

Institute of Art Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire

Faculty of Creative Technologies

Innovation in Cinematic Expression:

How Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger Communicate and
Interrogate the Mental Trauma of a Protagonist

By

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Declaration of Originality

This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfillment of the examination for the BA (Hons) in Film and Television Production. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

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Introduction

British director Michael Powell began his renowned collaboration with the Hungarian screenwriter-cum-producer Emeric Pressburger in 1939 with the thriller *A Spy in Black*. However the duos legendary production company 'The Archers' sporting the iconic red-blue bullseye would not be officially birthed until their 1942 propaganda piece, *One of our Aircraft is Missing*.¹ The pair would go onto collaborate on 16 further feature films but it could be argued that their most influential period of filmmaking was between the years 1946 and 1948. In this short period they produced and directed three films; *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1948), all of which with British director of photography, Jack Cardiff. The pair would, with these films, solidify their unique and antithetical style of filmmaking to other British pictures of that era². Over the course of this dissertation, I will discuss in detail the aforementioned trilogy of films and analyze just one of the predominant ways they diverged from British filmmaking norms: their in-depth depictions of psychological trauma.

While they were both credited as writer/director, their true dynamic has long since been established with Powell having directed each film and Pressburger providing the screenplay. For the sake of this analysis, the title of the Archers will refer not only to Powell & Pressburger but to their frequent partners such as Jack Cardiff, Alfred Junge and Hein Heckroth. In the systematic exploration of each of the films in question, we will identify how these different artists worked in tandem with Powell & Pressburger to interrogate and communicate the psyches of the films' protagonists. We do this not only to reveal the symbolic and subtextual methodology by which they carried this out but ultimately to expose an observable evolution in their experimentation with psychological themes as they became more prominent in the British film industry.

¹ Harris, Scott Jordan. "Directors: Powell and Pressburger." *Directory of World Cinema: Britain*, edited by Neil Mitchell and Emma Bell, vol. 14, UK, Intellect Ltd, 2012, p. 58.

² *Ibid*, p.58

Chapter 1 explores how Powell & Pressburger convey the guilt of the protagonist through symbolism and the device of the two worlds in *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946). I discuss the how importance of colour or the lack thereof is used to establish the dual realities of the film and the elements of production design that contribute to this effect. I also refer to Jack Cardiff's innovative use of POV shots and how it solidifies the subjective nature of the story by putting us in the protagonist's head.

Chapter 2 deals with Powell & Pressburger's depiction of repression in *Black Narcissus* (1947) and how it is conveyed through mood and subtext. There is much discussion of the idea of a mirror character for the protagonist through which darker ideas about the protagonist's psyche can be conveyed. I return to the use of Technicolor and how their use of it has evolved. I analyse the efficacy of the 'constructed' studio based sets and their possibility as a means of expression.

Chapter 3 continues my examination of the trends and evolutions in Powell & Pressburgers portrayal of trauma. This analysis focuses on *The Red Shoes* (1948), reading it as a tragedy of emotional abuse. I explore the interplay between the protagonist's reality and fairytale and how this can be viewed as a coping mechanism. I highlight the parallels in set design between this film and that of the German Expressionist era and take a final look at Technicolor and camera operation as means of further expression. Finally I identify the trend in the differing psychological arcs of the three protagonists discussed in the dissertation.

Chapter 1

A Matter of Life and Death:

Depicting Guilt in War Time



Figure 1

“This is the story of two worlds, the one we know and another that exists only in the mind of a young airman who’s life and imagination have been violently shaped by war...”

It is with this disclaimer that Powell & Pressburger’s seminal 1946 film, *A Matter of Life and Death* (*AMOLAD*) opens. At once establishing the documentarian inflections that will permeate the film and planting the flag of its subject matter firmly in the realms of the psychological. This quirky opener is a microcosm of the conflict at the heart of the story and thusly, in the mind of our hero, Peter Carter. A conflict of two opposed ideologies: patriotism and romanticism, resulting in tremendous, if externalized, survivor’s guilt. In so doing, *AMOLAD* wears its divided heart on its sleeve. It is not a stretch to say that this is Powell and Pressburger’s most literal and overt depiction of the human psyche. The subject of the human mind never appears quite so textually anywhere else in their filmography. However, through further analysis, *AMOLAD* reveals itself to be just as subtle and idiosyncratic as any other film in the Archers canon. With that, I can think of no better place to start our exploration of how Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger use the technical and design aspects of filmmaking to express the mind on screen.

