-173). The film won 2 of its 5 Oscar nominations, but also won Fox a special Oscar for heading the development of CinemaScope (Cyrino, 2005, p. 53).

*How to Marry a
Millionaire*

(Negulesco, 1953, Fox)

Monroe's first CinemaScope film, in which she had third billing behind Bacall and Grable earning considerably less (Lev, 2003, p. 19, 168-169). Grable had for many years been Fox's top female star, but during filming reputedly told Monroe, 'Honey, I've had it. Go get yours. It's your turn now' (Victor, 1999, p. 309).

Elephant Walk
(Dieterle, 1954, Paramount)

Originally planned for Vivien Leigh to star opposite Peter Finch, Leigh's mental health meant she left the project so was replaced by Taylor who shared Leigh's height and build. Taylor's fee was \$150,000 (Morley, 1989, p. 67). This was therefore the film in which Taylor first worked with Finch and therefore requested his casting as Caesar.

The Egyptian
(Curtiz, 1954, Fox)

As an example of a film set in ancient times, but lacking epic production values, this was a misfire. The critical reception commented on the film's lack of pace and poor performances, including Darvi's performance as Nefer. *The New Yorker* opined: 'The Egyptian hardly qualifies as a movie. It barely moves at all, and when it does work up a bit of motion, it proceeds at the pace of a Spanish funeral (Richards, 2008, p. 145). Darvi's screen career ended soon after she returned to Paris, later committing suicide (Solomon, 2002, p. 44-45).

Prince of Players
(Dunne, 1955, Fox)

A vehicle designed to showcase Burton's Shakespearian credentials, but his personal magnetism on stage did not transfer to the screen (Rubython, 2011, p. 315). The film's failure halted Burton's film career, but did introduce him to Moss Hart, who later cast him as Arthur in *Camelot*.

Oklahoma!
(Zinnemann, 1955, Fox)

The first film to premier Todd-AO, and the first screen adaptation of a Rodgers and Hammerstein stage work. The film played for 51 weeks in New York (Lev, 2013, p. 175-176), but soon after the premiere. Todd sold his stock and resigned his seat on the boards of Magna and Todd-AO (Todd and McCarthy Todd, 1983, p. 303) to invest his fortune

on *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956) (Allan, 2011 [1961], p. 111). Fox distributed the film, giving them first refusal right to all subsequent Rodgers and Hammerstein stage shows.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

(Siegal, 1956, Park Circus)

This was Wanger's first film after his release from prison. It was a sleeper success and boosted Wanger's stock as a producer, leading to his joining Mankiewicz' Figaro company.

The King and I

(Lang, 1956, Fox)

Zanuck produced this film, one his last before he left Fox, and his personal favourite of the Rodgers and Hammerstein shows. It also premiered the short-lived CinemaScope-55 process. DeCuir won Best Art Direction for the film, and Sharaff designed the costumes (Matessino, 1994b, p. 1), the script was by Lehman, who later worked on *The Sound of Music* (1965). The film cost \$4,500,000 and earned \$11,000,000.

The Ten Commandments

(DeMille, 1956, Paramount)

With a 221-minute running time and a \$13,500,000 cost (Edelson, 1976, p. 124-125), DeMille's final film doubled its investment. Following 5-years research and 3-years writing, DeMille spent 112 days shooting the film, including locations in Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula (Amalgamated Press. 1958, p. 6-7). As such, the film embodied the Hollywood system at its most effective in the way it responded to, and benefitted from, international politics and economics. It was the first film to surpass *Gone with the Wind*, and in its 'embodiment of American wealth and power' it was a clear expression of 1950s American culture and ideals (Lev, 2003, p. 163, 169). DeMille's film influenced all the epics films that

followed it.

