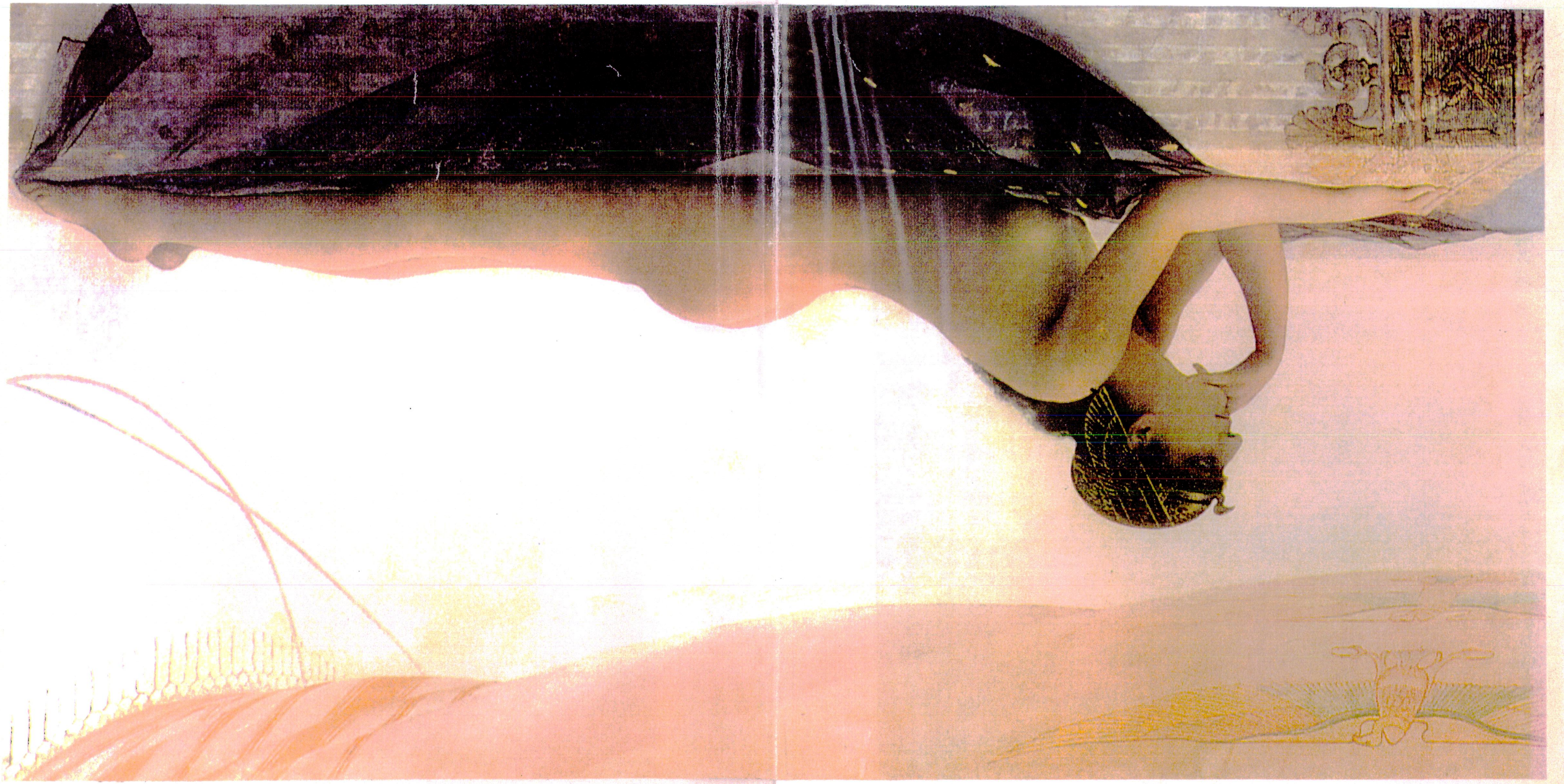

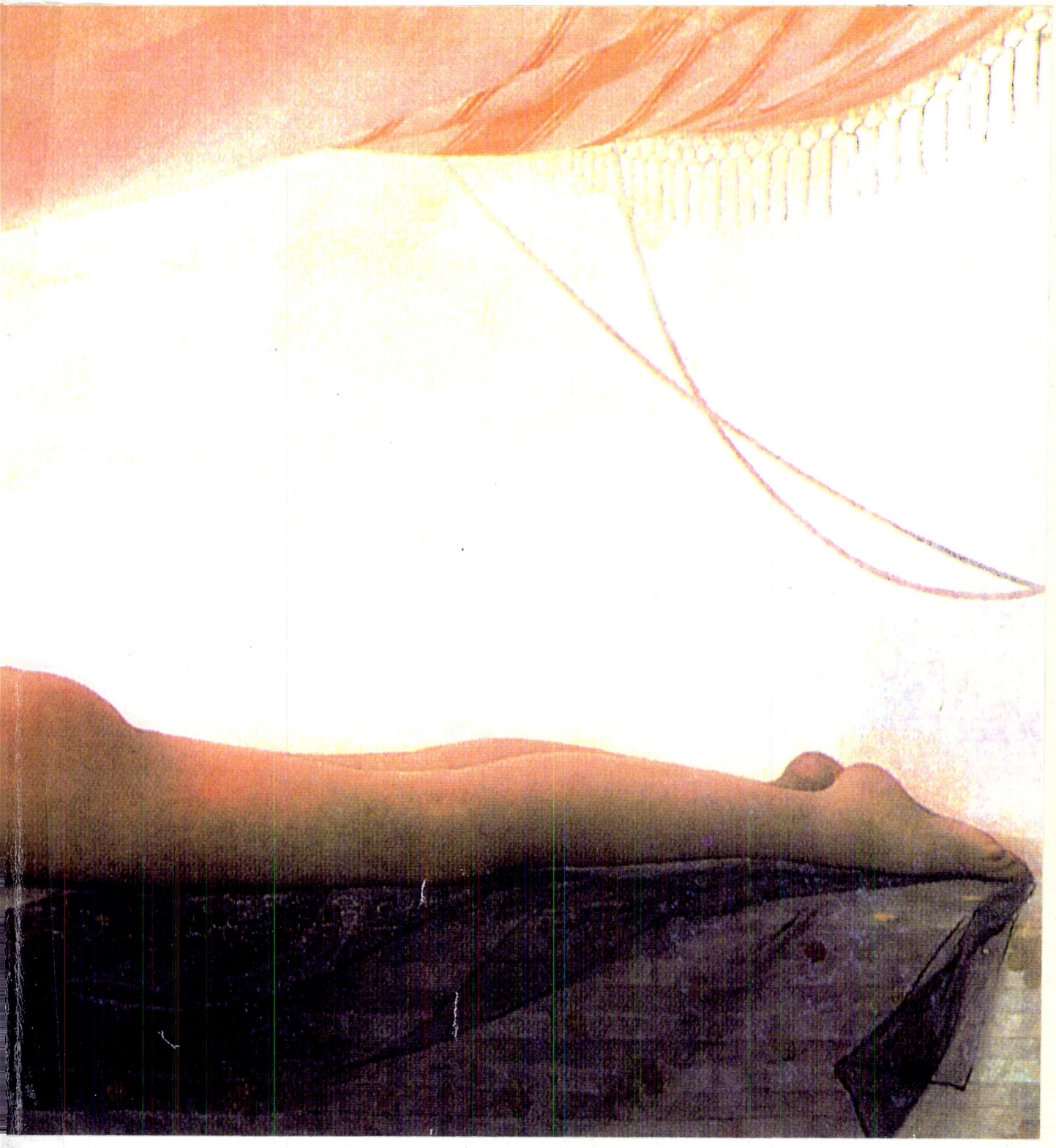

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FACULTY OF DESIGN, DEPARTMENT OF FASHION AND TEXTILES

TWENTIETH CENTURY METAMORPHOSES OF CLEOPATRA

by

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INTRODUCTION

Cleopatra is the name of a dead queen, who died 2,000 years ago. Yet hers is a household name, while those of her contemporaries are known only to the erudite students of that epoch.

I shall attempt, in the context of the known historical facts of the life and times of this person, to explore the phenomenon of her enduring significance. I shall try to demonstrate that the legends, myths and projections concerning Cleopatra change from culture to culture and from age to age.

Representations of her therefore are revealing: how she is represented in the film medium of this century will be explored and, in particular, attention will be paid to the most recent of these.

I will conclude with an attempt to find a role for Cleopatra to play in Western society at the close of the twentieth century.

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PROLOGUE

Of all the great female figures from the beginning of time, few have secured their place in the Western world. Among these must be numbered Mary, the mother of God, the prototypical Eve, and Cleopatra.

All three have mythological and religious traits and serve as archetypes. They are, however, at opposite ends of the pole; one beloved for her purity, the other two for their deviance.

The enduring myth of Cleopatra has been told a million times in a million ways. She has captured the imagination of artists from all ages and has been kept alive in literature, art, music and dance. In this century the film and advertising industries have staked their claim to her.

The first people to capture Cleopatra in writing (and therefore our first glimpse of her) were the ancient Greeks, such as Plutarch and Virgil, who brought her into our Western world. It is important to remember that ancient Greece was a male-dominated society that devalued the female sex. Such written accounts of Cleopatra depict her as an enemy of their regime, and a harlot. (Tacitus & Appian in Hughes-Hallet, 1988, pp 51-53) It must have seemed sacrilegious to the Greeks and Romans that a woman could wield absolute power and also have a

bewitching hold over two of their greatest and most admired leaders (Caesar and Mark Antony).

Factual information on her life, however, is often distorted and indeed one wonders if the accounts by the ancients are entirely true or purely chauvinistic.

What facts therefore do we have to go on? We have been conditioned to believe that physically she was an extreme beauty, loved by every man who set eyes on her. The few fragmented pictorial antiquities of her give us very little information, as Egyptian art was highly stylised at the time and also used mainly for propaganda purposes. (Fig. 1.1)

Coins with her name and seal have been found and these portray a very masculine, almost ugly, profile. (Fig. 1.2) Due to the fact that such coins have been minted in the Greek style, they are likely to be a more honest representation of Cleopatra.

Plutarch wrote that her beauty lay not in her physical appearance but in her personality and presence. (Plutarch in Hamer, 1993, p.1) It is now widely believed that her beauty was held in high regard because she was half Greek and therefore pale-skinned amongst a dark-skinned race.

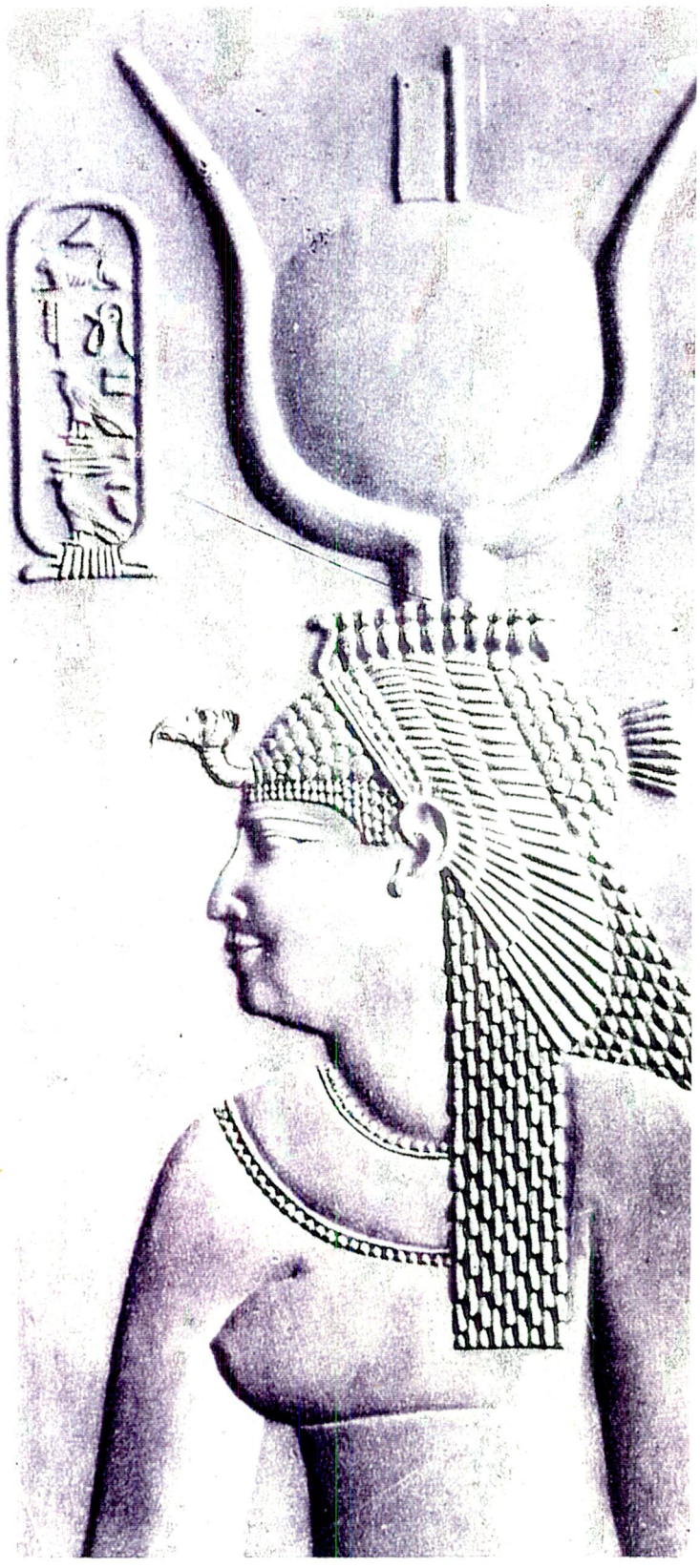

Fig. 1.1 Bas Relief of Cleopatra, c.30BC

Fig. 1.2 Greek coin depicting Cleopatra, circa 30BC

For centuries archaeologists have longed to look upon her face in certainty. Much speculation and presumption have revealed three busts thought to be those of Cleopatra.

