

How have the films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger influenced contemporary cinema?

Not standard Hollywood fare.
Met making WW2 "propaganda" films.
Made something more - Explored themes and stories on the edges of popular movies.

Matthew Bourne - Theatre Director, Choreographer - influenced by movies - Wikipedia

Themes of Love and Obsession

Add "desire" to list. Love forms the core to many of their films. Not all though.

Not all obsession sexual: Colpeper obsessed with keeping the local girls true to their boyfriends. A Canterbury Tale

Costume design-wise P&P films have great uniforms due WW2 related themes

Crossing Borders

Crossing Thresholds - perhaps a better description as characters enter a new reality/world view

The World Navel / Axis Mundi:

Corryvreckan - I Know Where I'm Going;
The Stairway/Heaven - A Matter of Life and Death;
The Ballet Performance - The Red Shoes
Main characters enter - come out changed

Whirlpool

Travels to the Other World

David Niven falls in love, becomes trapped between heaven and Earth
Wendy Hiller goes to Scotland to get married, falls in love instead.

- P&P were at odds with main film industry
- mix of WW2 propaganda & fantasy
- went out of style - rediscovered in the 60's. Martin Scorsese fan
- influence pop culture: shots from "The Simpsons", "Captain America" / Images on Phil Collins album, postage stamps / Set design - The Barbie Movie

- Images, colour and sets influence - Baz Luhrman - Moulin Rouge, Great Gatsby, and Matthew Bourne (who?)
- Set design - opulent - enhances performance & character

- Visuals of P&P reflect theme of love and obsession
NB: so far the video has focussed on The Red Shoes
- Baz L and Matthew B's protagonists often suffer the same fate as Vicky from The Red Shoes, ie dead.
- Love, Obsession, Art - all form life, or are a part of life
- Set design reflect the dark undercurrent of obsession - Love gone wrong.
- Ditto for costume design of "muscle" armor of Dracula - 1992?

- P&P characters take a pilgrimage
- "wakes character from class, religious & military chains"
NB: this is a strange idea as P&P were very good at character. The rest is just setting

- Seen in Legend of Zelda: Breath of the World and in Coraline
- The otherworld in Coraline is a theatrical version of the real one like in Tales of Hoffman

NB: The hero's journey - Joseph Campbell - is a common structure in film. It's how you reach the "belly of the whale" - the point where the hero / their perception is (permanently) changed.

- Also Kate Bush - album "The Red Shoes" and song Sensual World

NB: Kate Bush very into movies. Song Hammer Horror. Video for Hounds of Love influenced by Hitchcock's 39 Steps and includes sound bit from Night of the Demon.

- Crossing Borders - defines character.

Hammer Movies - known for visual style and bold colours

P&P didn't want to do Pimpernel, and neither did David Niven - they were contractually obliged!

- Set design reveals and influences character
- Coraline - when her relationship with the Other Mother breaks apart - the other world breaks apart
- in P&P Elusive Pimpernel - when Chauvelin is defeated we cut to him looking over the sea as the tide literally changes
- KB's Sensual World is like Black Narcissus - the scenery change explores/reveals sensuality and female desire
- Red Shoes, and Tales of Hoffman - very theatrical. Similarly with scenes from Life and Death of Col. Blimp & A Canterbury Tale -playing the organ in the cathedral.
- Paddington 2 - dance number in prison, and Rye Lane - bad break-up recalled in the form of a play.
- Many of their films had character of different nationalities and cultures.
- An influence of Pressburger - refugee from Nazis
- Sympathetic Germans; during WW2!
- Padding 2 - for example reflects modern, cosmopolitan Britain
- Padding - native of Peru - is like the exiled Pressburger (?)
- Influence of P&P far-reaching
- Popular because they are a "reflection of how far identity has changed in modern times" ??!
- Their visuals were ahead of their time
- Not always appreciated by audiences.
- Sympathetic portrayal of Germans during WW2!
- Psychological thriller - erotic and sexual freedom.
- Audiences sometimes ambivalent - had not seen liberal unions of post-war Europe or the sexual revolution
- What would modern cinema look like without them?
- Because of them - it is a more colourful and welcoming place.

Cosmopolitan Stage

I she is only doing a surface reading this. P&P explored themes of the commonality of people across cultures and time. Culture, place and time have meaning.

Also not sure what "fictional activism" means. Corresponding visual is not P&P - looks modern

Visual: Black Narcissus - desire and obsession. Nuns set up shop in the former palace of the concubines.

Very nice montage of two-shots of romantic leads from their films.

SUMMARY

The fortuitous partnership of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger produced some of the most visually arresting and thematically mature films of the 1940's. Their complementary skills allowed them to produce films where every shot, line of dialogue, and mis-en-scene contributed to the story. Like many filmmakers, they were forgotten but were discovered in the 60's & 70's. Their work, whether we are aware of it or not, still exerts an influence in films today.