Around the World in Eighty Days

(Anderson, 1956, Warners)

Todd utilised his relationship with Taylor to promote the film and used the premiere party to formally announce their engagement, for which Taylor wore a new diamond ring valued around \$100,000 (Sheppard, 1975, p. 177-178). Sibley (2004a, 000:10) described the film 'not so much a film, as a cinematic ice cream sundae. A long colourful confection, sweets and sometimes sticky, with an occasional swirl of darkness and one or two nutty bits.' This captured the combination of cameo performances and locations and the grand scale of the narrative. With this picture, Todd demonstrated the power and flexibility of independent production that within a few years all Hollywood emulated.

The Bridge on the River Kwai

(Lean, 1957, Sony)

For Lean this film was a career departure. His most recent film had been shot on location in Venice and starred Katherine Hepburn, marking Lean's move away from British stars and subjects. However, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) marked a further shift, this time towards big subjects. Like all Best Picture Academy Award winners, from 1954 to 1957, it was an independent production (Lev, 2003, p. 208). It also marked the first time a male actor earned \$1,000,000 for a movie.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

(Brooks, 1958, MGM)

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1958) premiered just as news about Taylor's affair with Fisher broke in the press. This did nothing to stop the queues gathering around the cinemas (Mann, 2009, p. 257-258), making it the year's top-grossing film and building Taylor's status as a star (Maddox, 1979, p. 145).

I Want to Live

(Wise, 1958, MGM)

Wanger's film about the prison system, which he had said he wanted to make on his release from prison. It starred Susan Hayward, who was under personal contract to Wanger and earned \$321,783 in profits from that contract (Bernstein, 1994, p. 337). The film raised Wanger's status once more.

Some Like it Hot

(Wilder, 1959, MGM)

Thomson (2006, p. 329) calls the film 'Wilder's peak, and at once his most completely sardonic and exhilarated film.' It was however also the peak of Monroe's career.

Ben-Hur

(Wyler, 1959, Warners)

MGM responded to *The Ten Commandments*' (1956) success by greenlighting *Ben-Hur* (1959) but knowing that if it failed then so would the studio (Karney, 2005). Once again MGM chose to shoot the film at Cinecitta taking nearly a year, using 300 sets, 100,000 costumes and 10,000 extras (Richards, 2008, p. 79). The 220-minute film was a vast undertaking, headed by Wyler, initially as director, but eventually as producer as well (Heston, 1995, p. 198). Its \$14,000,000 budget was the largest of any film to date (Karney, 2005), but by 1969 had earned over \$66,000,000. It was nominated for 12 Oscars and won 11, a record only broken by *Titanic* (1997) (Richards, 2008, p. 82-83). The film also made MGM large amounts of money through the sale of merchandise (Wyke, 1997, p. 27-28).

Suddenly Last Summer

(Mankiewicz, 1959, Powerhouse
Films)

Directed by Mankiewicz, this film returned Taylor to the top 10 box-office stars, largely on the back of an advertising campaign that centred on Taylor (Parker, 1989, p. 175). The film surpassed box-office expectations grossing \$6,375,000 in the US

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(Sheppard, 1975, p. 238) and becoming the fourth highest grossing movie of 1960. Reviews were mixed, but Capote thought Taylor's final monologue was 'the best scene she'd ever performed before or likely ever again.' (Porter, 2012, p. 435-437).

The Diary of Anne Frank

(Stevens, 1959, Fox)

This film was, at the time, the most expensive black and white film ever made, and its production demonstrated director George Stevens' growing determination to work slowly on a production. However, at this time Skouras began to think of Stevens as a possible director for *The Greatest Story Ever Told*.

Psycho

(Hitchcock, 1960, Universal)

This film marked a major shift for Hitchcock and earned over 20 times its cost at the box-office (Cousins, 2004, p. 279-280). *Psycho* (1960) was not an instant critical success, but screenwriter – Joe Stefano – attributed this to the fact that Hitchcock had not let the critics see the movie before the premiere. Crowther disliked it on its release, but by the end of the year listed it in his top 10 (Bouzereau, 1997, 1:28:18). As a film, *Psycho* (1960) spoke to a new generation of cinema audience.