In 1933 the Vatican proclaimed that it had found Cleopatra (Fig. 1.3), which was indeed a revelation as she had previously only been viewed through the daunting profiles of ancient coins. Secondly, the Berlin Head (Fig. 1.4) was bought by the Berlin Museum in 1976, but it is of unknown origin. Some scholars have argued that it is not in fact ancient. The third head (Fig. 1.5), now in Algeria, was found at the site of her daughter's capital in Mauretania. All three busts are sculpted in Hellenistic style (not Egyptian) and connections with Cleopatra are purely based on circumstantial evidence and comparison with coins as a basis for identification.

Perhaps we shall never look upon her face and perhaps it is just as well that we cannot. It leaves us free to conjure up the most excitingly beautiful and exotic queens of our imagination. Everyone has their own fantasies, and through art we have been able to look upon artists' ideal Cleopatras, and a huge and diverse spectrum exists.

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Fig. 1.3 The Vatican Head

Fig. 1.4 The Berlin Head

Fig. 1.5 The Algerian Head

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORICAL CLEOPATRA

> We, as we read of the deeds of the queen of Egypt, must doff our modern conception of right and wrong; and, as we pace the courts of the Ptolemies, and breathe the atmosphere of the first century before Christ, we must not commit the anachronism of criticising our surroundings from the standard of twenty centuries after Christ.

(Weigell in 20th Century-Fox Publication, 1963, p.1)

Cleopatra's story has, as her image, undergone many metamorphoses in the two thousand years since her death. Mundane details have been omitted and mythical overtones added. The following is a basic mixture of the real and imagined stories which we have come to know as the legend of Cleopatra.

Cleopatra VII was born in 70BC. She was the last descendant of a Macedonian line which had been established in Egypt when Alexander the Great conquered it. She married two of her half-brothers (as was the custom) and at the age of twenty-one she succeeded her father, Ptolemy, as the sole ruler of Egypt. However, it was only due to the deaths of both her brothers/husbands that she became queen. Their deaths are speculated to have been calculated, and not accidental, as is written. She was reputedly a very beautiful queen, known for her vanity and extravagance (e.g. bathing daily in asses' milk and rose petals).

She was also an intelligent politician and soon sought reinforcement from Rome's vast army to secure her kingdom. It was through this political alliance that she met Caesar. He arrived in Alexandria to seal the agreement. For security reasons the two could not meet, but Cleopatra cunningly had her trusted servant (and reportedly part-time lover), Appollodorus, carry her to Caesar's quarters rolled up inside a carpet. Caesar, who was well into his fifties, was instantly seduced by the

young, forthcoming queen. Together they cruised upon the Nile for nine months, before war beckoned Caesar away.

A few years later she visited him in Rome and brought their three year old son, Caesarian, with her. Her entrance into Rome was a lavish and super-spectacular parade that succeeded in displaying her vast wealth and power to the Roman people. It also gave her the opportunity to publicly proclaim her son as Caesar's rightful heir. She lived with Caesar in Rome and he erected a huge statue of her in a Roman temple. He was assassinated soon afterwards, in 44BC, and Cleopatra returned to Egypt.

She governed happily with her son Caesarian and was extremely popular amongst her people. She spoke many languages; it is said she never needed a translator. Although of Macedonian extraction, she adopted Egyptian rites as her own. Her great pride in, and attachment to her country, was realised by her subjects.

After Caesar's death his provinces were divided between his nephew, Octavian, and his second-in-command, Mark Antony. Antony needed a new alliance with Egypt to protect his land from Parthian rule. He travelled to Egypt seeking equipment and contributions from Egypt's vast treasury. The pair met aboard Cleopatra's opulent barge in Tarsus, south Turkey. She threw a welcoming

party for Antony and took advantage of his weakness for women and wine in order to seduce him.

Cleopatra agreed to give Antony financial help in return for extending the boundaries of her kingdom. However, subsequent wars kept Antony separated from her for nearly four years. In 40BC she gave birth to Antony's twins and named them Antony and Cleopatra. Soon afterwards Antony was widowed, but instead of returning to Cleopatra he married Octavia (a Greek beauty), for political reasons, as she was the sister of his rival, Octavian.

A few years later, in 37BC, Cleopatra and Antony met at a ceremony that became known as "The Donations of Alexandria". Cleopatra, robed as the goddess Isis, received the appropriate title "Queen of Kings", and she and Antony proclaimed their children, and Caesarian, sovereigns of her extended territories.

At the famous sea-battle of Actium, Octavian's fleet routed the Egyptian fleet. Cleopatra retreated, thinking Antony's ship had been sunk, and when he saw her sailing away from him he abandoned his army and followed her back to Alexandria.

It is said that on her return home, in a fit of depression, Cleopatra started experimenting with different poisons on condemned prisoners.[1]

[1] Death by snakebite was a form of capital punishment in Egypt at this time and thought to be very humane.

Octavian also followed them to Alexandria and when he arrived, Cleopatra had locked herself safely away in her mausoleum with all her treasures.

When Antony arrived, Appollodorus (Cleopatra's servant), who had always been jealous of Antony and Cleopatra's relationship, told him that the queen was dead. On hearing this, Antony threw himself on his sword but didn't die immediately. Now remorseful, Appollodorus carried the fatally wounded Antony to Cleopatra, where he died in her arms.

Octavian sent messages to the queen saying he was willing to negotiate, but Cleopatra knew that if he got her alive he would march her and her children through the streets of Rome in chains. Death was preferable to humiliation. Legend has it that as a last request she asked Octavian for some figs before unlocking her treasury doors and handing herself over. Appollodorus carried a basket of figs to her, with an asp hidden beneath. She offered her breast to the serpent, where it bit her. She died, with her two hand-maidens by her side until the very end.

*

Such are the basic historical facts surrounding Cleopatra's life and times. Where history ends, legend begins. In the intervening two millennia each century has taken from her story elements suited to their interests and perspectives.

In the third century she served as a model to Queen Zenobia of Palmyra. The fourth century historian, Sextus Aurelius Victor used her to warn men of the dangers of beautiful women. The Arab world, in the tenth century, was informed by Al-Masuda that she was "the last exponent of Greek wisdom in the West." (National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p.556)

In the fifteenth century, the Christian Church viewed Cleopatra as a martyred saint. To the Elizabethans, hers was a story of fidelity and monogamy. Shakespeare, in the seventeenth century, was one of the few artists who succeeded in conveying the true essence of her story - "the danger inherent in passion." (Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.201)

In the eighteenth century her story was used as a vehicle for political propaganda, while in the nineteenth century her sexual violence was emphasised by such writers as Theophile Gautier.

George Bernard Shaw's play, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, written at the turn of this century, depicts the queen as a shameless flirt and, so quite coquettishly, the great queen enters our century.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE HOLLYWOOD CLEOPATRA

'Cleopatra is a blank screen
on which any number of
desires could be projected.'

(Gautier, 1886, p.22)

In Paris in 1909 the ballet *Cléopatre* was performed. Anna Pavlova danced the leading part and portrayed the queen as a "heartless libertine and a devourer of men." (Hamer, 1993, p.122) Egypt was becoming very *en vogue* and there was an interest in oriental costumes and décor. This also coincided with the renewal of the idea of female leaders at a time when women were attempting to change their political status across the world.

By 1893 women in Australia, New Zealand and parts of Scandinavia had already been given the right to vote, and in Britain the Suffragette Movement was developing along with the rumblings of war.

Three cinema versions of *Cléopatre* were made in Europe, but it wasn't until 1917 that she appeared on the Hollywood screen. This was the first of five Hollywood versions of her story (one every decade up to the 1960s). Cleopatra had now been introduced to a new worldwide medium and presented to a huge new audience. For women of the time this meant that at last there was a powerful female that the world would take notice of and whose status could be used to bridge the gap between rights for men and women.

In 1917 Fox Studios used the plot of Rider Haggard's 1889 novel. Theda Bara played a powerfully vampish Cleopatra. As with the other Hollywood Cleopatra actresses who followed, much propaganda grew up around Bara herself.

She lived quietly at home with her parents, but she was marketed as having been born in Egypt in the shadow of the Sphinx and who, as a child, sucked the venom of snakes rather than her mother's milk. Viewed as a sinful killer, she was the epitome of wickedness.

Bara was a plump, bejewelled Cleopatra, happy to expose her ample rolls of flesh to her audience.(Fig. 2.1) She portrays a woman who was well able to take on any man - in politics or in bed. Bara reflects the busty ideals of the 1900's fashion. Many of the stills that remain[2] throw emphasis on her ankles, stressed by twisting snake anklets (Fig. 2.2), a part of the body not exposed in public at that time. Filmed just before fashion took on the 1920's androgenous slim, flat-chested, boyish look, Bara is the embodiment of the opposite of what was to come.

The depressed post-War societies who viewed the film were looking for a more light-hearted, humorous form of entertainment and, as one reporter of the time wrote of Bara's Cleopatra: "(She was) so outrageously evil that the audience finds several of her scenes rather amusing" and laughed at the film's "concoction of sensationalism." (Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.331)

[2] The film no longer exists.

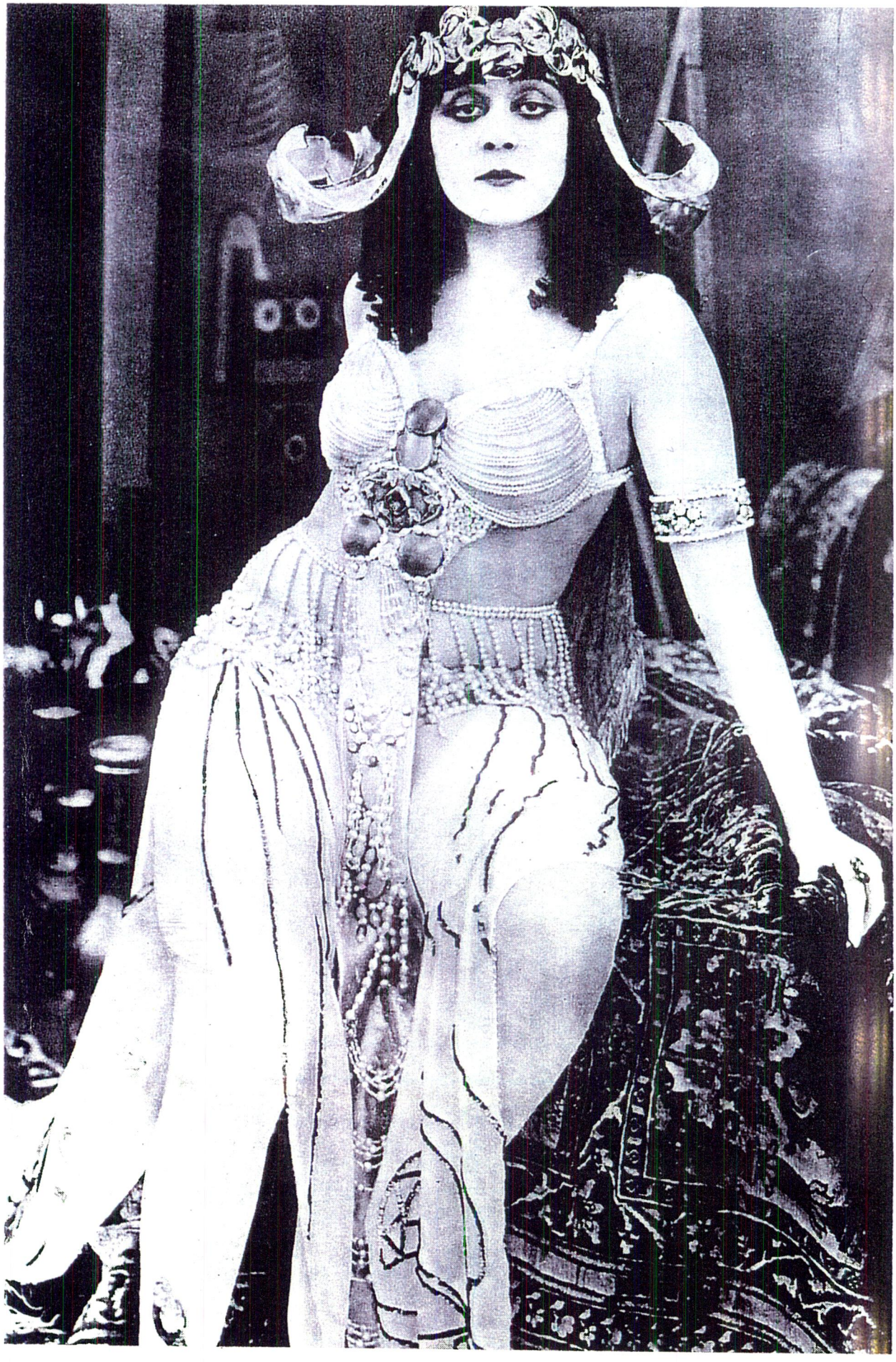

Fig. 2.1 Theda Bara as Cleopatra in 1917.

Fig. 2.2 Bara's ankles get special emphasis.

Despite Fox Studio's failure to relate a serious, romantic and political tale, they did however succeed in introducing their public to a new dimension of film - the expensive epic; their *Cleopatra* boasted a total cost of $500,000.

*

In 1922 Howard Carter discovered the tomb and treasures of Tutankhamen, and Egyptomania began. All areas of design, from clothing to wallpaper to cigarettes, were bedecked in Egyptian imagery. This design interest was carried along well into the 1930s on the back of the Art Deco Movement.

By now many more countries (including Britain in 1920) extended votes to women, but in 1933 the Nazis came to power and in Italy Mussolini dropped women's wages by 50%. Women were having to worry about their status in society once again. Also in 1933 the Vatican Head was found and "identified", which led to another renewal of interest in the ancient queen. Many books about her were translated into modern European languages and scholars started studying her as an actual subject. The following year, Cecil B. de Mille released his sixty-first film, *Caesar and Cleopatra*.

By the 1930s, actresses, especially in Hollywood, enjoyed high status. Cinema was now the most popular form of entertainment and women looked to stars such as Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo for their fashion leads.

De Mille aimed his Cleopatra, played by Claudette Colbert, at the ordinary woman, "bringing the historic figure into flattering alignment with the women of its own day." (Hamer, 1993, p.105) His elaborate Art Deco sets (Fig. 2.3) were not too far removed from contemporary New York apartments.

Colbert's portrayal of Cleopatra denies the maternal and emphasises the fashionably "modern" woman. Sexual appetite in women in the 1930s was recognised as a mature attribute and was identified with the health-conscious female. After World War I, health and beauty became a new culture for women; sports and fitness were not only acceptable, but desirable, and Colbert's Cleopatra is slim and trim. Make-up was no longer only for actresses and prostitutes, and women began to wear it every day, especially as they were now working alongside the opposite sex.