Powell & Pressburger, co-wrote the screenplay for *AMOLAD* so it is on the page that they begin to paint the picture of Peter D. Carter’s psyche. As stated above this is a unique case where the plot of the film so explicitly references the psychology of the protagonist. Therefore our analysis can start with the script and Peter’s characterization. From the first scene, Peter is presented as an ideal British soldier, settling his affairs and facing death with militaristic decorum. However he is also a poet with dreams, hopes and emotions. These two contradictory sides of him will provide much of the conflict for the story. On one level, Peter, having survived an impossible fall, wants to live and pursue a love life with June but on another subconscious level, he feels he must join his wingman, Bob who is waiting for him in Peter’s own construction of the afterlife. In this way, the set up for the plot is analogous of Peter’s survivor’s guilt and his struggle to overcome it. The juxtaposition of the two sides of his personality is manifested in the Lee Wood House scene as a squad of British soldiers rehearse a production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The troops are stand-ins for Peter himself and as they are all in a similar way, military-artists. A vignette plays out here when one soldier turned actor reads the part of Bottom with a loud flat tone (‘like a gangster’) before being encouraged by the director to give it more emotion and flamboyance. This

interaction is an externalized diorama of the militaristic patriotism and emotive romanticism within Peter.

Prominent in the films marketing was the use of Technicolor. Then in its infancy and still a gimmick to many, the Archers in league with cinematographer Jack Cardiff, make full expressive use of the process. The harsh contrast between the monochromatic “afterlife” in Peter’s mind and the vivid technicolor reality creates a strong visual representation of the divide within Peter: the subconscious urge to join his comrades and die like a proper soldier versus his longing to live out his romance with June. Peter’s experience as a soldier informs his expectations of the afterlife, perceiving it as just another station he and his comrades are required to report to. The black and white color palette emphasizes this outlook and, as Bob observes platoons of soldiers arriving one by one, once more evokes the feeling of a wartime documentary. This sentiment is echoed by Archer’s scholar, Andrew Moor: “The monochrome ‘Other World’ with its authority, and its sense of order... endorses a set of values associated with the documentary movement of the war period”³. In a similar way, Peter’s passions inform the color palette of the real world. The deep red of June’s lipstick establishes her character as the object of his desire just as the purples and pinks in the rose orchard scene solidify that moment as the consummation of their love. The use of technicolor here is an interesting reversal of expectations. One might assume that the ‘inner world’ of Peter’s mind would be depicted in full colour in contrast to a monochromatic reality, as was the case in the more culturally prominent *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939). There is great importance in this inversion as it ultimately leads to a more optimistic message. The strong, varied color pallet of the ‘real world’ indicates the depth of Peter’s emotional investment in it, implying that, despite his apparent guilt, this reality is his preferred state of being.

Another way of framing the separation between the color and non-color realities of *AMOLAD* is that they represent the divide between the rigid views of the past and the endless possibilities of the future. If we assume that Peter’s ‘afterlife’ is shaped by his own narrow expectations at the start of the film, as he puts it, “I think it starts where this [world] leaves off or where this one could leave off if we listen to Plato and Aristotle and Jesus”, then it follows that this place of his creation is based solely on his past experience, therefore

³ Moor, Andrew, *Powell and Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces (Cinema and Society)*, Kindle ed., London, I.B. Tauris 2005, ch. 4

manifesting as a construction of black and white (the pallet synonymous with films of that era and before). The 'living world' then with its rich and varied colors must represent the bright future and all it's potential: the life that he would be foregoing. As previously stated, technicolor was a new innovation at that time and would have evoked the possibilities for films yet to come. It's fitting then that the operating theater(see Fig. 2), where Peter's future will be decided is painted in muted tones, a sort of crossroads between color and non-color and thus between life and death.

