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Women Film Editors

Unseen Artists of American Cinema

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"Trojan Annie"

Anne Bauchens' Epic 40-Year Partnership with Cecil B. DeMille

In early 1914, William deMille,[1] a prominent New York playwright who had recently moved west to become part of Southern California's bustling, upstart motion picture business, took his secretary, a very proper, soft-spoken young woman named Anne Bauchens (1882–1967), to a movie screening. The film, a western called *The Squaw Man*, had been co-produced and co-directed by William's flamboyant younger brother, Cecil. Cecil's first attempt at filmmaking, it was also the first feature-length film ever made within the geographic boundaries of Hollywood. Within weeks, *The Squaw Man* would become an enormous box office hit, both launching Cecil's career and laying some of the groundwork for what would eventually become Paramount Pictures. On that particular day, however, it also had a deep impact on the impressionable Bauchens. "I was a very naïve young lady," she recalled decades later. "I had never been among the literary and more intelligent groups [so] I just thought it was the most wonderful thing I'd seen."[2]

The experience changed Bauchens' life. In addition to working as William's secretary in his new role as a writer-director, she helped out wherever she was needed and soaked up everything she could about this fascinating new art form. For a brief period, she worked as a production assistant, literally creating the position of script clerk, the person who records every detail of individual film shots so they can later be matched in the editing process. Then, more and more, she found herself drawn to the cutting room, where the finished films were actually put together. At first, she learned about cutting from William. Then, one day in 1917 in the

cutting room the two brothers sometimes shared, she looked over to Cecil and said: "Some day I'm going to cut your pictures." At this, Cecil—who had little patience for what he perceived as impertinence—snapped back: "No one will *ever* cut a picture of mine, except me!"[3]

Two months later, however, Cecil asked Bauchens to replace an assistant director who had dropped out of a film, a drama called *We Can't Have Everything* (1918). As well as assisting DeMille on the production, she helped with the editing. "I made suggestions when they occurred to me," Bauchens said. "Evidently, Mr. DeMille liked them, for he said that maybe I would like to try cutting. I cut his next picture and stayed on the job."[4]

Beginning her editing career in 1917, Anne Bauchens worked mainly with producer/director Cecil B. DeMille until his death in 1959. The first woman ever to be nominated for a Best Film Editing Academy Award (for 1934's *Cleopatra*), she is also the first women editor ever to win an Oscar (for 1940's *North West Mounted Police*) (© Paramount Pictures).

And, as Bauchens added, she "stayed and stayed."[5]

For the next 40 years, from the late 1910s until the late 1950s, Bauchens and Cecil B. DeMille were joined at the hip—or maybe it would be more fitting to say, "joined at the editor's moviola." During that time, she edited every one of the 39 films DeMille made. At DeMille's request, she was also on the set constantly to watch how scenes were shot and advise on how those shots could be edited together. In between DeMille projects, she edited more than 20 films for other directors as well, including such respected figures as Victor Fleming, William Dieterle, Mitchell Leisen, and John Farrow. But, when DeMille needed her, she was always there. In fact, every time he negotiated a new film deal, DeMille made certain that Bauchens was a part of the package. He never edited, he made it clear, with anyone else or without her.

Along the way, Bauchens also earned the respect of many others in the film business. In 1935, the first year the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented an Oscar for editing, she was a nominee for her work on DeMille's *Cleopatra* (1934) with Claudette Colbert. Six years later, for her work in DeMille's action-adventure film *North West Mounted Police* (1940) with Gary Cooper, she became the very first woman ever to win a Best Editing Oscar. Then, in the 1950s, when she was in her 70s, she received two more Academy editing nominations for her work on two of DeMille's most ambitious films, *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952) and *The Ten Commandments* (1956). For her work on *The Greatest Show on Earth*, she also received the very first ACE Critics Award from the prestigious film industry association, American Cinema Editors.

Along with her fierce loyalty to DeMille, Bauchens brought several other strengths to the relationship critical to their successful partnership.