Let's Make Love

(Cukor, 1960, Fox)

Monroe's penultimate finished film, and her last one for Fox. It was however poor, largely because of the poor script and Montand's miscasting (Banner, 2013, p. 347). Its only true highlight is Monroe singing *My Heart Belongs to Daddy* (Spoto, 1993, p. 465-466).

Spartacus

(Kubrick, 1960, Universal)

Douglas's independent production adapted from a novel by a known communist writer, scripted by the blacklisted Dalton Trumbo, directed by Stanley

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Kubrick (Thomson, 2006, p. 344). Costing \$12,000,000, the film grossed over \$60,000,000 worldwide, but received no Oscar nominations for Best Picture, director, actor or actress, and the American Legion called for a boycott of the film (Richards, 2008, p. 88-89).

Butterfield 8
(Mann, 1960, Warners) Taylor and Fisher disliked the film intensely, Fisher (1999, p. 167) rightly received the film's worst notices. However, the film was a success at the box-office and although its subject matter was less censored, it cast Taylor as the kind of strong woman Hepburn, Davis or Crawford had played (Mann, 2009, p. 286). It earned \$8,000,000 at the box-office (Parker, 1989, p. 179).

The Misfits
(Huston, 1961, Fox) Monroe hated the film and her performance in it (Wolfe, 2006, p. 363), reviews were mixed (Leaming, 1999, p. 380), as film critic Derek Malcolm later concluded: 'So when you look at the film, you don't just see a not terribly wonderful film, even though its well-acted and pretty well scripted too, but you see – you remember all the things about it, all the things outside the film (Discovering Film: Marilyn Monroe, 2018).

El Cid
(Mann, 1961, Anchor Bay Entertainment) Basinger described *El Cid* (1961) as: 'If you're going to go for an epic film, you want spectacle, something big and wonderful, and this film has that in spades as much as any film ever made. But the thing is that it never loses the human story. Mostly you get a human story and not much epic or you get a lot of epic and not much story, but this is a film that manages to balance both.' With unanimous critical

praise, it became one of 1961's top-grossing films, and was Bronston's biggest success (McIntosh, Mizrahi and Rodriguez, 1993a, 0:00:34, 0:20:45).

The Longest Day

(Annakin, 1962, Fox)

Having cost \$10,000,000, \$8,000,000 to which Fox had agreed and an additional \$2,000,000 of Zanuck's own money, *The Longest Day* (1962) grossed \$25,000,000 in its first year (Burns, 2001, 0:38:35), aiding Fox's recovery. It also signified Zanuck's return to form as a filmmaker and producer.

Lawrence of Arabia

(Lean, 1962, Sony)

Building on the success of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), Lean pursued a second epic-scale film. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) won the Best Picture Oscar and consolidated Lean's reputation as a director of films with scale. As a film it was therefore a new kind of epic, one that moved away from the ancient settings of the DeMille style epic but mirrored their scale.

Cleopatra

(Mankiewicz, 1963, Fox)

The V.I.P.s

(Asquith, 1963, Warners)

The publicity surrounding this film built on the Taylor-Burton relationship, but while the critical reception was lukewarm, audiences flocked to the film leading to a box-office gross of \$15,000,000, trebling its budget (Munn, 2008, p. 129). The film also marked the start of a phase in Taylor's career where she was cast for her celebrity rather than her acting prowess (Hirsch, 1975, p. 104).

The Fall of the Roman

Critics mocked the film for attempting to put Gibbons' multi-volume work into a 188-minute film.

Empire

(Mann, 1964, Anchor Bay
Entertainment)

In truth, it focuses on the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and his successor Commodus. Solomon (2001, p. 84, 86-87) argued that *Cleopatra*, left little chance for the public to praise *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964), even though its production values were tremendous – given a budget of \$16,000,000 and the involvement of many of Hollywood’s leading talents in the production team. The film’s narrative lacks drive and cohesion.