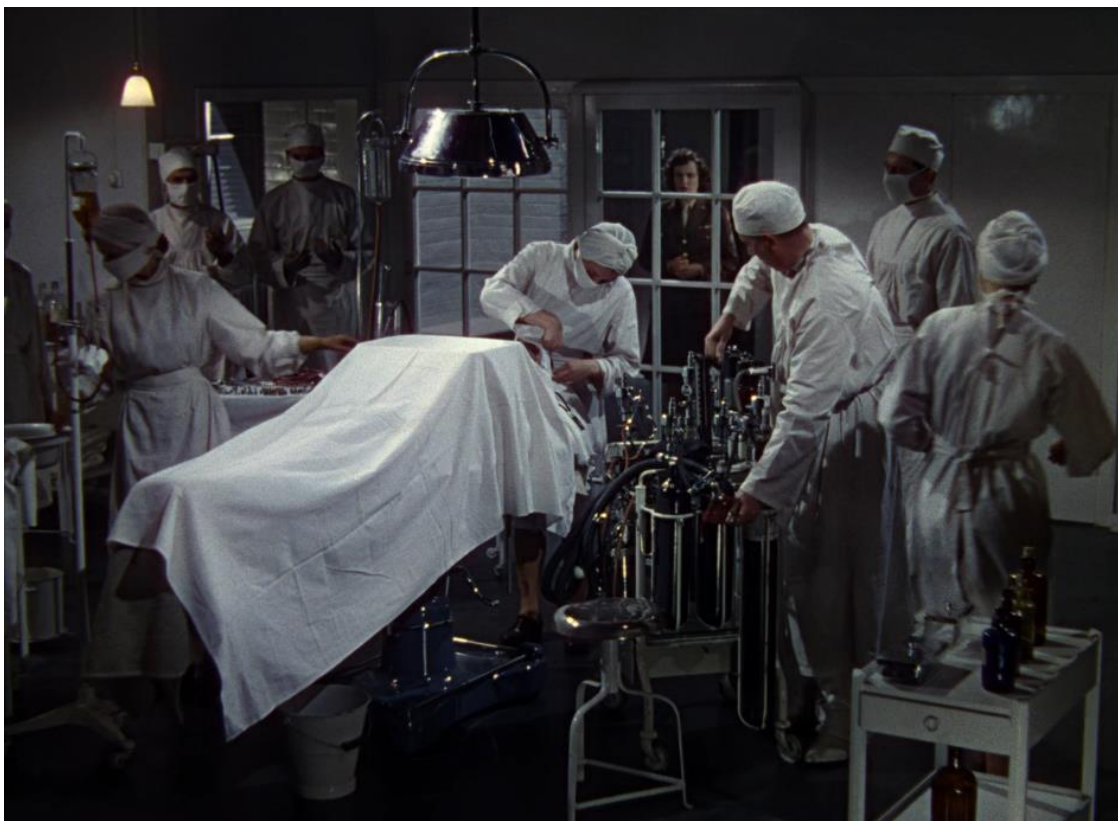


Figure 2, credit: The Archers; J. Arthur Rank

In creating Peter's varied mental landscape, the Archers worked with production designer Alfred Junge and costume designer Hein Heckroth to breathe life into the hallucinations. The realist future design of the 'inner world' lends it an almost dystopic atmosphere. On paper, Peter's afterlife contains everything a young soldier could want: staff that dress like military nurses, a free pair of wings for every fallen comrade and, of course, a Coca-Cola machine. However Junge's set design gives all of it a realist edge. As Powell himself remarks in his memoir: "Everything was to be as real as possible in both worlds.... [Alfred Junge] thought he

had no more worlds left to conquer. But now he had two more to create.”⁴ All the angels are clerks, the wings are vacuum sealed and this ‘utopia’ is comprised mainly of office space (potentially referring to the real life job opportunities facing returning soldiers). The center piece of *AMOLAD*’s design and special effects is of course the colossal escalator that is implied to bridge the living world with the afterlife (Fig. 3). The key decision here is that it is definitively an escalator and not a staircase. It will take Peter up into the afterlife whether he wants to go or not. This reinforces the powerful sense of inevitability Peter deals with throughout the story. Coupled with this inevitability is the construction of an authority in the afterlife. The combination of the courtroom style staging and costuming (Fig. 4) tells us that Peter, at least on a subconscious level, believes that he lawfully *should* have died in his fall from the plane. In his mind he frames his newly found romance as an affront to some kind of authority, as if that by going on living he is betraying his comrades. Peter therefore must prove to the court and himself that he has the right to live.