One was her legendary stamina, which earned her the nickname "Trojan Annie." Because DeMille's pictures were often big, complicated spectacles that required much more editing work than most films, she often put in extremely long hours in the editing room. In the 1920s, for example, she would routinely work 16- to 18-hour days when a film was in post-production. And, even in the 1950s when she was well into her 70s, she would work 10- to 14-hour days. Rather than stoically bearing this burden, she seemed to relish the challenge, saying in an interview in the 1950s that the 14-hour days she was putting in at the time "were nothing compared to the 18-hour stints Mr. DeMille and I would chalk up."[6]

Another strength was her fearlessness in opposing the often imperious, always intimidating DeMille when the two disagreed about their work. As Charles West, who headed Paramount's editing department, once

said, "Annie and DeMille did not always see eye to eye. They usually went through about five weeks of disagreement and out of it came good pictures. Annie, as everyone knew, was very strong-minded and stubborn. So was DeMille. One of them always had to bring the other around because neither of them would give in."[7] Obviously, she had earned and maintained his respect to an extent that only a handful of other people ever did.

Yet another strength, as this implies, was her ability. As DeMille noted in a memoir he wrote near the end of his life, "She is still best film editor I know."[8] And her Oscar, three additional Academy Award nominations, and recognition from the American Cinema Editors all certainly confirm the high regard of her editing peers. Only two women received Best Editing Oscars during Bauchens' long career, and she was one of them.

Assessing her, however, must also involve assessing DeMille, who worked side by side with her in the editing room on nearly all the films they did together. Although he had a genius for staging spectacle and other talents essential to telling the stories he wanted to tell, he was, according to many accounts, someone who needed a good editor. As the legendary Margaret Booth, the long-time head of MGM's editing department, noted (with characteristic prickliness) in a 1965 interview: "DeMille was a bad editor, I thought, and made [Bauchens] look like a bad editor. I think Anne really would have been a good editor, but she had to put up with him—which was something."[9] While this appraisal seems overly harsh, it clearly suggests DeMille's considerable reliance on Bauchens' editing judgment and skills. Perhaps, without DeMille, Bauchens could have been an even better editor and blossomed more on her own. But then, without DeMille, she might not have ever been challenged to the extent that she was and inspired to meet the many demands she did. In any case—and regardless of Margaret Booth's sharp words—Bauchens remains one of Hollywood's most celebrated and respected film editors from the 1920s to the 1950s.

A Life Largely Lived in the DeMille Universe

Unlike many of her fellow female film editor pioneers who started when they were quite young, Bauchens was past 30 when she first stepped into a cutting room.

Born in St. Louis in 1882 (or possibly 1881, as a few sources state), she was the only daughter of Luella McKee Bauchens and Otto Bauchens, who worked as a railroad porter. When she was a young woman, she aspired to become an actress and studied for a time under a local actor-director

named Hugh Ford, while also studying gymnastics and dancing and working to support herself as a telephone operator for the city newspaper, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Eventually, she left for New York to pursue acting on the Broadway stage. Finding those jobs elusive, she went to work as a secretary for a real estate firm and, when the firm went bankrupt, was hired as William deMille's secretary. When William's brother Cecil convinced him to come to Hollywood in the mid–1910s, she came as well, and, by 1917, she had become the sole editor on Cecil B. DeMille films, a post she would hold until his death in January 1959.

Today, the DeMille name has become synonymous with the kind of ornate, sumptuously produced, and perhaps garish Biblical and historical epics such as his two versions of *The Ten Commandments* (1923 and 1956), *The King of Kings* (1926), *The Sign of the Cross* (1932), *Cleopatra* (1934), *The Crusades* (1935), and *Sampson and Delilah* (1948). Over the course of his career, however, he was far more versatile, working in various genres from contemporary melodramas to westerns, to comedies of manners, to action-dramas such as *The Greatest Show on Earth*. At the same time—like Chaplin, Griffith, Ford, Hitchcock, and a handful of other Hollywood directors whose careers overlapped with his—he was also a genuine auteur, an author whose films usually reflected his values, vision of the world, and personal style. As much as anyone, except perhaps Chaplin after 1920, DeMille also enjoyed great autonomy. A showman first, he had an excellent sense of what the public wanted and how to package it for mass consumption. With only a handful of exceptions, his films were hits, and sometimes—as in the case of his second *The Ten Commandments*—among the most popular films ever made. Because a DeMille film usually meant big box office, Paramount essentially allowed him to be an independent in-house producer for most of his career. And, at several points in the studio's history, DeMille could rightfully claim credit for singlehandedly keeping its account books in the black. For more than 40 years, he was a towering Hollywood figure.