The wage-earning woman now had money to spend on her personal grooming. Beauty manufacturers saw Cleopatra as the perfect saleswoman. Many advertising companies of the 1930s used Cleopatra's image and Colbert herself to sell items such as ballgowns, hair curlers and perfumes. (Fig. 2.4)

According to Colbert: "Cleopatra's personal sexuality was not a threat but an affirmation of the social order." (Hamer, 1988, p.121) Caesar, in de Mille's film (played

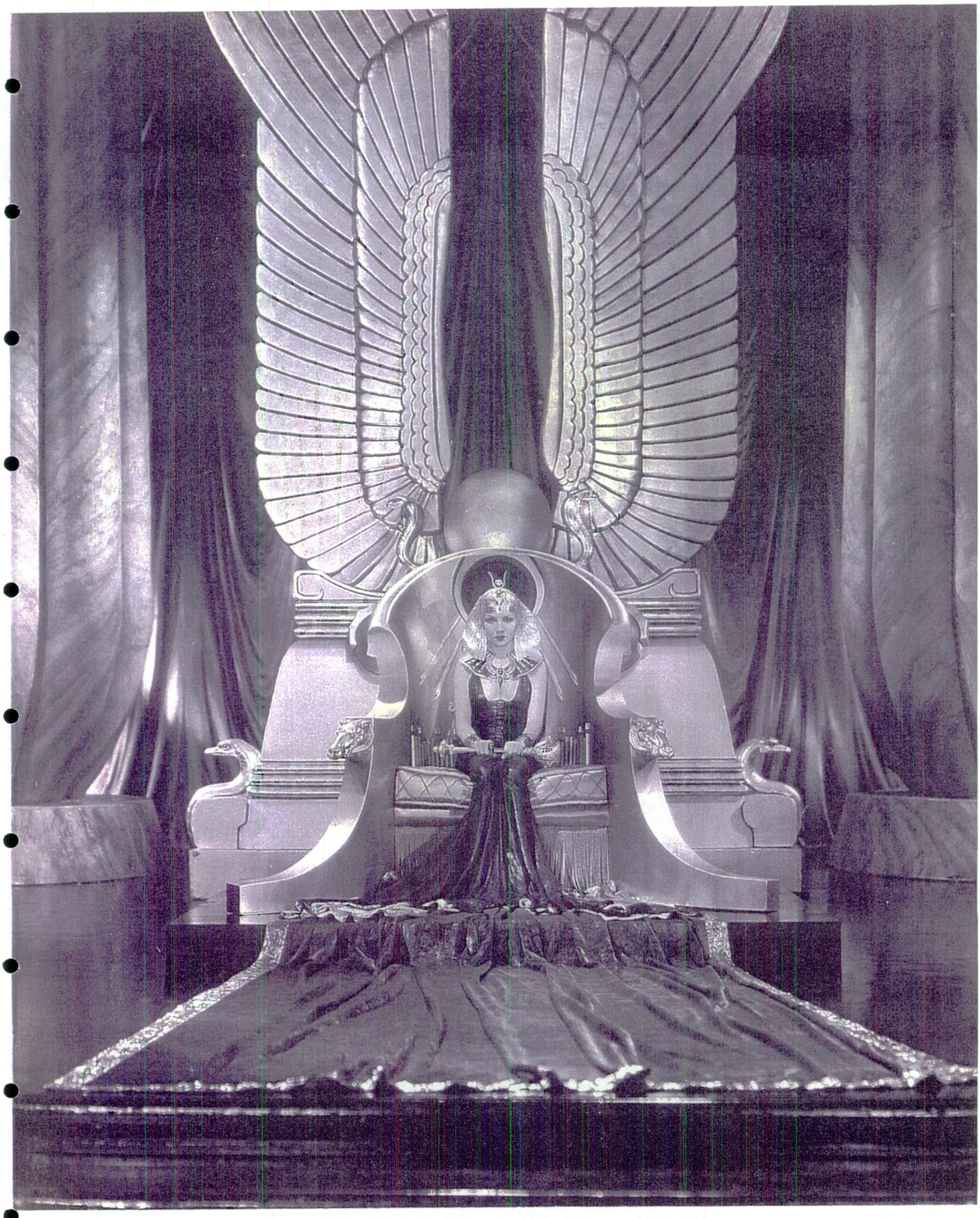

Fig. 2.3 De Mille's elaborate Art Deco sets in 1933.

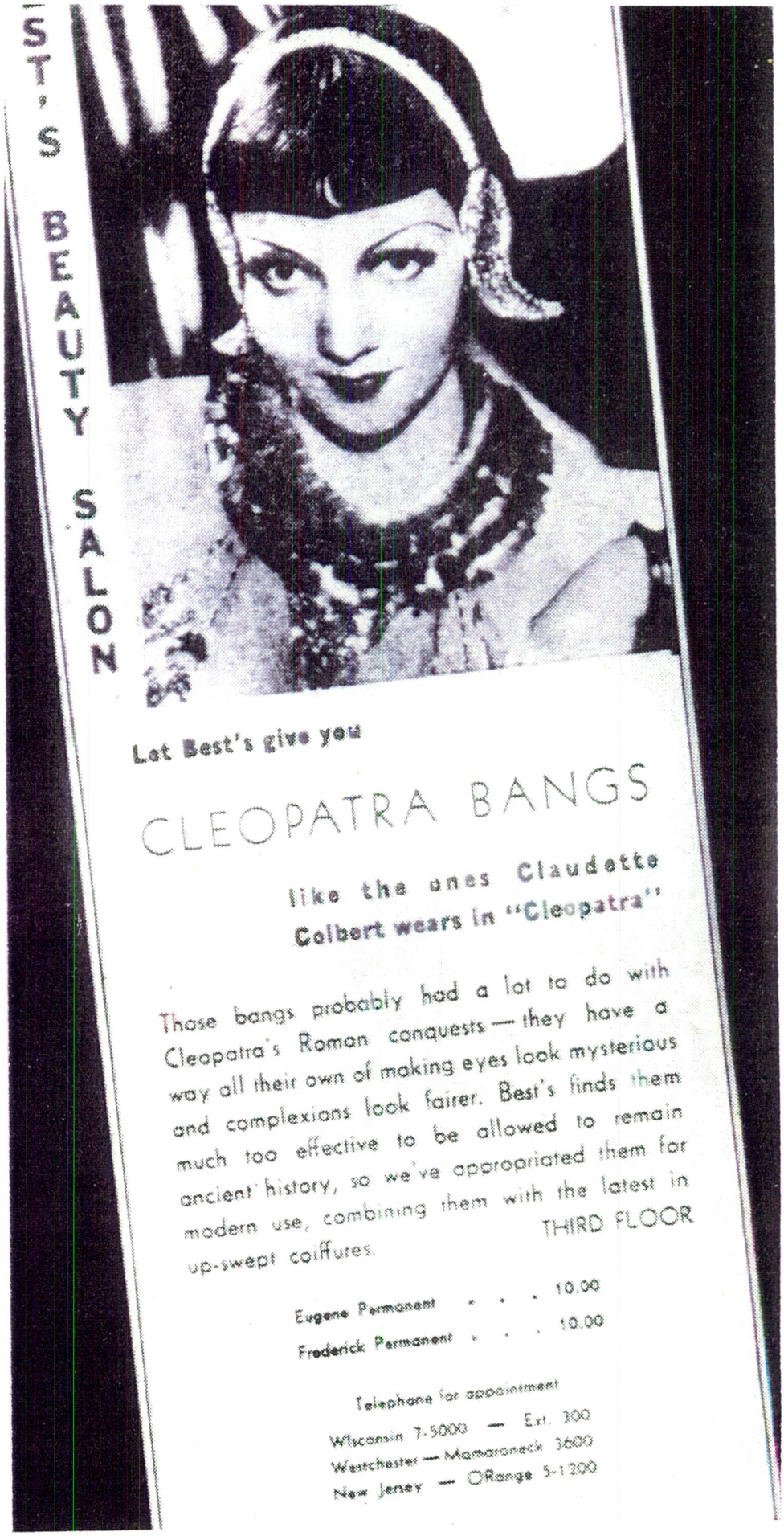

Fig. 2.4 Cleopatra's image used for advertising purposes in the early '30s.

by Henry Wilcox) is depicted as a boyish child beside sophisticated Colbert, who was now seen as society's ideal companion and wife.

Colbert's Cleopatra was the exemplary 1930s' female, not only in her morals and character, but also in her dress. Her skirts were long and trailing, her shoulders and back were often exposed, and new emphasis on the neck and chest can be seen in her refreshingly simple costumes. (Fig. 2.5) Instead of the pouty Theda Bara, Colbert had a mischievous smile and a coy look in her eye. (Fig. 2.6)

Colbert was one of the few Cleopatras who didn't generate fantastical stories about herself. She is arguably the most successful Cleopatra, and this is partially due to the Art Deco Movement at the time which set Cleopatra's scenes on a continental scale. Another contributing factor is de Mille's cleverly designed sets. Building on the Art Deco's pervasive influence on public taste, he exaggerated this, producing a kitsch-deco that conveyed to that day's audience the necessary grandeur and expanse.

*

In 1946 Gabriel Pascal filmed Bernard Shaw's play with Vivien Leigh as Cleopatra. The News Chronicle described it as "the most expensive film of all time." (Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.354) £1,500,000 was spent on filming and no expense was spared, including 400 tonnes of Egyptian sand being shipped to Pinewood Studios, merely because it

Fig. 2.5 Colbert's Cleopatra reflects the 30s' fashion emphasis on women's necks and backs.

Fig. 2.6 The "modern" 1930s' Cleopatra.

was the right shade. Leigh's costumes, encrusted with authentic-looking antique gold and jewels scream of excess and indulgence. (Fig. 2.7) To war-stricken Europeans watching this epic, it must have seemed the epitome of prodigality.

Pascal stuck closely to Shaw's 1901 original text; Cleopatra was depicted as an anti-romantic, asexual child. Vivien Leigh, however, portrays both a sexual woman and a little girl, for which she had both the generous figure and perfect innocent face. (Fig. 2.8) Pascal does include a romantic element in the text and Leigh's infantile qualities in the film are portrayed as a form of flirtation and dainty sweetness. Interestingly, she is also depicted as the weaker sex, beside her Caesar (Claude Rains).

Vivien Leigh's personality has been speculatively compared with that of the Egyptian queen herself. Although she often acted a charming and innocent character, (as in her previous film, *Gone With The Wind*), she was known behind the scenes for her rudeness and stubbornness. Her affair with actor Laurence Olivier got much press coverage at the time of the *Caesar and Cleopatra* release. Olivier, like Mark Antony, was married but seduced by a wealthy, famous female; also (as with the ancient Antony) he was known for his fondness of drink. As usual, the gossip and melodrama surrounding a filming of Cleopatra added to its allure and reputation.

Fig. 2.7 Leigh's extravagant costumes, 1946.

Fig. 2.8 Leigh depicts an innocent infantile Cleopatra, 1946.

Post-War American and European women were modest females, dedicated to their homes and families. Newsreels discouraged women from working in the name of a new type of patriotism. There was a huge new emphasis on the home, and yet another Cleopatra was born in Hollywood.

Serpent of the Nile, directed by William Castle, was released in 1953. Rhonda Fleming played an alluring Cleopatra against glitzy, tacky sets originally constructed for the previous year's *Salomé* (perhaps the only Cleopatra who did not over-spend on herself!).

Fleming, as an actress and as Cleopatra, was not the busy housewife, nor the traditional woman in love with the ideals of marriage and motherhood. She was in a way a lazy Cleopatra, perhaps what every working housewife dreamed of being one day. She lounges on silky-cushioned sofas, wanting nothing more (it seems) than to be entertained while wining and dining - a far cry from the women in the audience, whose "duty" it was to wine, dine and entertain others.

As the title suggests (with overtones of Eve and the Serpent in the Garden), this Cleopatra has a bad-girl attitude. Her bikini-clad entertainers are painted gold and bound in chains in a festive parade, with elements of the erotic and masochistic. (Fig. 2.9) It was billed by publicists at the time as "the sizzling love life of history's most notorious siren." (Hallet-Hughes, 1988,

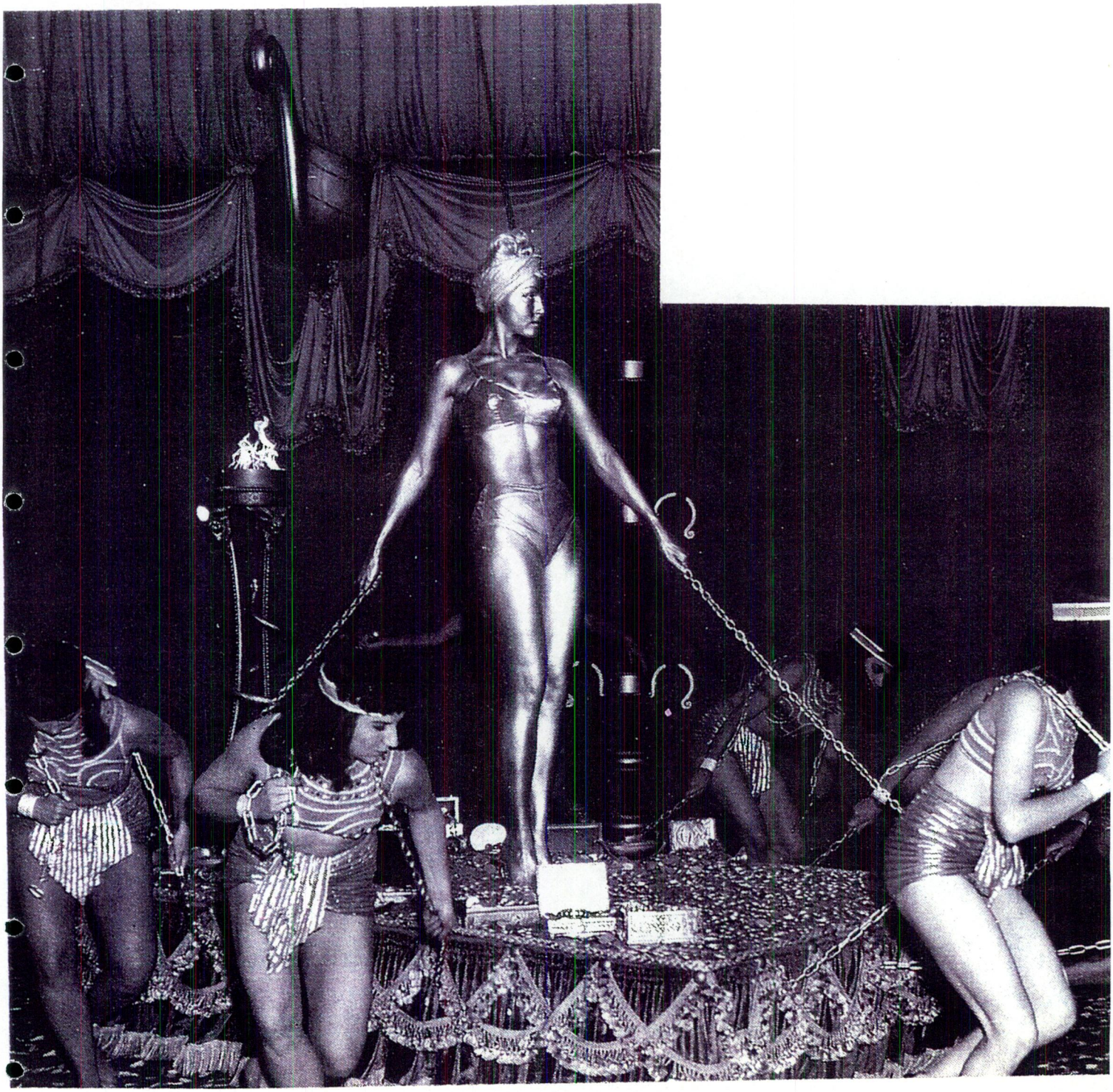

Fig. 2.9 Fetishistic dancers entertain Cleopatra in 1953.

p.332) Castle portrays this Cleopatra as a purely sexual being. Visually, however, Fleming is not very convincing as an ancient queen, and with her large, 1950s' print sun-dress and painted toe nails (Fig. 2.10), it is speculative whether Castle was just providing a fancy dress theme for an erotic film.