Figure 3, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

⁴ Powell, Michael. *A Life in Movies*. New ed, UK, Michael Powell, 2000. p.498



Figure 4, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

The film pushes us further into the realm of subjectivity through Jack Cardiff's usage of what can only be described as 'extreme POV' photography. Cardiff would become somewhat renowned for his ingenuity in operating the fridge-sized camera demanded by the color process at the time⁵. Through careful placement of said camera and various overlays and optical effects, we are physically placed in Peter's head, looking at the world through his eyes. At an early point in the film, as Peter realizes for the first time that his mind has been compromised by his near-fatal fall, we see the threatening blindspot in the middle of Peter's vision (Fig. 6) at *just* the moment he does. Just before the climactic courtroom scene, as Peter is being anaesthetized, we experience his restricted cone of vision (Fig. 5) and share in his sense of foreboding as his eyelids close over the lens. The camera then brilliantly takes us down into the his mind as we witness physical brain matter give way to the subconscious

⁵ Ibid. p.535

world within. We are reminded through this camera movement of the deception at the core of Peter's afterlife. It is not a place above, but a place below.

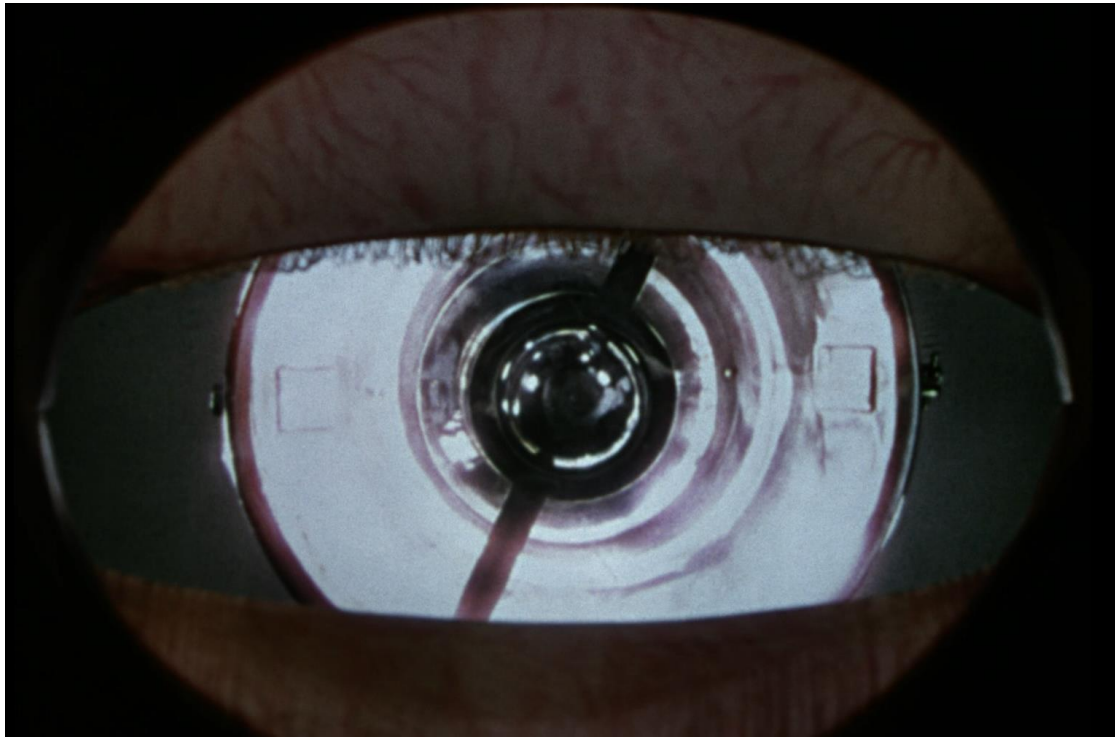


Figure 5, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank



Figure 6, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

The use of sound and music in *AMOLAD* repeatedly conveys the inevitability Peter feels throughout the story. Sound recorder CC Stevens and composer Allan Gray effectively create a soundscape driven by Peter's perceptions. They incorporate musical motifs that begin as simple tunes played by other characters but, through the lens of Peter's mind, take on a grave psychological importance. In an early scene, as Peter lies unconscious and we get our first look at his figurative 'inner world', a soldier entering the afterlife plays a song on harmonica. The melody is somber and feels like funeral dirge for the troops as they pass on. In that moment we are left with a question: if it is all a creation of Peter's mind, where did this musical piece come from? We receive our answer in the next scene as Peter comes to on an empty beach and discovers a boy playing the same song on a flute in nearby sand dunes. This is the first of numerous instances where Peter incorporates real world details (such as sounds, faces and objects) into his 'inner world'. This moment in particular correlates with Peter Jessen's theories of the effect of external stimuli on dreams:

Every noise that is indistinctly perceived arouses corresponding dream-images. A peal of thunder will set us in the midst of a battle; the crowing of a cock may turn into a man's cry of terror; the creaking of a door may produce a dream of burglars.⁶