In the decades since DeMille's films were made, however, his work has not held up as well in film studies circles as the work of other auteur directors such as Chaplin, Ford, and Hitchcock. For contemporary audiences especially, his concerns and outlook seem dated and difficult to relate to. Given this limitation, however, his films often exhibit such a passionate point of view and such daring and dynamic showmanship that they are almost impossible not to respond to. As Scott Eyman noted in his excellent 2010 biography of the director, "DeMille's movies were a pure expression of DeMille, defiant throwbacks to another century's beliefs and

styles, yet too audaciously conceived and executed ever to be entirely dismissed."[10]

Like other powerful Hollywood figures, DeMille had his entourage, an inner circle of people from employees to family members and friends he repeatedly turned to for assistance and advice. Unlike most other Hollywood figures, however, most of DeMille's most trusted advisors—sometimes referred to as his "harem"—were women. In addition to Bauchens, there were (among others) DeMille's wife Constance, his daughter Cecilia, pioneer screenwriter Jeanie Macpherson, and his private secretary Gladys Rosson. The nature of these relationships differed widely. At various times, for example, Macpherson and Rosson (along with DeMille stock company actress Julia Faye) also served as DeMille's mistresses. But, whether there was a sexual component to the relationship or not, all of these women shared an intense life-long loyalty to him, and, in various ways, he reciprocated.

Despite DeMille's tendency to become involved with women in his inner circle, there is no evidence that he and Bauchens, who never married, ever shared anything more than work and friendship. In fact, in his memoirs, DeMille shared a humorous story about how—in 40 years of working together—he had only stirred her passion once. As the story went, a car DeMille was driving with Bauchens as a passenger spun out so its back end was hanging out over a cliff. "I hung onto the brake," he remembered, "and Anne threw her arms around my neck and said, 'Oh, Cecil!' That was Annie's only burst of emotion toward me in the forty years we've been working together."[11]

As DeMille's editor, Bauchens held one of the most important posts in the DeMille universe. And, considering both the scale and complexity of many of the productions they worked on together and DeMille's stubborn personality, hers was no easy task.

Given that the two nearly always edited his films together, it is almost impossible to point to specific sequences and moments and say precisely that they are the results of Bauchens' inputs or of DeMille's. But, considering the egocentric, often overbearing DeMille's enormous reliance on Bauchens for so long, it is not unreasonable to assume that she brought a great deal of value to the equation. He could not have done quite what he did without her, and he knew it.

During the 1920s, the films varied between contemporary comedies of manners to some of the first notable examples of the films DeMille would ultimately be best remembered for: his big and often very plodding and preachy Biblical epics.

One of these was his first version of *The Ten Commandments* (1923).

More than two hours long, the first one-third is a large-scale epic telling the Bible story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and receiving the commandments from God on Mount Sinai. Then, quite awkwardly, the final two-thirds is a modern day morality tale of two brothers, one who follows the commandments and becomes a poor but virtuous carpenter and the other who consistently breaks the commandments, becomes very rich, and is ultimately led to ruin and tragedy.

Another of these epics, one that is far more compelling, is *The King of Kings* (1927), DeMille's version of the last few weeks of Jesus Christ's life, culminating in the Last Supper, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. A full two hours and 35 minutes long, it is filled with moments that, while tinged with hokum, remain quite powerful, even for those who are not necessarily fans of Bible stories.