It is worth noting that in the following year a low budget Italian sex-comedy was released. Sophia Loren starred as Cleopatra (and her look-alike hand-maiden) in *Dúe Notte con Cleopatra*. Her costumes are similar in style and shape to those of Rhonda Fleming, and no great effort was made at authenticity as Loren's make-up and hairstyle are purely her own. (Fig. 2.11) Perhaps, as with the seventeenth and eighteenth century paintings, Cleopatra had once again been misused as an excuse for sexual imagery and not for her historical standing.

*

Theda Bara, in the early 1920s, depicted a vampish, laughably evil Cleopatra; Claudette Colbert in the 1930s depicted a modern, mischievous yet sophisticated Cleopatra; Vivien Leigh in the 1940s depicted an innocent, child-like and naïve Cleopatra, and Rhonda Fleming's 1950s' Cleopatra exuded adult sexuality.

The next decade's portrayal of Cleopatra (directed by Joseph Mankiewicz, 1964) was her last, large public appearance.

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Fig. 2.10 Fleming as an unconvincing ancient queen, 1953.

Fig. 2.11 Sophia Loren as Cleopatra, 1954.

CHAPTER THREE

MANKIEWICZ'S CLEOPATRA

The thing that motivates Antony and Cleopatra is that they both need Caesar, but he's dead so she hooks into the new guy but the hook gets her too and for the first time in her life Cleopatra falls deeply and passionately in love... Cat and mouse where the cat gets the mouse and the mouse gets the cat and they both go under - no survivors.

(Producer Walter Wanger explaining the plot to Taylor and Burton from "The Liz Taylor Story", 1995)

'Cleopatra took (5) years to make ... and when it was finished...everyone wondered whether it had all really been worth it ... the screen was a pile of corpses and a star and a great studio had nearly perished.' (Thomson in Lloyds, 1983, p.41)

While looking at this 1960s' portrayal of the Queen, I will be examining the range of traits given to this Cleopatra and focusing on her six main characteristics, namely: power, vulnerability, love, sexuality, maternity and cruelty.

In addition, I will be analysing how these characteristics are portrayed through devices such as dialogue, posture, costume and actions.

Maternal Instincts

This film does not emphasise Cleopatra's maternal qualities, and indeed sometimes shows criticism of the lack of them. However, many times such traits are suggested through her dress.

The first time we see such instincts is when she is in bed with Caesar. Caesar tells her that his wife (Calpurnia) is barren and Cleopatra says 'A woman who cannot bear children is like a river that is dry ... I am the Nile ... and will bring fruit to barren land.' She and Caesar go to her priestess to hear what the future holds for them. When they hear 'A son shall be borne to

Isis' they are so happy that they don't even notice the priestess' distress when she witnesses their son's destiny.

Just before Caesarian is born, Cleopatra orders her maid to bring the baby to Caesar in front of all his men. She knows if Caesar picks up the child he is publicly proclaiming him as his heir. Even before the child is born she is concerned about its future and she lies on Marian-coloured sheets of white and blue, which suggest virginal and maternal qualities. This concern for her son's inheritance is often confusing, as her concern could have selfish roots. When she hears of Caesar's death she cries 'My son, my son' and it is unclear if she is mourning for her son's loss of a father or her loss of extended boundaries from her son's inheritance.

We rarely see mother and son together. Caesar and Cleopatra's handmaidens show much more affection for the young king. On one occasion Caesarian witnesses a murder and is very frightened. His maids bring him to his mother who walks past him, seemingly uncaring. In this scene she is dressed in black, quite the opposite to her previous Madonna-like bedsheets, and she appears as a wicked, black-hearted (and bedecked) mother.

After Caesar's assassination she leaves Rome. We see her boarding her barge dressed in a blue-toned, Virgin-like veil and tunic. (Fig. 3.1) She kneels beside her

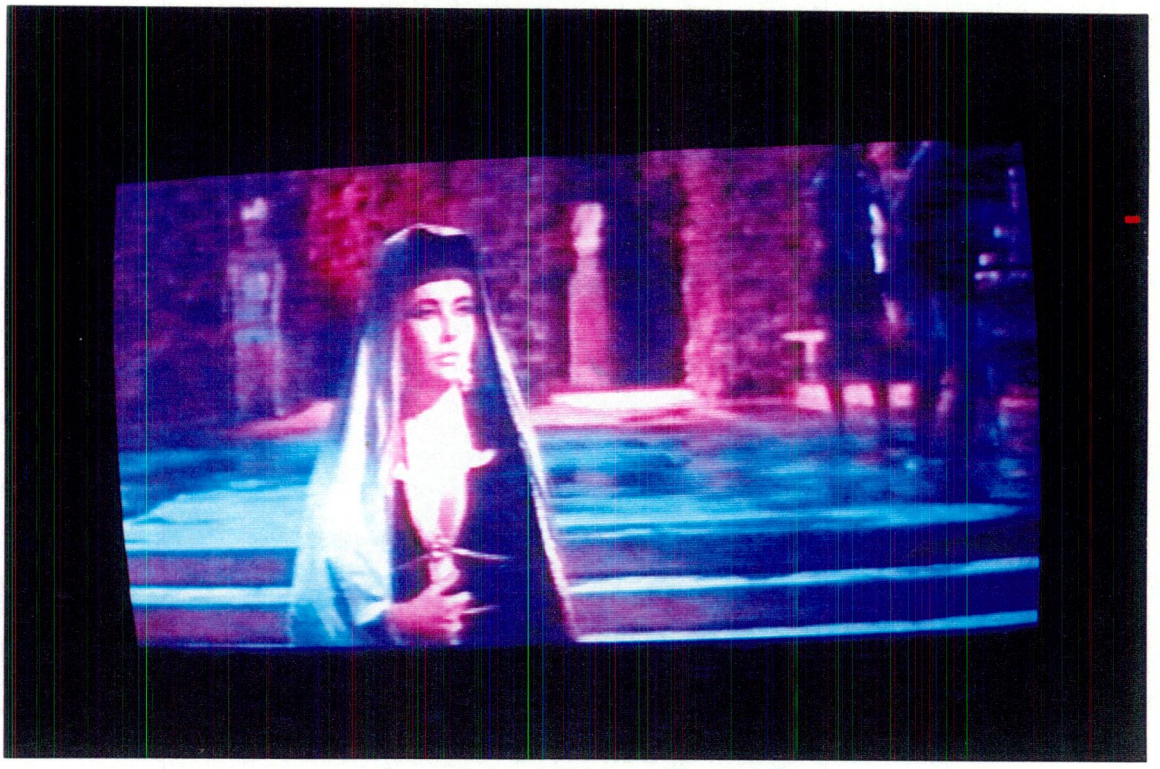

Fig. 3.1 Cleopatra wearing a Madonna-like veil.

sleeping son (Fig. 3.2) in a scene reminiscent of the Nativity. This is the first time we see her tending to her child. (However, in deleted scenes we see mother and father tucking their son into bed). (Fig. 3.3)

When Cleopatra's barge arrives in Turkey to meet Antony, large organza curtains are drawn back to reveal Cleopatra dressed like Mary the Mother of Jesus, set against a Catholic grotto-like background. (Fig. 3.4) She holds out her arms to her courtiers who kneel at her feet and worship her in religious awe.

Fig. 3.2 Cleopatra tends to her son in a Nativity-like scene.

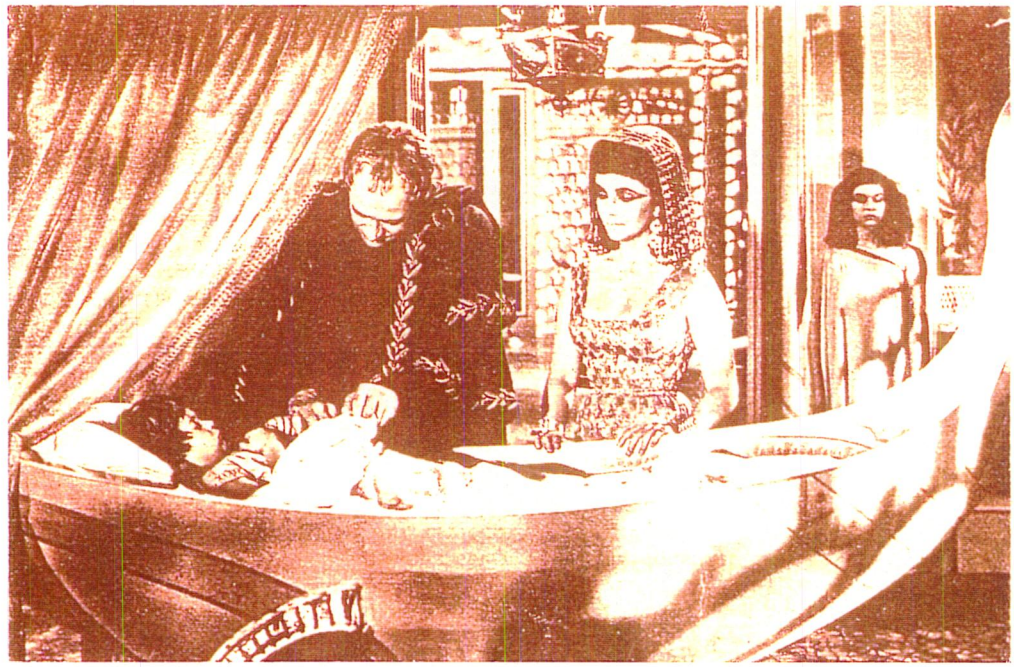

Fig. 3.3 A deleted family scene from the 6-hour version.

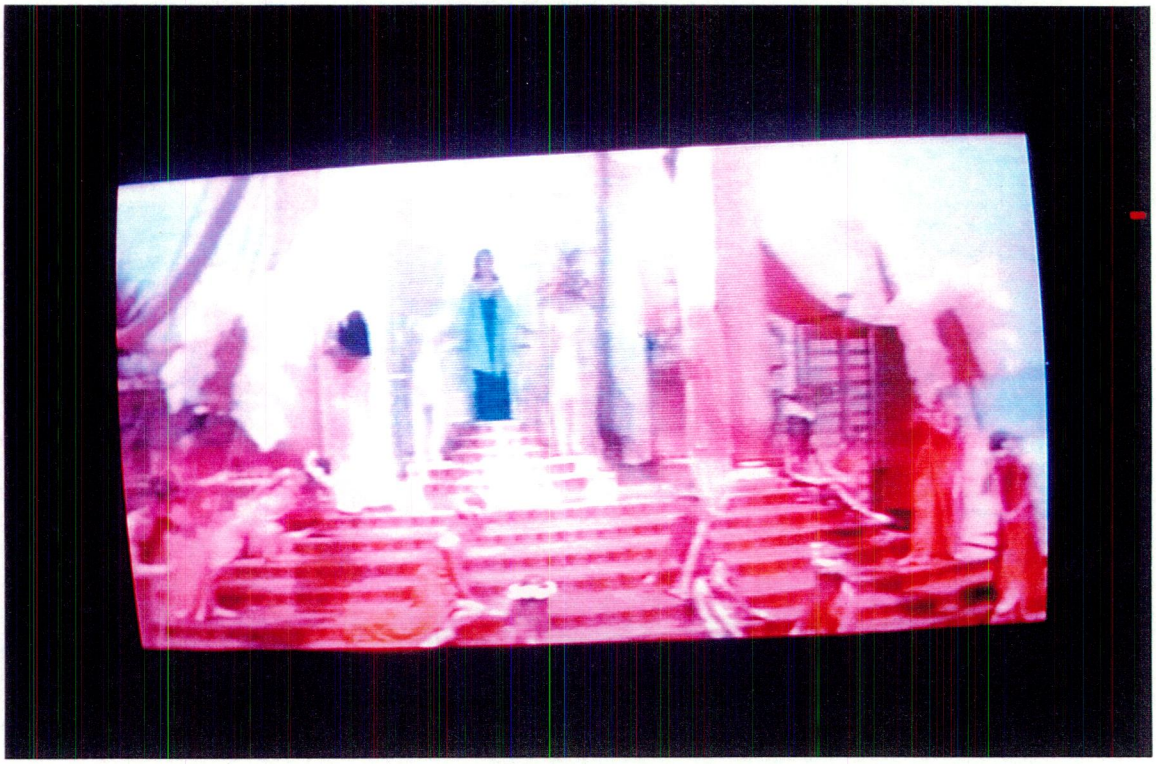

Fig. 3.4 Cleopatra emerges as a modern Madonna from a Catholic grotto-style chamber.