Another example occurs in the theatre scene as Peter listens to the sounds of a pianist playing a foreboding descending scale. This same tune reappears later, twisted by Peter's unconscious into a sinister theme as he desperately tries to escape the 'stairway to heaven'. In the aforementioned scene and in Peter's mind, the musical piece becomes synonymous with inevitability and impending doom. Or as Ian Christie puts it in his writings for the *BFI Collection*; "...the repeated figure of the staircase theme, raised by a semi-tone each time, creates a strong sense of inexorability..."⁷. The sound effect track compounds this feeling when the ordinary sound of a table tennis game (theatre scene) or isolated piano notes (waiting room scene) begin to resemble that of a ticking clock.

The summation of these aspects of expression throughout is to paint the inner portrait of a loyal soldier and caring artist. Despite the mildly transgressive message that it is perhaps more sweet and honourable to *live* than to die for one's country, the film's depiction of Peter's character overall falls mostly in line with the expectation of male protagonists at that time.

⁶ Jessen, Peter Willers. *Versuch Einer Wissenschaftlichen Begründung Der Psychologie*. Berlin: Veit, 1855, 527 f.

⁷ Christie, Ian. "A Matter of Life and Death (BFI Film Classics), UK, British Film Institute, 2000, p. 56.

That is to say a mild mannered, level-headed man. This is echoed in their corresponding depictions of the cliched 'hysterical woman' character in the two preceding case studies of *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1948). However, through further exploration, the mental arcs of Sister Clodagh and Victoria Page, protagonists of those two films respectively, prove to be more nuanced as a result of the Archers increasingly bold character studies.



Figure 7

Chapter 2

Black Narcissus:

Repression and Temptation



Figure 8

The Archers would continue to plumb the depths of mental anguish on screen with their next film, *Black Narcissus* (1947). This time exploring the idea of repression in an adaptation of the Rumer Golden novel of the same name. After bringing English audiences home from the war with *A Matter of Life and Death*, Powell & Pressburger transport them to the far reaches of the East with this studio based construction of a Himalayan province. In examining the symbolic and technical aspects of *Black Narcissus*, we can appreciate a more subtle, subtextual approach to the depiction of our protagonist's trauma than the Archers' previous effort, while simultaneously parsing evolutions of certain expressive principles present in *AMOLAD*. This chapter will also pay particular attention to the notable divergence in their depictions of the protagonist's psyche here than that of *AMOLAD*'s, emblematic of the creative growth of Powell & Pressburger.