My Fair Lady

(Cukor, 1964, Paramount)

Although Jack Warner had resisted casting Harrison, it proved to be the high point of his career winning him the Best Actor Oscar. It won Cukor his only Oscar as best Director and saw Audrey Hepburn sign her first \$1,000,000 contract (Moseley with Masheter and Masheter, 1987, p. 228). It also marked the last big studio movie produced by Warner who was the last of the moguls from Hollywood’s golden era (McGilligan, 1991, p. 279). The film was a financial success, having reached \$8,400,000 in advance ticket sales (Wapshott, 1991, p. 248).

Carry On Cleo

(Thomas, 1964, Studio Canal)

The Carry On team turned their focus to spoofing the Hollywood epic (Cull in Joshel et al, 2001, p. 162), especially *Cleopatra*, which Rogers – the film’s producer – had observed during the Pinewood shoot.

The Sound of Music

(Wise, 1965, Fox)

The critical reception was largely negative, even Crowther thought the film old-fashioned (Lev, 2013, p. 266), while Kael called it ‘the big lie, the sugar-coated lie that people seem to want to eat’ (Roberts, 2010, p. 155). However, the public disagreed and

despite the new wave of films like *Psycho* (1960), audiences flocked to see *The Sound of Music* (1965), however, Thomson (2006, p. 346) later argued that even though it 'seemed moribund on first viewing... the gap between Julie Andrews and the military build-up in Vietnam was no greater than the gulf of understanding between Adolf Hitler and Shirley Temple.

The Greatest Story Ever Told

(Stevens, 1965, Fox)

Running at 260 minutes, Stevens' film cost \$20,000,000, but domestic rentals only came to \$7,000,000 (Pirie, 1981, p. 289). The film had been shot largely in the Utah valley, not on location in Europe or the Holy Land. The project that Skouras had believed would rescue Fox, failed.

The Sandpiper

(Minnelli, 1965, Warners)

Again, the critics disliked a Taylor-Burton film, but the public did not, seeing it achieve considerable success at the box-office (Smith, 2012, p. 81). Collectively, Taylor and Burton earned \$1,750,000 for the film (Hirsch, 1975, p. 110).

The Agony and the Ecstasy

(Reed, 1965, Fox)

Not all of Fox's releases after Zanuck's return were successes, *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965) had cost \$7,000,000 and was based on Irving Stone's best-selling novel, but it failed at the box-office (Solomon, 2002, p. 155).

Doctor Zhivago

(Lean, 1965, Warners)

Lean's follow-up to *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) again proved tremendously successful (Shipman, 1993, p. 266). The intimate story was told against an epic background and set within living memory.

*Who's Afraid of Virginia
Woolf*

(Nichols, 1966, Warners)

Taylor's performance won her critical acclaim and the approval of the young audiences that now formed most of the cinema-going audience. Taylor's willingness to play against type and look ugly challenged the conventional expectation of stars (Monaco, 2003, p. 128). The film cost \$7,500,000 and grossed \$40,000,000 at the box-office. It won Taylor her second Oscar (Cashmore, 2016, p. 171).

*The Bible: In the
Beginning*

(Huston, 1966, Fox)

Huston's telling of the book of Genesis marked the end of the Hollywood epic. It was the highest grossing movie of the year, earning \$15,00,000 and overall lost \$1,500,000.

Jaws

(Spielberg, 1975, Universal)

The film with which Wasserman's Universal studios reimagined the blockbuster by coupling 'mass-saturation advertising on television with simultaneous bookings in cineplexes across the world.' Thereafter, studios used television to market their films, which coupled with merchandise and other ancillary rights created the modern blockbuster (Gomery, 2008, p. 200).

Gladiator

(Scott, 1999, Dreamworks Pictures)

Scott's film was the first significant release of considerable scale and length set in ancient times. Its story was the same as *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) but took a markedly different approach to the narrative.

*Pirates of the Caribbean:
On Stranger Tides*

(Marshall, 2011, Disney)

The fourth film in Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise, was – allowing for inflation – time the most expensive film ever made, finally overtaking *Cleopatra*.

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