One scene, very effectively orchestrated by DeMille and Bauchens, is when Jesus gives a young blind girl sight. It begins about 16 minutes into the film. At this point, viewers have been introduced to numerous characters, but they have not seen Jesus himself.

The girl, dressed in rags and whose eyes seem eternally closed, has been led to Jesus' mother Mary, whom she asks to take her to Jesus so he can perform a miracle on her and give her sight. Mary then leads the girl to Jesus, who is still off-camera, presents her, and leaves. The film cuts to a closer shot of the girl, who says (in the inter-title): "Lord, I have never seen the flowers nor the light. Wilt thou open my eyes?" Behind her we see two apostles, both watching intently. The film cuts back to the girl, her eyes still closed. The space around her head begins to go dark. Then suddenly—and quite unexpectedly—the film cuts to total blackness. Just like the girl, we in the audience cannot see a thing. We are now effectively inside her head, seeing from her point of view. After a second or two, a light—first dim and then brightening—shines down from right to left across the screen. Then, over the light, appear the words: "I am come a light into the world—that whosoever shall believe in me shall not abide in darkness." Cut back to the girl in close-shot, now with some diffused light around her. The light becomes brighter, and she seems to recede into it. Cut back to the girl's point of view, which is now an image of diffused light filling the screen that is slowly but constantly shifting. Cut back to the girl, now filled with great excitement. Cut to an inter-title: "Oh—oh! I begin to see—the light!" Cut back to the girl, now wringing her hands with joy and excitement. Cut back to her point of view. At first we see a big, sun-like circle of light filling much of screen. Then, slowly the face of Jesus begins to appear in this light, as if emerging from it, and becomes

more and more distinct. The light recedes, but not entirely. Around Jesus a halo remains. Finally, the girl—still drenched in light—opens her eyes. Cut to Jesus. He nods, smiles kindly, and holds out his hands out to her. She holds her arms out to him. Cut to the film's first two-shot of both the girl and Jesus as he holds her arms with his hands and then hugs her.

What an entrance!

While the subject matter depicted here may not resonate with many modern viewers, this remains a very moving scene 90 years after it was first screened. It owes much, of course, to the film's clever scripting, which waits until this point to introduce Jesus; DeMille's careful and very sensitive direction; and the very honest and moving acting of eight-year-old Muriel McCormac as the blind girl. But, the editing is what brings it all together and makes it work so well. While the scene, which lasts approximately four minutes, includes lots of cuts to keep the action crisp and engaging, it also includes a good share of leisurely fades and dissolves that allow the audience to fully absorb the enormity of what is happening in the young girl's life ... and to visually reinforce the film's theme that Jesus is indeed the light of the world. Upon repeated viewings, the timing of every cut, dissolve, and fade seems perfect. Nothing is too long. Nothing is too abrupt.

The coming of both sound films and the Great Depression in the late 1920s presented some new challenges to Bauchens and DeMille.

Like her fellow editors, Bauchens had to learn how to cut for what was essentially a new art form, the talking picture. This meant developing new editing strategies, especially for scenes heavily dependent on spoken dialogue. The editing rhythms prevalent in silent films, which used relatively little dialogue and inter-titles, for example, had to be rethought entirely. In addition, film editors now had to work very closely with a new kind of studio employee called the sound editor, and relationships could often be highly competitive and downright adversarial.

DeMille had to stay relevant as well, and in 1932 he released *The Sign of the Cross*, a film that has in many ways defined what we today call "a DeMille picture." In keeping with what had worked for him in the 1920s, this was a lavish epic set in ancient times with a strong Christian message that also included a large cast and sumptuous, complex set pieces. But now—during what we now know as the Pre-Code Era, a brief period when filmmakers constantly pushed the envelope when it came to challenging restrictions on screen sex, violence, and other taboos—he went to new lengths to titillate as well as preach. In other words, as he extolled the Christian virtues to audiences, he also thrilled them with scenes that were

more overtly sexual in nature and more brutally violent than he ever had. This was of course brazenly hypocritical, but it was also highly successful. *The Sign of the Cross* was an enormous hit with audiences who wanted to have it both ways: to be praised for their virtue while also getting a voyeuristic look at some of the very exciting things they were missing out on because they were virtuous.