The film is centred around a group of Anglican nuns and their struggle to establish a convent in what they consider to be the most uncivilised, untameable part of the Himalayas. Below the surface however it is the internal struggle of their leader, Sister Clodagh, as she deals with memories of her past and her romantic urges which have both been repressed by years of servitude to the church. This idea of repression is something we will revisit throughout this chapter as it is perpetuated by most every aspect of the film, technical or otherwise. The oppressive nature of Mopu's mountainous resting place, combined with the perceived savagery and exoticism of the locals, push Clodagh's repressed thoughts to the surface. However it is in her mirror character, Sister Ruth, that we see Clodagh's anguish reflected. The love triangle between Clodagh, Ruth and Dean can be interpreted more as a romance between two people where Clodagh and Ruth merely represent two sides of the same psyche. While Clodagh's bond with Dean comes from a place of honest friendship, Ruth's longing for him is purely sexual. As Sarah Street points out in her writings on the characters:

...the film highlights a fascination with femininity and sexuality and in particular emphasises that Ruth is what Clodagh fears she herself might become if she does not stifle her memories of the past and the unsettling feelings she has experienced at Mopu.⁸

In this way, Ruth serves as the avatar of Clodagh's sexual frustration that Mopu has brought to the fore, eventually devolving her character into a sort of expressionist villain akin to the

⁸ Street, Sarah. *Black Narcissus: Turner Classic Movies British Film Guide* (British Film Guides). Illustrated, UK, I.B. Tauris, 2005, p.47

Somnambulist of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920). In fact as the whole film pivots toward horror in the third act, Ruth falls more in line with Robin Wood's interpretation of the horror movie monster as "the figure of the doppelgänger, alter ego, or double..."⁹ or more plainly "...as normality's shadow"¹⁰. Thusly her character proves to be one of many externalizations of Clodagh's repression.

Returning to the idea of externalization of the protagonist's trauma, a trend emerges in both *AMOLAD* and *Black Narcissus* in which the Archers refrain from having the main character articulate or express the trauma themselves. Peter Carter's PTSD is represented in the "inner afterlife" he constructs and Clodagh's repressed sexual desire, as previously established, is personified in Ruth. Is this distancing of trauma from the character themselves a way of preserving the perceived integrity of the leading star? It stands to reason that the Archers would not want to compromise the debonair image of David Niven or the honour of Deborah Kerr by having them portray such raw vulnerability outright. I will continue to test this theory in my following analysis of their final film of the 40's *The Red Shoes* (1948).

If we assume the depictions of the native Indian people are deliberately skewed to convey the main character's idea of them as opposed to the filmmakers', we can interpret them as another means of expressing Clodagh's repression. The locals are characterized from the beginning as "Other" and thusly are repeatedly referred to by the main characters as savage, primitive and promiscuous. Much like the set design, they too are a construction, a pantomime of sorts in order to make a point about the protagonist. As a means of dealing with their 'otherness', Clodagh projects onto the locals her own repressed urges or insecurities and perceives it as exoticism. This falls in line with Barnes' account of the relationship between man and other cultures.

The petit-bourgeois is a man unable to imagine the Other. If he comes face to face with him, he blinds himself, ignores and denies him, or else transforms him into himself. In the petit-bourgeois universe, all the experiences of confrontation are reverberating, any otherness is reduced to sameness.¹¹

⁹ Wood, Robin. "An Introduction to the American Horror Film." *American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, edited by Richard Lippe, Toronto, Festival of Festivals, 1979, p. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.14

¹¹ Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Rev, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972, p.152

This is particularly evident in the character of Kanchi, a local girl who is staying at the convent. Her characterization is based solely on her mischievousness and her budding sexuality, solidified by an extended dancing scene in front of a mirror for seemingly no one's benefit but her own. Another Indian character, the elaborately costumed Dilip Rai is seen to use the same mirror. In this way, the filmmakers are contrasting the sexuality and vanity of the Indian characters with the conservative nuns, but subtly highlighting that these are merely repressed natural urges projected onto the natives under the guise of exoticism.

Powell & Pressburger once again partnered with Alfred Junge to design a cinematic space that would reflect the protagonist's internal struggle. Opting to shoot the whole film (besides the scenes in Ireland) in a studio set gave them full control over how the location would be constructed, thereby enabling Junge to achieve the full expressive potential of the set. Andrew Moor highlights this in his comprehensive book about the Archers:

...topographical space is abandoned in favour of a more controlled studio-based aesthetic, the inner terrain of the unconscious is presented, or pure, sustained fantasy worlds unfurl. Reality is banished. They escape the empirical to lodge in the sequestered territory of the artistic imagination.¹²

This decision is the first in a number of design parallels this film has with films of the German expressionist era in which sets were entirely constructed in lieu of on-location shooting such that the very shape of the set would communicate the mental landscape of the characters. Junge uses this to great effect in the oppressive design of the temple Mopu. The walls are lined with erotic depictions of the harems and orgies that echoed through the temple walls long ago with statues of over sexualised naked figures scattered throughout. These images physically surround the nuns in their day to day work, a constant reminder of the temptation threatening their holy order. Another running design motif throughout the temple is of latticed dividers between rooms and in front of windows (Fig. 9) that contribute to this sense that Clodagh, in her repression, feels like a caged animal. This image is solidified somewhat bluntly when we see that Clodagh's office (previously an aviary) is littered with literal bird cages.