She uses this form of entrance again when Antony comes aboard her ship. Uncharacteristically, she holds out benevolent, maternal arms as her people gasp at her beauty. In this scene she is wearing an angelic white gown (although her hair resembles a 60s' beehive style). (Fig. 3.5)

There is only one scene in the whole film in which we see Cleopatra communicating with her son. Towards the end of the film she arranges for his safe passage out of Egypt. She speaks gently to him. He tells her he is afraid and she replies 'All kings and especially queens are afraid.'

Fig. 3.5 Cleopatra welcomes her courtiers with outstretched arms.

However, later on when she discovers he has been murdered, we see very little emotion from the Queen.

The Cleopatra represented to us is a mother figure in terms of fecundity, and the ruling dynasty passing through her. She is not, however, a mothering figure, not here the tender loving care or self-sacrificing attention to offspring. Rather, through the use of the symbolic power of dress and colour, we are given the "concept" of maternity.

The dependence, on the part of the film makers, upon Roman Catholic iconography, is out of context with the rest of their well-researched design work and is an obvious anachronism. One can only speculate that such images are used to add a greater contrast to Cleopatra's dark side. Depicted as Mary, she is the nearest thing to her audience's knowledge of a contemporary goddess.[3]

Cleopatra can switch easily from the cruel killer to the angelic, worshipped goddess. A traditional children's rhyme once told of such diverse contrasts in a female personality and can be used to describe Cleopatra: 'When she was good she was very very good, and when she was bad she was horrid.'

[3]. This is an interesting parallel to the unpublished work of an eccentric British Scholar. A.J. Bethell, in the 1920s, based on forensic evidence, dictated that Cleopatra had faked her own death, escaped to sea and had two more careers as a powerful female figure, the second one of these being the Virgin Mary. (Hughes-Hallet, 1988, pp 141-2)

Love

The first evidence we see of the soft side of Cleopatra is when she witnesses Caesar having an epileptic fit and is obviously moved and shocked by it. She later looks after him during another fit and wears a dress of pure white whilst nursing him.

Caesar's departure for Rome shows a sad and romantic Cleopatra. Caesar kisses her hand while she turns her back to him, suggesting it is too painful for her to watch him go.

Later on in the plot, on the morning of Caesar's assassination, we see another emotional parting. Cleopatra dressed again in a Madonna-like veil (Fig. 3.6) says farewell to Caesar and tells him 'The world, except for you, is filled with little men.'

It is now three years since Caesar's death and we see Cleopatra still lamenting him. She wears a necklace made entirely of gold coins and bearing Caesar's image, which she later tells Antony, 'I wear it always'. This tells us that not a day has gone by without her thinking of him.

When Antony has to leave her to go to Rome she says to him: 'Antony, how will I live? ... you take so much of me with you.'

Fig. 3.6 Cleopatra in a Madonna-like veil says a last farewell to Caesar.

She also reveals a romantic side when she says to him she wishes she had known love when she was younger (which suggests she did not love Caesar).

Towards the end of the film, Octavian offers Cleopatra a pardon in return for Antony's head. She displays her loyalty to her lover when she tells Octavian he can have 'either two or none.' While Antony is in deep depression about being defeated in battle, she tries to reach him, saying 'Without you, Antony, this is not a world I want to live in - much less conquer.' Again in this scene she is robed in Maryesque style.

Just before the final battle, Cleopatra's servant, Appollodorus says to her 'I have always loved you.' She replies gratefully 'And I have always known.'

As Antony lies dying in Cleopatra's arms she whispers to him 'Even you and I will fool death and make dying nothing more than one last embrace,' and as she herself is dying she calls out to her lover 'Antony, Antony - wait.'

Unlike her feelings as a mother, her feelings as a woman in love do occasionally come through in this portrayal of Cleopatra. Indeed, they come through quite strongly at times. The strength of her feelings is conveyed, as we have seen, by the heroic nature of her actions. It is important also to note the heroic (one might be tempted

to say "mock-heroic") nature of the dialogue - the poetic utterances professing her love both to Caesar and Antony.

A pattern is emerging in her costume. She is dressed in either angelic whites or Maryesque veils and colours in scenes where we see her desirable or vulnerable qualities.

Cruelty

There are only two scenes in the film where we are given evidence of Cleopatra's cruel streak. The first is one in which we see Caesar's men discussing her and telling tales of her experimenting with poisons on condemned prisoners.

The second is even more heartless. She is at her bath when one of her servants serves her a drink. One of her other maidens notices it hasn't been tasted by the servant first. Cleopatra makes the servant taste it and she breaks down crying and admits the drink is poisoned. She begs her queen's forgiveness and Cleopatra kindly says 'I forgive you ...,' then shouts 'now drink it.' The maid does so and drops dead.

The woman nursing the sick Caesar also has the dictatorial bitch in her. The woman who says 'I am the Nile ... and will bring fruit to barren land' is shown as equally adept at stamping out life. These contrasts add to the portrayal by introducing unpredictability,

tension, explosiveness and hence heighten the impact of the persona before us.

Vulnerability

The first time we see the queen she is in a very vulnerable position. Carried rolled up in a rug to Caesar's apartments in the palace, she is rolled out on the ground and as her servant announces the queen she is face down on the ground at Caesar's feet. (Fig. 3.7)

In the first few scenes Caesar speaks to her very patronisingly, calling her 'young lady' and of incestuous descent. In one early scene he loses his temper with her and says 'Have you broken out of your nursery ... to come and irritate the adults?'

When Caesar is going to the Senate, on the day of his assassination, she admits to him 'Caesar, I'm afraid,' as she also admits to her son later on in the film.

We see the great queen crying when she sees Caesar's death in their priestess' oracle.

After the feast on her barge a very drunk Antony comes to her bedchamber and shouts at her in a drunken rage. She watches him with the expression of a frightened child, not sure how to cope with the situation. (Fig. 3.8)

Fig. 3.7 Cleopatra at Caesar's feet.

Fig. 3.8 Cleopatra watches Antony's drunken rage with the expression of a frightened child.

When she hears of Antony's marriage in Rome to Octavia, we see her emotions at their peak. She asks to be 'completely alone' (without her servants) and goes into a rage of screaming and crying, shouting Antony's name to the sky and tearing at his clothes and their bed.

We see her crying later as she tries to get a response from the depressed Antony. She approaches him in a Marion-like veil and cries at his feet in despair. (Figs. 3.9 & 3.10)

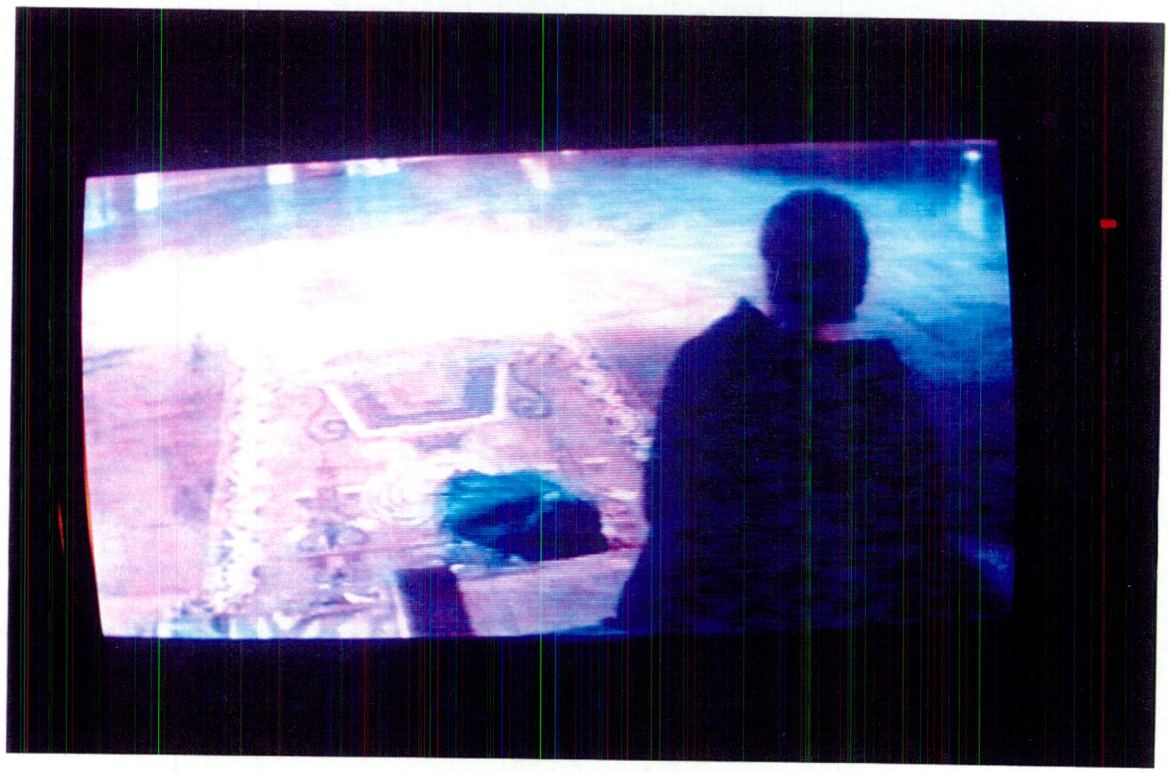

Fig. 3.9 Cleopatra at Antony's feet.

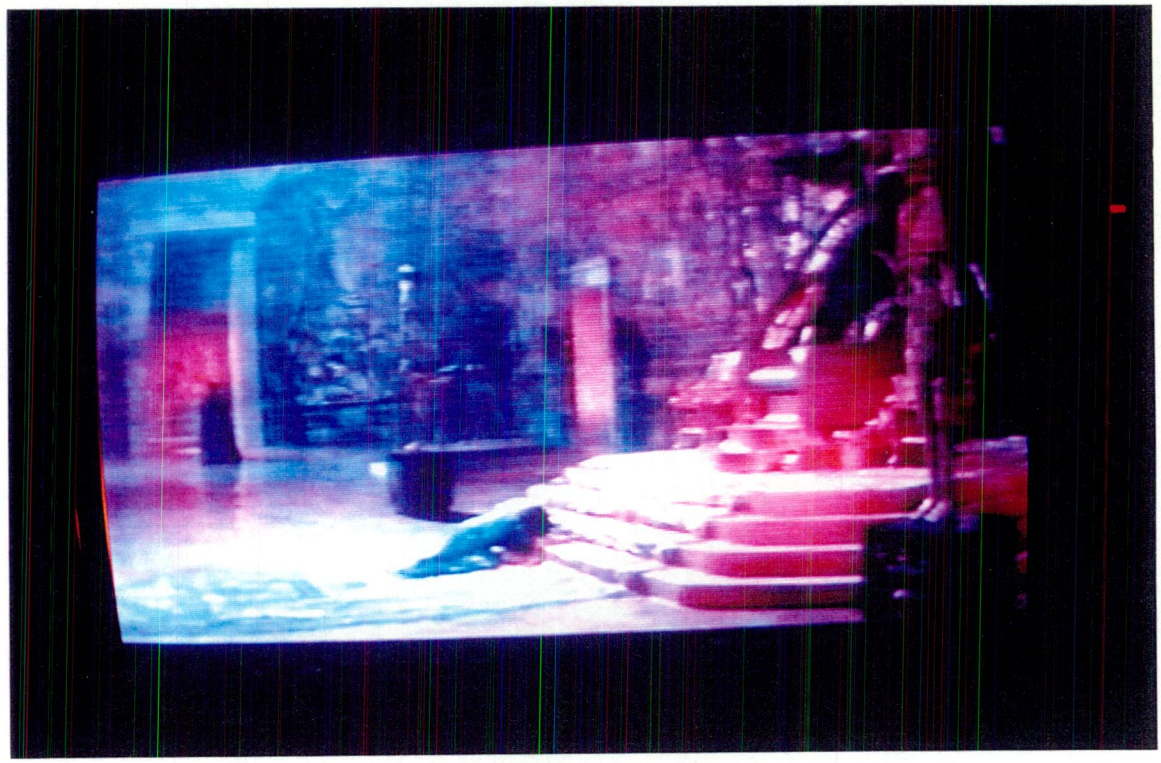

Fig. 3.10 Antony leaves Cleopatra crying on the floor.

Cleopatra goes to Antony, again in a Maryesque veil (Fig. 3.11), and scolds him for being a drunk. She slaps him across the face but he slaps her back and knocks her to the floor where she lies looking up at him towering above her. (Fig. 3.12) This time her Marian costume rouses sympathy from her audience.

So "Isis" is also vulnerable, capable of tears, temper tantrums and fear. She is spoken down to, chided, knocked to the ground. The goddess has feet of clay. This portrayal of vulnerability and weakness - perhaps most poignantly conveyed in that first scene with Caesar, where she is tossed out of the carpet and lies prostrate at his feet - is important. It provides the counterpoise for one of the strongest themes of the film, Cleopatra's "power".

Fig. 3.11 Cleopatra approaches Antony in a Madonna-like veil.