This film also presented some intriguing new challenges for Bauchens, who, as usual, had to make it all work.

One involved a famous scene from the film, in which the beautiful and manipulative Empress Poppaea (wonderfully played by Claudette Colbert) bathes in asses' milk. Colbert is clearly topless, and the scene goes on for several minutes. For the entire time, the intent is to tease viewers by showing as much breast as possible without revealing Colbert's nipples. With a great deal of precision cutting, Bauchens and DeMille achieve this effect. But, more important, the cutting appears very natural and the scene flows smoothly. Combined with Colbert's fine acting, what could easily have appeared forced and silly comes off as quite credible.

Another scene involved a much-talked-about lesbian dance, in which a decadent female character sings and dances around and periodically caresses the virtuous Christian heroine's lovely body. Here, there is a dynamic quality to the cutting that gives this scene an eroticism that still holds up today. Quickly, the film cuts between the dance and the various characters watching it and, in the process, becoming quite aroused. Again, anything less than first-rate editing would have diminished the effect, making the eroticism seem silly.

Still another challenge came at the end of film when viewers are treated to grand-scale carnage and atrocities in the Roman Colosseum. Sometimes, too, this is mixed in with moments of titillation, as in a couple of scenes when beautiful young women, clothed only in slim garlands of flowers strategically wrapped around their bodies, are, first, about to be devoured by crocodiles and then accosted by a gorilla. It's all quite bizarre, but it's also clear that, without precise, quickly timed edits, the whole purpose of evoking horror would have been undermined and the film's overall dramatic impact greatly diminished.

While it has its flaws and dated aspects, *The Sign of the Cross* was nevertheless a very daring film to make. To even attempt it took a supremely confident director. But, to succeed, especially in many scenes that could easily have gone wrong, it also took a supremely capable editor.

The success of *The Sign of the Cross* led to *Cleopatra* in 1934, and throughout the 1930s and much of the 1940s, DeMille turned out films—

most of them hits—at a steady clip. Many of his better films during these years, such as *The Plainsman* (1936), *Union Pacific* (1938), and *North West Mounted Police* (1940)—for which Bauchens received her Oscar—were westerns. Even though Paramount demanded that she also edit for other directors between DeMille pictures, Bauchens remained deeply involved in every DeMille effort, observing and advising during shooting as well as editing.

After a rare box-office disappointment, an American colonial era action-adventure story called *The Unconquered* (1947), DeMille, needing a hit, returned to his tried-and-true formula of lavish, sexy Biblical epics with *Samson and Delilah* (1949). The strategy worked. Although the film seems stiff, stodgy, and a bit silly today, it was hugely successful when released, ultimately reaping box office receipts of more than $25 million on a budget of only $3 million.

By the early 1950s, both DeMille and Bauchens, who by then had both turned 70, were showing signs of slowing down (at least by their standards). They would have only two more films left: *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952) and a remake of *The Ten Commandments* (1956). Both efforts were hugely popular, and both received numerous Academy Award nominations, especially in technical categories. Bauchens was nominated for Best Editor for her work in each film, bringing her lifetime total to four nominations with one win. And DeMille received his only competitive Academy Award, as producer of *The Greatest Show on Earth*, which won the Best Picture Oscar that year.

Both films were also filled with enormous editing challenges. In *The Ten Commandments*, for example, DeMille worked with as many as 12 cameras in some scenes, eventually shooting more than 100,000 feet of film. It was Bauchens' job to whittle it all down to 12,000 feet and a running time that still ran nearly four hours. In addition, she had to edit many of the large, action scenes and glass-and-matte shots with the utmost precision—always a tricky business in those pre-digital days. It's a testament to her skills that even the most difficult of the film's most spectacular and technically challenging scenes, such as the parting of the Red Sea, still hold up well today decades after audiences have become accustomed to far more sophisticated computer-generated effects. DeMille later noted that it was "the most difficult operation of editing in motion picture history."[12] Given that DeMille often spoke in superlatives, this may or may not be the case. The editing challenges involved in *Gone with the Wind* and other films made before 1956 were also monumental in scale and difficult to implement as well. Still, it was an enormous task.

In addition, Bauchens and DeMille make ample use of long dissolves to underscore the film's themes. One of the most powerful comes near the end of the film when Egypt's ruler, Ramses II (Yul Brynner), returns to his throne room now dark and empty except for him and his queen, Nefretiri (Anne Baxter). At this point, his arrogant defiance of the god of Moses has caused great suffering and loss for them. Both sit on their huge dark thrones in despair, and, in a final surrender, Ramses says that Moses' god "is God." At this, the film dissolves very slowly—and with great emphasis—from this scene to a scene of Mount Sinai (where the god of Moses resides). In the frame, Sinai (with a fiery light overhead) emerges between Ramses and Nefretiri and above them, visually drowning them out of the frame like the waters of the Red Sea drowned Ramses' army just minutes earlier in the film. In all, this one dissolve takes about 12 seconds, quite long—and daring—for 1956 when long dissolves were quickly going out of fashion. But, here, because it underscores meaning so dramatically, it is quite powerful.

According to Lisa Mitchell, who acted in a small role in *The Ten Commandments* and then went on to a career as a film historian, this experience was difficult in another way as well. With DeMille working on the film in Egypt and huge amounts of footage to edit, raw footage was regularly flown to Los Angeles for her to edit without him, an experience that gave the 74-year-old Bauchens considerable separation anxiety.[13]

Although DeMille considered other projects after *The Ten Commandments*, this was his last hurrah as well as Bauchens'. When he died in January 1959, she retired and lived quietly until her death at a home for motion picture retirees in Woodland Hills, California, in May 1967.

As noted earlier, Bauchens never married. She lived in an unassuming home in Los Angeles for most of her life. For a time, she shared the home with her widowed mother. Later, she had a housekeeper and a dog she credited with taking very good care of her. While she was active in her church and an enthusiastic gardener, her work with DeMille was truly her life. And, along with the stamina that earned her the nickname Trojan Annie, her loyalty to him was legendary.

Scott Eyman captured this in very poignant terms in his biography of DeMille. At a gathering the day after DeMille's funeral Bauchens told a story of how DeMille had spotted someone smoking a cigarette in the final print of one scene from the 1956 version of *The Ten Commandments*. "Bauchens believed that, if DeMille saw it, it had to be there, so she ran the footage for two days straight, over and over again," Eyman wrote. "She never found the offending shot—nobody ever has—but she had been wor-

rying about that phantom cigarette for the last three years and would for the rest of her life.... Then she began to cry."[14]

Like the vast majority of her contemporaries, Bauchens embraced the traditional "continuity editing" philosophy, which espoused that editing should strive to achieve a logical coherence between shots without drawing attention to itself—by effectively being invisible. And her editing style—much like her modest, soft-spoken personal style—followed suit and stayed fairly consistent throughout her long career.

To signal scene changes in films, for example, she quickly abandoned many of the gimmicky editing techniques common in silent films such as "wipes" and "iris ins," and "iris outs" and relied heavily on the less showy and self-conscious fades and dissolves. Often, too, her fades, and especially her dissolves, are used to visually convey irony.

When cutting actual scenes, she thought along similar lines. "You must make the story flow evenly [and] splice in the close-ups and the distance shots so the audience is not conscious of any break in the story," she once noted. "Unusual angles should not be employed merely for their own interest, unless they are effective in telling the story. The moment the audience is aware of various cuts and devices used, the story will suffer."[15]

We don't know what Bauchens thought of the more stylized, self-conscious editing techniques that emerged in the 1940s in films such as *Citizen Kane* or of the "shock cuts" and other even more radical techniques the French New Wave filmmakers employed in the late 1950s and 1960s. But, since these techniques were so alien to both her personal and professional sensibilities, she most likely would not have been impressed. She was very much a person of her time.