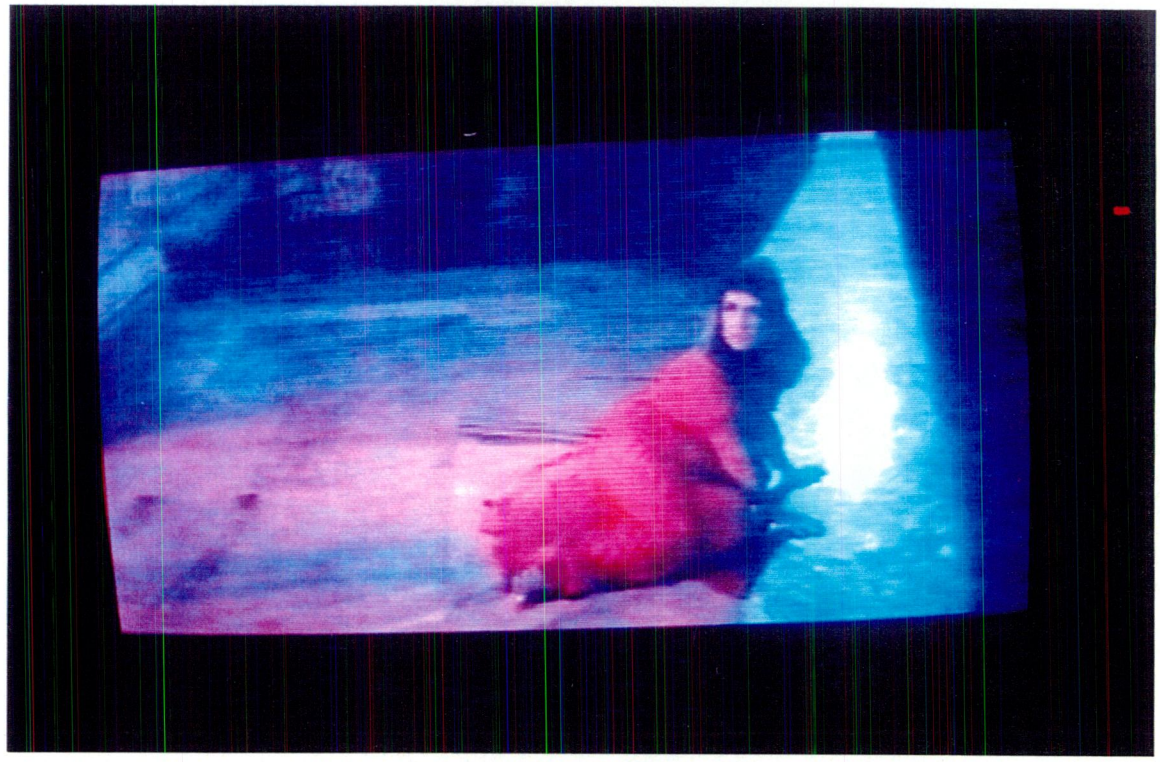

Fig. 3.12 Cleopatra on the floor at Antony's feet.

Power

From the first scene of the film Cleopatra tries to prove her equality to her male counterparts (mainly through her dialogue). Caesar orders eight of his armoured guards to escort the queen safely back to her quarters. She turns brashly to the soldiers and says 'The corridors are dark, gentlemen, but you mustn't be afraid, I am with you.'

She also tries to prove to Caesar the power she possesses over her people 'I am Isis and worshipped by millions.'

Her dress also added to her authority in many scenes, and when Caesar crowns her queen she is in full Pharonic robes. (Fig. 3.13) But even this is not enough for her and she makes Caesar and all his men bow at her feet.

Her grand entrance into Rome displays her wealth as well as her power, and in many deleted scenes the theme of bribes was used to show that Cleopatra got what she wanted, even through devious methods.

Her golden Isis ceremonial costume also exudes power (Fig. 3.14), power so great that even the jealous senators' wives felt it necessary to give her a standing ovation.

Fig. 3.13 Cleopatra in full Pharonic robes, holding her crook and flail.

Fig. 3.14 Cleopatra in her ceremonial robes of Isis.

She also had the power to turn the Romans against two of their greatest leaders. Antony for one realises this and says 'I've only one master ... you, I can see nothing but you. ' When he agrees to a sea battle[4] it is because, he says 'I must do as I am told.' Cleopatra tells Antony's men of his divorce from Octavia 'It was done at my bidding'. Antony tells her she has complete control over him and that he left the battle because 'My master called.' When Antony is told untruthfully that Cleopatra is dead, he says 'Once more it seems Cleopatra is out of reach and I must hurry after her,' which suggests he not only sees her as his equal, but his superior. It is not just a sexual power she has over him, but emotional power also.

Fig. 3.15 Cleopatra wears a fish-scale-motif dress as the sea battle is discussed.

4. It is interesting to note that Cleopatra wears a fish-scale-motif dress as the sea battle is discussed. (Fig. 3.15)

Earlier, when Antony arrives to seek funds from Cleopatra for his battles, she shouts at him from her throne 'On your knees,' and when he turns to leave she exclaims 'You have not been dismissed.'

It is symbolic that Antony dies in her arms and not the other way around, as she has always had the upper hand in their relationship.

These few examples show Cleopatra wielding power through all the available channels - talking tough, power dressing, economic and political power, and not least sexual power. In many ways Cleopatra is shown to us as the arch manipulator.

Sexuality

We first hear of Cleopatra's sexual notoriety through Caesar's men discussing her 'sexual talents which are said to be considerable.'

Her elaborate bath scenes, with her bikini-clad handmaidens, are idyllic kitsch settings. When she hears Caesar is approaching while she is at her toilette, she says to her maids 'We must not disappoint the mighty Caesar. The Romans tell fabulous tales of my bath and my handmaidens ... and my morals.' When Caesar arrives Cleopatra has changed out of her ankle-length tunic and is reclining naked with nothing but an organza scarf covering the bare essentials. (Fig. 3.16)

Fig. 3.16 Cleopatra "reveals" herself to Caesar.
From her obvious sexually superior position she feels in command and speaks patronisingly to Caesar.

The night Cleopatra and Caesar consummate their relationship she provocatively gets into bed and holds back the sheets, inviting him to join her. This gesture is done with such a casualness that it reminds us how relaxed and in control Cleopatra feels in a sexual situation.

At the banquet aboard her barge she tricks Antony by having her look-alike maid dance half naked in front of him.(Fig. 3.17)

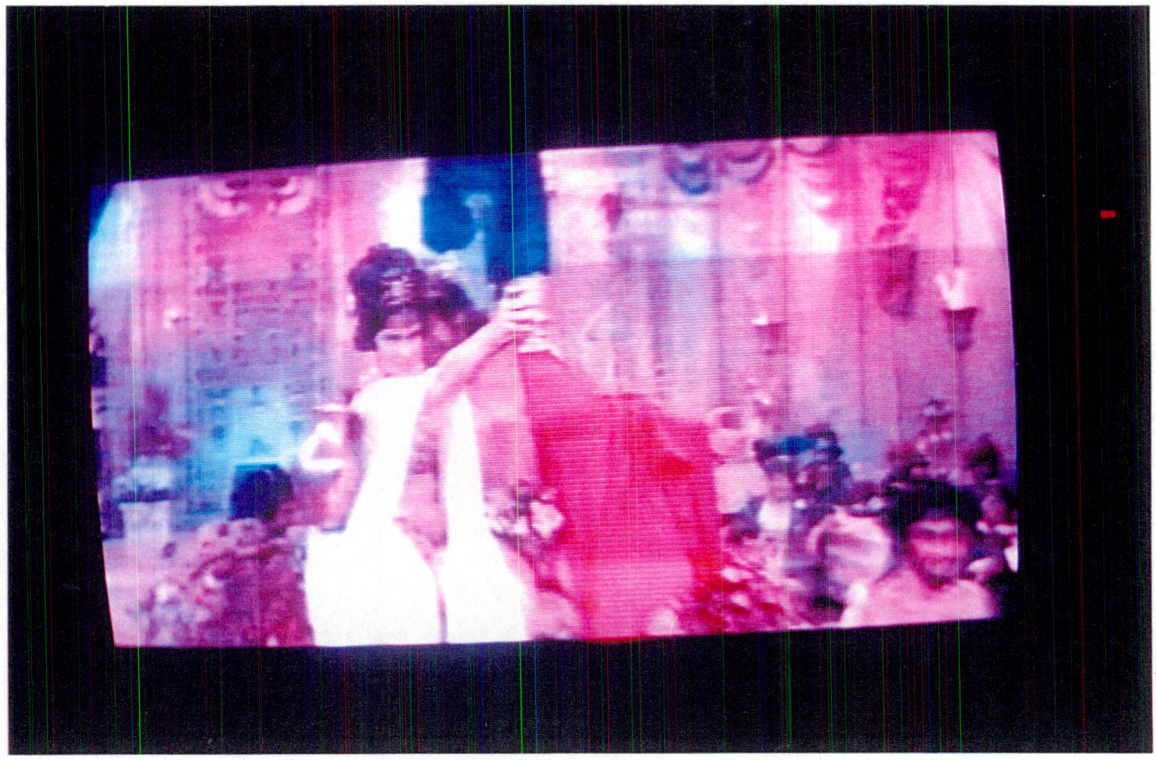

Fig. 3.17 Cleopatra's look-alike maid dances in front of Antony.

He has been drinking and thinks it is her. She has carefully calculated this sexual manoeuvre so that when Antony realises his mistake she is waiting for him in bed. Later on she is furious with Antony for marrying Octavia and mocks his wife, using her own sexuality as her weapon. 'She sleeps, I hear, fully clothed,' she jeers.

The film allows Cleopatra an expression of raw sexuality in so far as the conventions and mores of the day would allow. She uses it unashamedly, to toy with, humiliate and manipulate "the stronger sex". One of the most important props available to the film makers in presenting this theme was Liz Taylor's body and wardrobe.

(The reader is referred to Appendix 1 for a quantitative measure of the relative emphasis placed on these six characteristics. In addition, the Appendix provides information on how these traits were portrayed in the film. There are of course others we could have explored, for example, intellectual ability, political craft, jealousy etc.).

Before proceeding it is worth making note of the use of costume in the film. In comparison to the accurately depicted sets, Cleopatra's costumes are a definite reflection on the 1960s' vogue. The men's costumes, (designed by Oscar-winning Vittorio Nino Novanesse) are superbly accurate and detailed, while Cleopatra's costumes, designed by Irene Sharaff (who also won an Oscar for them) and costing $130,000, are reminiscent of 1960s' night attire: organza tunics in bold colours. Taylor's pale blue eye-shadow and peachy pink lipstick are complementary to her '60s-style swimming cap "ancient" head-dresses. (Fig. 3.18)

The queen's costumes often have snake motifs on them (Fig. 3.19) and although this may seem a little obvious, it is actually one of the only accurate elements of her dress. The snake was one of the sacred symbols of the goddess Isis (whom Cleopatra believed herself to be), and it is quite possible that the ancient Cleopatra's garments would have depicted such designs.

Fig. 3.18 Cleopatra's '60-style "swimming caps".

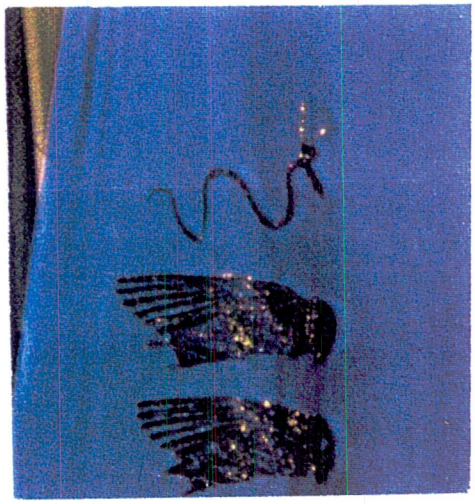

Fig. 3.19 Some examples of snake motifs on Cleopatra's costumes.

Cleopatra is depicted as powerful, not only because she is a queen, but also because of the way in which she exercises her power; as a mother lacking in maternal qualities yet appreciating the importance of fertility; as a lover who will use her sexuality to manipulate those she loves; and as a girlish victim who counteracts her vulnerability through cruel and patronising behaviour.

The Camp Cleopatra

Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* is a far cry from the reality of the 1960s and its huge expenditure certainly wasn't in accordance with 1960s' standards. John F. Kennedy was asking Americans to become more patriotic, and Cuba was predicted as the site for the next world war. Just down the road from Hollywood Herbert Marcuse was proclaiming his theories of overthrowing the existing social order, and hippies and flower children were "being born" practically on Hollywood's doorstep. Although the 1960s' Cleopatra seems very out of step with the times and very much in keeping with a 1950s' Hollywood genre, it is in another way very apt.

Bearing in mind the fact that Walter Wanger was producing the film, (now in his mid-sixties) "he, who had always been admiring of pomp" and, as David Thomson says: "He may have been the truest Roman in the movie", (Thomson, in Lloyds, 1983, p.41), his overdone, unsubtle Cleopatra is a caricature of herself and placed in her kitsch surroundings she oozes campness. This camp Cleopatra was

ahead of her time in the realm of kitsch, and as Liz Taylor herself said, she was "at her most glamorous worst" (Empire Magazine, 1995, p.57) throughout the film. The ancient Egyptians themselves stylised all of their art forms and one could argue that Wanger and Mankiewicz were using the ancient methods of stylisation and applying them to a modern medium.

Cleopatra's conscious artificiality makes her stand out against her realistic sets. Twentieth Century Fox's Cleopatra (mirroring Liz Taylor's own personal habits) is the camp queen of excess. Every big screen Cleopatra has shown her continuing importance and value to society by the expense she has had lavished upon her.

Cleopatra's parade into Rome, with her fetishistic black slaves, erotic dancers and her gold lamé dress is a very contrived yet successful scene which both the ancient and present day audiences enjoy for its pure opulence.

As Lucy Hughes-Hallet points out, in this scene as Cleopatra arrives in front of Caesar she winks at him (Fig. 3.20) as if acknowledging her own excess and the shallowness of her display. (Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.330) She is therefore briefly laughing at herself. Mankiewicz could also be telling his audience through this "wink" that he realises his is a camp Cleopatra. In a recent released dramatisation of Elizabeth Taylor's life story,[5]

5. Shown on Network 2, January 1996

Fig. 3.20 Cleopatra winks at Caesar

we see "Liz", (played by Sherilyn Fenn) once she has applied her Cleopatra make-up and costumes, wink at herself in the mirror. (Fig. 3.21) It is interesting that the producers picked up on this one wink. Cleopatra is acknowledging with one eye and denying with the other; it is her way of telling us "I'm supposed to be like this".

Susan Sontag says "One is drawn to camp when one realises that sincerity is not enough." (Sontag in Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.333). 1960s' society was looking very much to the future for inspiration and history took a back seat. Perhaps Mankiewicz knew his public wouldn't take Cleopatra's story seriously, but used her story as an excuse to make a spectacular visual display, and if this was the case, he succeeded.

Cleopatra's Expenditure

When the film was released it was of little interest to the public in comparison to the scandal surrounding those involved. Today it gives us more historical insight into the 1960s than to the first century B.C. Burton and Taylor's love affair bore a striking resemblance to that of Antony and Cleopatra. Burton was a man of great talent but easily led by his weakness for alcohol and women. Taylor was already a famous and wealthy seductress. They met through a business deal and soon squandered money on luxuries and parties. Taylor once bought Burton an aeroplane, saying "I bought it so we could fly to Nice for lunch." (Taylor in Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.360)

Fig. 3.21 Cleopatra winks at her own reflection.

Burton left his wife for a woman known for her loose morals. Taylor's and Cleopatra's children were never really part of their stories, although Taylor loved children and even adopted when she couldn't have more of her own.

During filming, both the Vatican and the US Congress complained about Taylor and Burton's promiscuity. Juliet Prowse sang about it in 1962:

> I'm Cleopatra, the nympho of the Nile,
> She uses her pelvis just like Elvis...
> There was not a man she couldn't get
> That was Cleo's problem on and off the set.

(Prowse in Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.357)

Self-destruction was an element in the lives of both the ancients and the actors, but with a camp culture no rules apply, and nothing is considered serious enough to be an offence.

Conspicuous expenditure was Cleopatra's best known characteristic of the 1960s. "The squandering of millions on an epic that nobody wanted to see ... was in itself the epic people wanted to see." (O'Brien in Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.355) Opulence negates thrift and economy, and neither Cleopatra nor Taylor ever had to be careful with their cash. In the 1964 film, fresh palm fronds were flown in daily from Egypt and 24-carat gold thread was used on Taylor's costumes, but then no rules apply when something is exaggerated to such an extent. Such waste reflects the ancient Queen's expenditure of her prisoners' lives and her baths of milk etc.

Taylor's/Cleopatra's sexuality in this film is also exaggerated and perhaps her wink is acknowledging this also. Since Theda Bara's humorous attempt at a wicked Queen, subsequent screen Cleopatras' only wickedness had been their blatant sexuality. Dilys Powell, reviewing the 1964 film, said "There is a kind of vulgarity which by its own boldness becomes beautiful, and this is it." (Powell in Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.333)

Modern Cleopatra

There is of course an attraction to the vulgar and wrongdoing woman (and man). In an article in *Elle* magazine, entitled "Sex and the Psycho Girl", the writer reports on the "neurotic, psychotic and sexy image of the unhinged woman ... from movies to the catwalk." (Elle Magazine, 1995, p.38) The writer examines the theory that overt sexiness is usually held to be a sign of wickedness:

> Sexy women are powerful but women with power provoke uncertainty in other women, and outright fear in men. How much easier to label them witches (the medieval Church), neurotics (Freud) or nuts (modern culture).

(Elle magazine, 1995, p.39) This rebirth in the 1990s of the neurotic woman (e.g. Juliet Lewis in *Natural Born Killers*, Uma Therman in *Pulp Fiction*), would be a perfect case study for a 1990s' Cleopatra.

Elizabeth Wurtzel, author of *Prozac Nation*, believes it all started in the 1960s. This

> link between instability and glamour was once reducible to a formula in the 1960s when, to turn an ordinary teenager into a swinging '60s girl all it took was the 'triple-A' mixture of amphetamines, anorexia and anaemia.

(Elle magazine, 1995, p.40) Although this 1960s female image is far removed from Taylor's Cleopatra, the psychology is similar, and Cleopatra's legend has always concentrated on an equation of sexuality and insanity. A dangerous, compelling and sexy psycho Cleopatra would perhaps be very indicative of a 1990s' Cleopatra.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTIONS OF CLEOPATRA

Even though she's been a pawn and manipulated in a way that we can't avoid as women, she has been an exemplary public rebel. I'm trying to put that out there, more images of women who want to rebel.

(Burkhart in Kontova, 1990, p.108)

The Heroic Cleopatra

Cleopatra has been associated with and compared to other legendary and ancient females. The first woman of all time, Eve, who ultimately brought evil into our world, is linked to Cleopatra through their common attraction to the phallic symbol of the snake. The Medusa (also connected by the snake) could kill at a glance. Cleopatra could kill on a whim. Mary Hamer, in her book, *Signs of Cleopatra*, spends much time discussing her theory that both the head of the Medusa and that of Cleopatra have come to represent the female genitalia. (Hamer, 1993, pp 110-116)

In the twentieth century it was discovered that Cleopatra had four children and as a result became associated with the mother figure, that of Mary the Mother of Jesus. It is also interesting to note that Mankiewicz's Cleopatra is only depicted as such in scenes revealing her characteristics of love and kindness. Her Marian costumes also provoke the viewer to feel sympathetic towards her in scenes when she is at her most vulnerable.

An article in *IT Magazine* by Ann Marie Houllihane says "Our love for our heroines is a little more than erotic ... We don't have any photographs of classical heroines which is probably why they've survived in our imaginations for so long." (Houllihane, 1995, p.48) We prefer our heroines, she claims, to be made of dreams and magic, rather than of flesh and blood, "and we prefer

them to be victims - not survivors." (Houllihane, 1995, p.48) How we view such heroines depends a lot on our sex - whether we are a male audience wanting the heroine, or a female audience wanting to be her.

Laura Mulvey, in her book *Visual and Other Pleasures*, deals with a heroine's crisis of sexual identity, a theme very relevant to Taylor's Cleopatra. Mulvey concentrates on "films in which a woman central protagonist is shown to be unable to achieve a stable sexual identity, torn between the deep blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity." (Mulvey, 1993, p.30) Taylor's Cleopatra is never passive, yet entirely feminine. In fact her exaggerated femininity suggests masculinity, which her Roman counterparts found so confusing. "She is frequently recogniseable as a man, or at least as part of the male psyche, dressed up in splendid but transparent drag." (Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.286) The camp Cleopatra is masculine in her overt femininity! Her power, both politically and sexually, over the men she meets, is evident. In an early scene in the film, Admiral Agrippa tells Caesar "were she not a woman one would consider her to be an intellectual" (Mankiewicz, 1964), and Nodier is of similar opinion: "I fancy indeed that a woman who passed laws ... and sat in judgement ... would be at most a man." (Nodier in Hamer, 1993, p.102) Taylor's Cleopatra has very masculine qualities and yet a very feminine appearance. This camp Cleopatra is a male Cleopatra inside a woman's body.

The Concept of Cleopatra

Liz Taylor as Cleopatra is still very much Liz Taylor. Lucy Hughes-Hallet comments that Taylor acquired "huge sums of money for the apparently effortless business of being herself." (Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.358) Taylor became a Cleopatra.

Cleopatra has become a concept. The historical facts don't matter any more and few remain. She is a vessel which society has used and abused to teach and learn about women and, as Hughes-Hallet says: "Her life can be viewed as greatly enlarged human possibility." (Hughes-Hallet, 1988, p.15)

The Nineties' Cleopatra

We have looked at Cleopatra's historical story and that story's metamorphoses, her cinematic depictions and her last (large) public appearance in 1964. So many representations of her have been created, distorted and recreated, and in our advanced technological and image-saturated culture of the 1990s, Cleopatra is still a significant presence.

The 1990s has liberated a new type of screen goddess, a cruel, calculating, sexual and often crude woman e.g., the sexual, abusing woman depicted by actress Demi Moore in the film *Disclosure*; the vulgar woman epitomised by *Tank Girl*; the explicit lesbian woman such as comedienne Jo Brand, or singer Melissa Etheridge, the male-woman who

appears in films such as *Prissilla, Queen of the Desert*, and the untouchable, virtual reality woman. Although obviously different from these 1990s' women of the screen, Cleopatra's life and story contain elements of each.

Cleopatra still has a place in the 1990s. Echoing her popularity in the 1930s, she is still being used to sell health and beauty products (Fig. 4.1) and even has her own brand name of soap. She still has a home in the arts: artists are continuing to paint one of their favourite muses. Kathe Burkhart, an American artist whose acrylics are "representations of the bad dark-girl" (Burkhart, 1990, p.109) show us a simplified Cleopatra (Fig. 4.2), while the English artist Jacqueline Rizvi takes a Tieopolesque approach (Figs. 4.3 & 4.4)

Cleopatra is still very much alive in theatre and is constantly being resurrected by theatre companies who use Shakespeare's words to depict the Queen. In May 1991 the accomplished Talawa Theatre Company presented an all-black version of *Antony and Cleopatra* in yet another possible interpretation. (Fig. 4.5)

However, Cleopatra's main arena in this decade is the music industry. In 1992 the grungy band, "The Spin Doctors", sang about *Cleopatra's Favourite Cat*, and in 1994 Irish band, "The Cranberries", portrayed their lead singer as a golden Cleopatraesque woman singing of pain

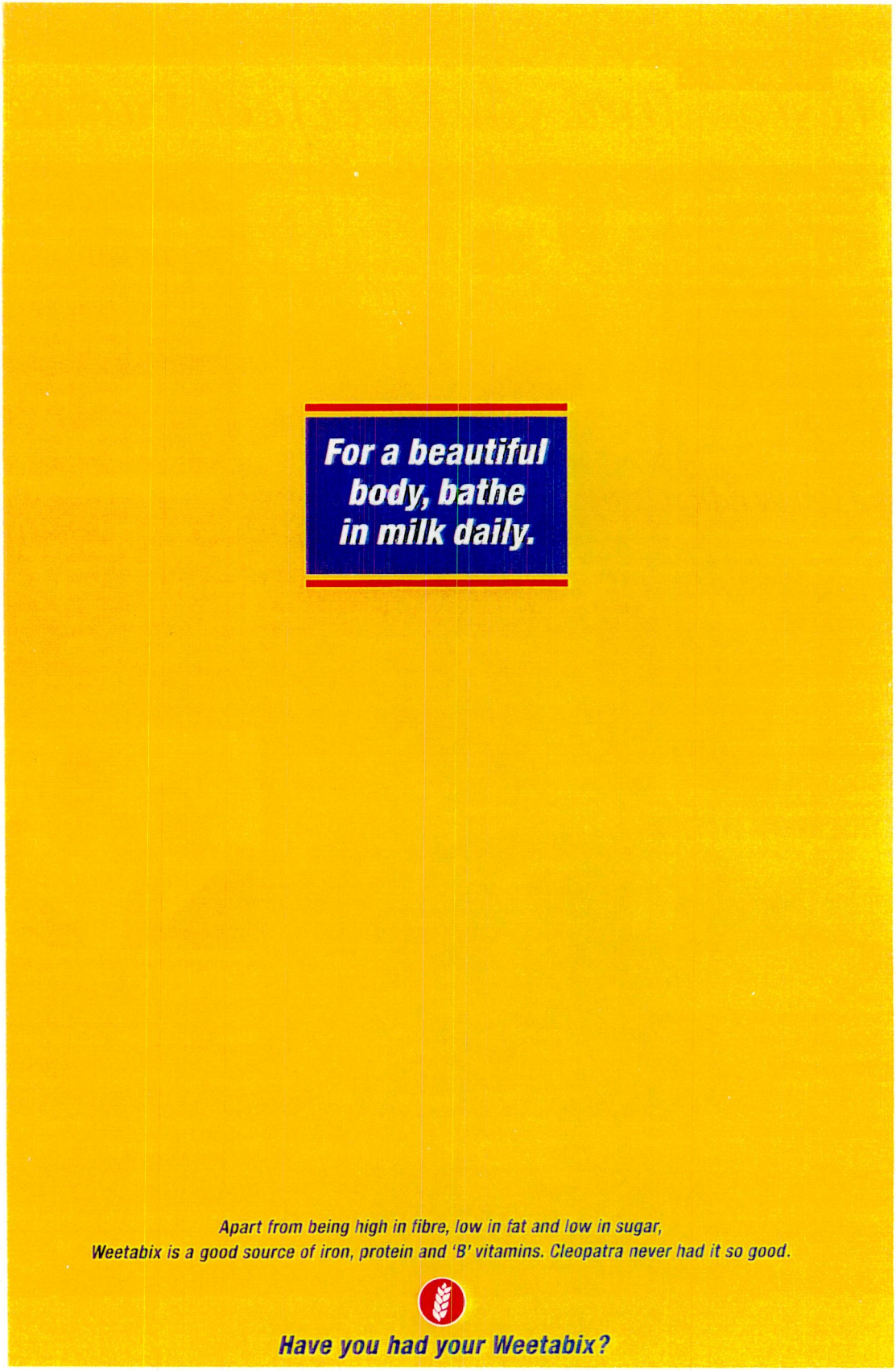

Fig. 4.1 Weetabix use Cleopatra's legend to promote their product in 1995.

Fig. 4.2 Kathe Burkhart's Taylor-Cleopatra in 1990

Fig. 4.3 Studies for the barge of Cleopatra, 1992.