Although she stayed within the confines of the "invisible" style, Bauchens nevertheless remains an extremely able practitioner of it. And, for 40 years, her work was invaluable in helping a sometimes ingenious but also flawed director-showman transform his lavish imaginings into consistently well-crafted, commercially successful films.

Bauchen's Work on the "Emphatically Lavish" Cleopatra

DeMille's *Cleopatra* was born out of the phenomenal popular success of *The Sign of the Cross* two years before. Delighted that they had come

up with a winning swords-sandals-and-sex formula, the director and Paramount were intent on using it again to strike box-office gold. In the meantime, the times had changed and the Hollywood Production Code, which had previously been dismissed by many filmmakers, was now being enforced much more strictly. DeMille had great clout, however, and, while not quite as violent or risqué as *The Sign of the Cross*, *Cleopatra* is still filled with lots of action and alluringly dressed women.

The story of course is the well-known saga of the clever Egyptian queen (played by Claudette Colbert) who stayed in power largely by seducing and manipulating Julius Caesar (Warren William) and Marc Antony (Henry Wilcoxon), two of the most powerful Roman leaders during the first century B.C. Ultimately, however, Caesar's heir, Octavian, defeats Antony and Cleopatra's combined forces in the Battle of Actium and the lovers both commit suicide.

Several critics have suggested that DeMille's approach to this story bears a remarkable resemblance to Alfred Green's *Baby Face* (1933), Warner's string of "gold digger" musicals, and numerous other popular films that featured downtrodden Depression-era heroines who use sex to scheme their way to wealth and power. And they may very well have a point. DeMille was very conscious of making his historical films relevant to contemporary issues and concerns, and his take here certainly echoes the desperate mood of the times.

For this production, DeMille—already widely acknowledged as one of the kings of Hollywood spectacle—was often unabashedly over the top. The film's big showstopper, if you will, is the famous sequence on Cleopatra's barge, which culminates with her bedding Marc Antony—perhaps the most elaborate seduction in movie history. Filled with music, dance, pageantry, scantily clad women, and opulence all around, it is large enough to make a splashy Busby Berkeley dance number seem small by comparison. "Emphatically lavish" were the words Mordaunt Hall of the *New York Times* used to describe *Cleopatra* upon its release in August 1934.[16] And, to support his point, he referred specifically to this scene.

To address budget constraints while also wanting everything to appear on a grand scale, DeMille came up with some very clever solutions. In his depiction of the Battle of Actium, for example, he used scenes from his 1923 version of *The Ten Commandments*, *The Sign of the Cross*, and Raoul Walsh's 1925 film, *The Wanderer*, along with shots featuring major characters from *Cleopatra*. The result—a long battle montage—also presented a major challenge for him and, in particular, Bauchens as they sorted through the existing footage and cut the sequence together.

Noted for its opulent (and sometimes over-the-top) sets and costumes, Cecil B. DeMille's *Cleopatra* (1934) with Claudette Colbert (center) offered Anne Bauchens a number of major editing challenges. One is a brilliantly orchestrated battle sequence toward the end of the film, which—to save money—was made up largely of existing footage from previous films (Paramount Pictures/Photofest).

Throughout the film, the editing is quite effective in many ways.

Perhaps the most apparent is Bauchens and DeMille's handling of the "showstopper," the sequence on Cleopatra's barge. The cutting is done to maximum effect throughout. One eye-popping moment is when Antony first beholds Cleopatra reclining in splendor in the center of the proceedings. It's quite a sight, and we move back and forth between them at just the right pace—each cut long enough to see that she has really made an impact on him but also never prolonged, always crisp. Another is the cutting of various scenes involving many people. Those viewing the dancers and other performers in reaction shots are treated as central to the experience as well, people absorbing all the sumptuous pageantry.

The editing is also highly effective in more subtle ways. Particularly impressive is how Bauchens handled dissolves to visually communicate

irony throughout the film. One example is a longish (six-second) dissolve from Caesar's assassination in the Senate to a close-up of a vaguely troubled Cleopatra, ornately dressed and waiting to be escorted to the Senate and named Rome's queen. Although we may have mixed feelings about Cleopatra and her motives, the timing of the dissolve makes her a particular poignant figure at this moment. We feel genuine sympathy for her. Another example is the dissolve between Octavian's call for war against Antony and Cleopatra and a scene of them in Egypt lounging in a rapturous pose, seemingly intoxicated by the love they share and listening to the sensuous strumming of a harp. Again, the dissolve is a bit longer than usual (this time about seven seconds), just long enough to let the irony sink in—that they are clueless and doomed. Incidentally, this scene is also famous for a not-so-subtle touch DeMille added to subvert the Production Code. After a few moments, the camera pans to a new angle of the lovers and Cleopatra's reclining, and provocatively clad body, which we now see through the harp strings in the foreground. As the harpist's hand (in the foreground) plays from this angle, there is the suggestion that he is also caressing Cleopatra's breasts in the background. The code, of course, would not tolerate actor Wilcoxon literally stroking actress Colbert's breasts, but, as we look through the harp strings, the suggestion is clearly communicated. Soon, however, the enforcers of the code would become more vigilant and even DeMille would not be able to get scenes such as this past the censors.

The editing is also extremely effective near the end of the film in the montage Bauchens and DeMille assembled mostly from existing footage to portray the Battle of Actium. About eight minutes long, the montage includes more than 200 separate shots, nearly all of which are three seconds or less in length. Aided by a rousing musical score, it moves with great speed and urgency. But its most impressive attribute is how artfully it conveys the complete story arc of the battle through images alone. As Antony and Cleopatra accept the fact that there will be a battle, they kiss. This kiss then dissolves into smiths forging spears in fire, suggesting a cause and effect between their fiery passion and the bloodshed it is leading toward. Then we watch the events unfold from each side: Antony and Cleopatra's forces from right to left on the screen, Octavian's forces from left to right. The horns sound, soldiers march, chariots ride out, everyone clashes, there is bloodshed and chaos, day turns to night, the battle now rages between ships on the water, ships ram each other, men struggle to survive underwater, ships catch fire, killing is widespread. Throughout we also see brief shots of Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavian in the midst of all

of this. The three glimpses of Cleopatra are especially telling. First, she is riding out filled with anticipation. Next, she looks more somber. Finally, as her face is superimposed over some battling soldiers, she appears downcast, seeming to realize that her and Antony's defeat is inevitable. As well as gripping, the entire montage is extremely well organized and clear; without a single word spoken, every important facet of the battle is communicated. A great deal of effort, care, and intelligence went into its creation, and both Bauchens and DeMille deserve kudos for this often-ingenious use of mostly recycled footage.

As hoped, *Cleopatra* was a major hit with both audiences and critics. It was nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Picture and—in the first year this contribution was recognized by the Academy—Best Film Editing. Bauchens' work—especially in assembling the Cleopatra's barge and Battle of Actium sequences—was widely praised.

Shining Brightly on Her Own

Like many of her contemporary editors, men as well as women, Bauchens' precise contribution to the films she worked on is difficult to assess. The constant use of longer-than-average fades and dissolves in the films she worked on certainly suggests her interest in keeping the flow of the story moving from scene to scene with great smoothness and reflects her sensibility much more closely than the more flamboyant DeMille's. We also can't dismiss DeMille's enthusiastic praise and lifetime commitment to using her services. He did not suffer fools, and she clearly contributed much more than her loyalty and diligence. Finally, there's the high esteem that other editors had for her. One of the first three editors ever nominated for an Oscar, she was also the first woman to win one. Then, later in her career, she was nominated twice more. This stands in sharp contrast to DeMille, who, during a long and commercially successful career, received only one Academy Award nomination for directing.

Although, as many have noted, Bauchens spent her career in DeMille's shadow, this shy, soft-spoken woman still managed to shine brightly on her own.

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