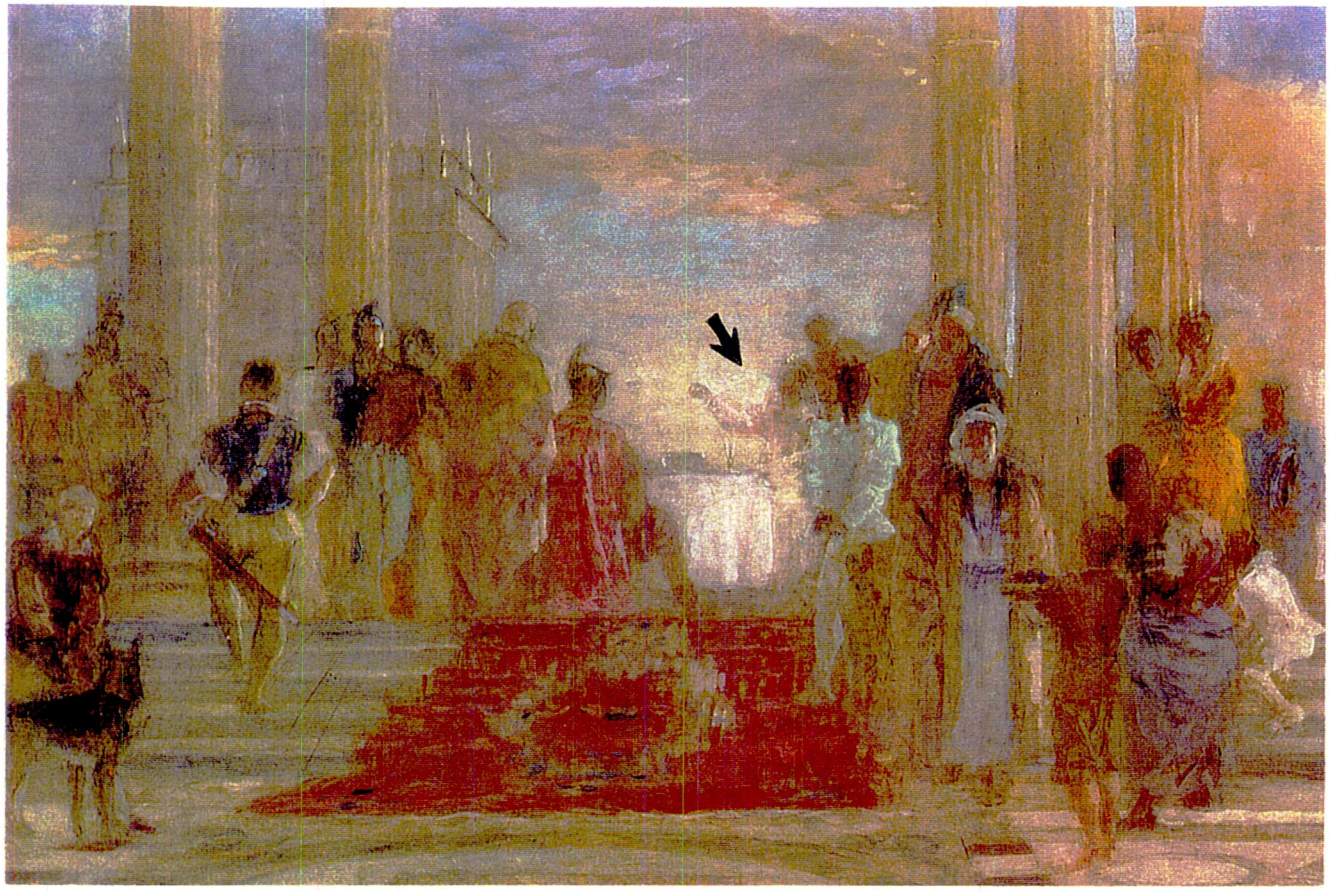

Fig. 4.4 The feast of Cleopatra, 1992

Fig. 4.5 Dona Crowl as Cleopatra, from the Talawa Theatre Company, 1991.

and suffering. 1995, however, could well have provided a taste of Cleopatra's appearances to come: Michael Jackson's album cover pictured himself as Antony beside the Taylor-Cleopatra. (Fig. 4.6) Enya's album cover shows the singer as a short-haired Cleopatra sitting on her throne (complete with the golden moon of Isis) (Fig. 4.7), and in December 1995 Elton John released a new song with famous transvestite Ru Paul. In the video for this song Elton John is dressed as Antony and Ru Paul as Cleopatra, bringing a new dimension to the camp queen!

If Cleopatra can make her way into today's fast lane, rock and roll industry, she can succeed anywhere.

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Fig. 4.6 Michael Jackson with his "ideal woman", 1995

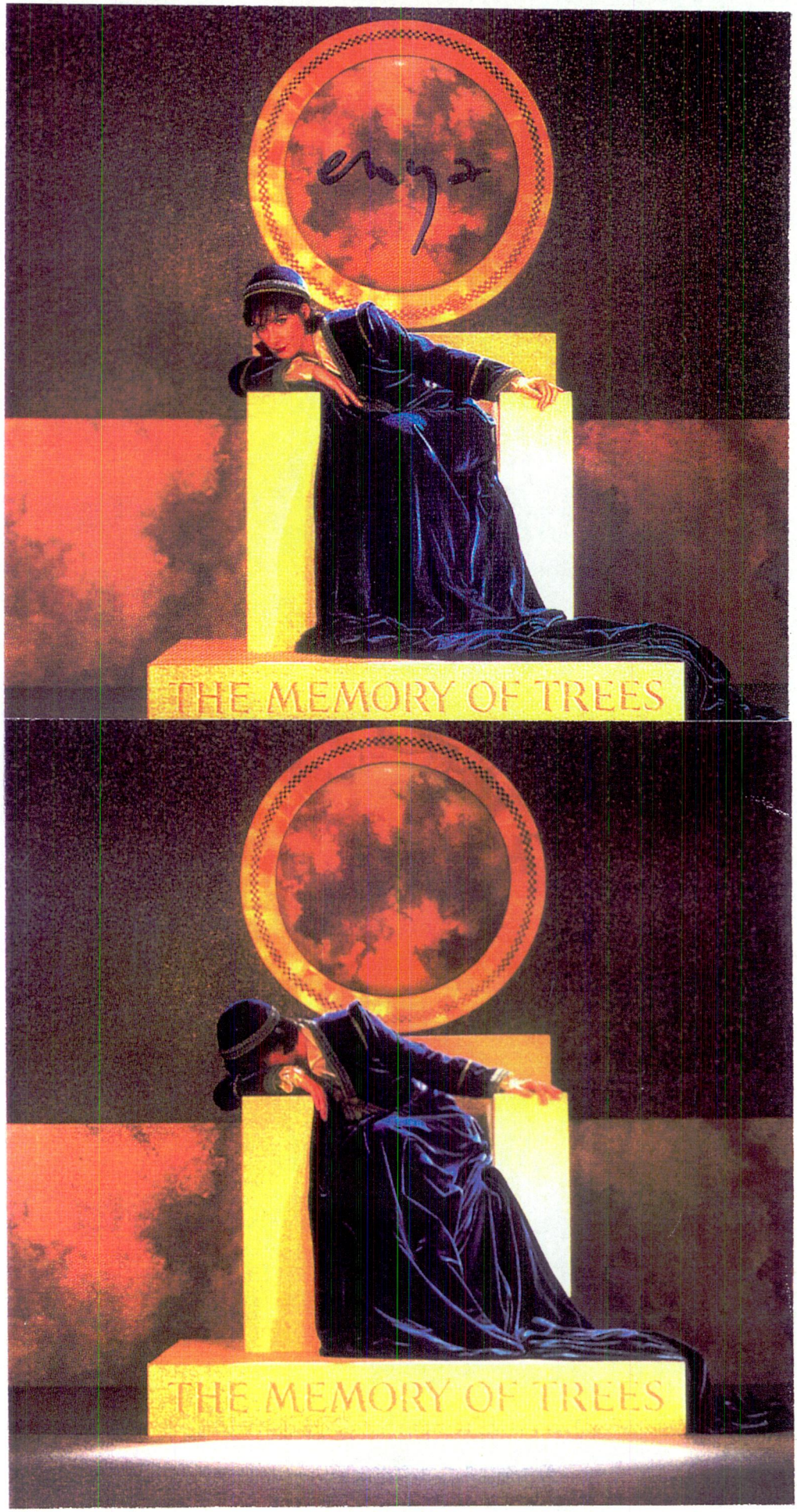

Fig. 4.7 Enya immodestly comparing herself to Cleopatra, 1995

CONCLUSION

Cleopatra has been and always will be used by society as a cultural sign. The paucity of historical facts facilitate her development as an abstract concept. She will never fade away with time, but grows stronger as the void in her factual history sparks creativity and imagination in her audience. She is, as she always believed herself to be, immortal.

She has permeated every part of culture, not just philosophy and fine art, but also film, music, fashion, literature, dance, beauty, and all areas of design. She has in fact entered into the human psyche.

The way in which she is represented at any given time tells us more about that particular time than about Cleopatra herself. She has become a mirror of society onto which we project ourselves and our beliefs, especially for woman who wish to portray their own qualities, be they sexual, maternal, powerful etc. Each period has laid different emphases on aspects of her story. Cleopatra is used to allocate moral and cultural priorities. As society represents her, so they dress her in the thinking, values and fashions of their own day. As Oscar Wilde so eloquently put it: "Every portrait painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not the sitter." (Ellman, 1987, p.292)

CLEOPATRA REVEALS US TO OURSELVES.

APPENDIX

Chapter Three gave brief descriptions of some of the key scenes in Mankiewicz's film. However, a more detailed analysis, scene by scene, has been carried out by the author. More specifically, a frequency count was conducted on the main themes. These are expressed in percentage terms in Figure A.1.

In Figure A.2 is presented a percentage breakdown of the devices used by the director to convey these characteristics.

It will be noted from the Figure that dialogue is the most frequently used device. Unlike current films, this reliance on dialogue to carry the film's message is not unusual for the period - what is unusual, though, is that the director did not rely more on the art of the screenplay writer.

The Figure clearly shows that other devices were used extensively, particularly dress, costume and set, accounting for almost a quarter of the communication concerning Cleopatra's character.

Overall, the figure shows the visual nature of the film.

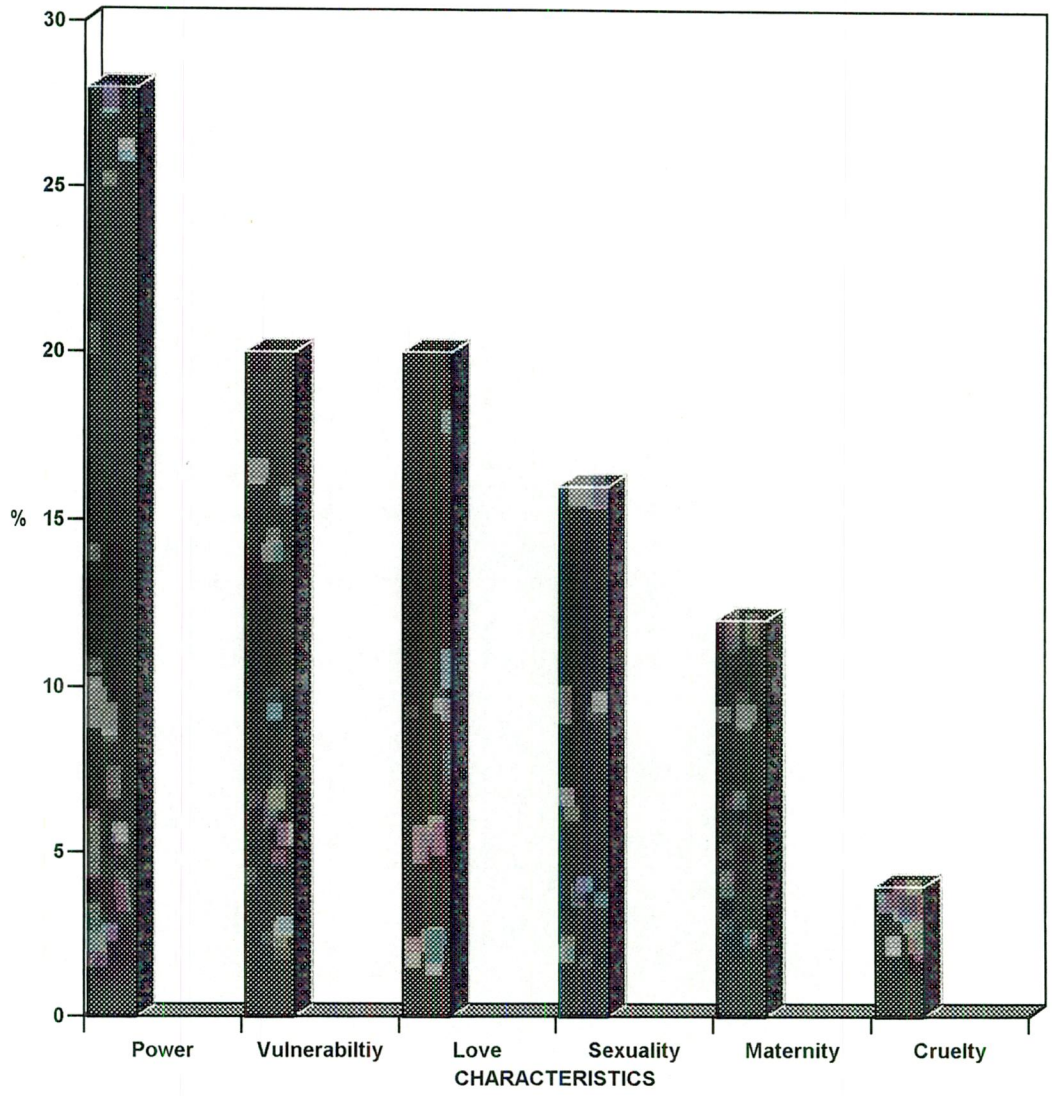

Fig. A.1. Bar chart showing frequency (in percentages) of main themes in Cleopatra's character.

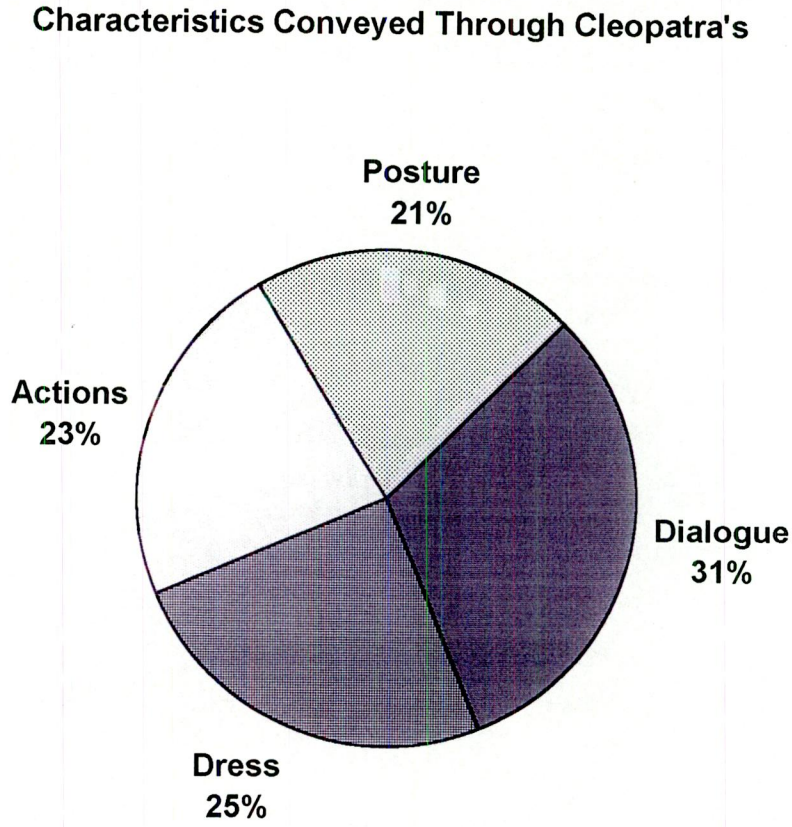

Fig. A.2. Pie chart showing frequency (in percentages) of devices used to convey Cleopatra's character.

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