¹² Moor, Andrew. Powell and Pressburger. Epub ed., London, Netherlands, I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2005, Introduction..

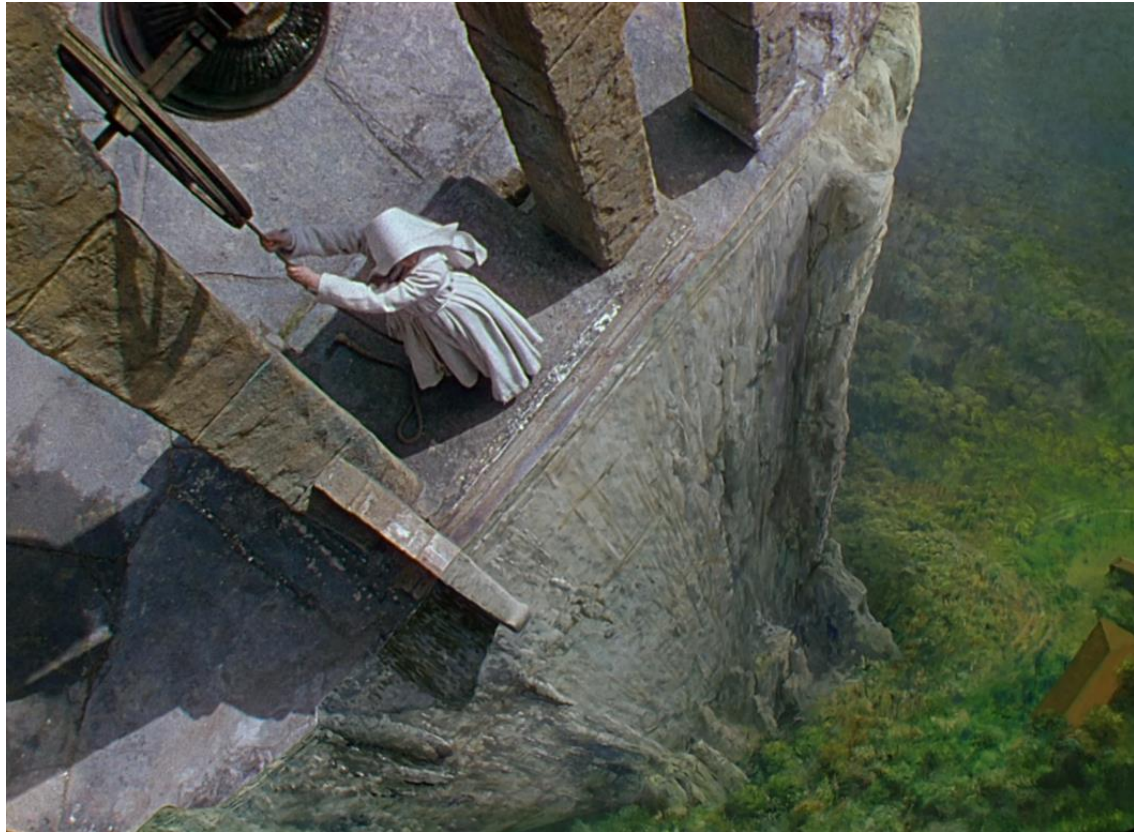
The efficacy of Percy Day's matte painting work in evoking the sense that the topography itself is oppressing the nuns cannot be understated. A downside to not shooting the film on location was that they were not able to attain B-roll of the surrounding Himalayas. This coupled with the fact that enlarging a photograph to the size required for the backgrounds would have been too expensive meant the mattes had to be hand-painted and chalked¹³. While presenting a unique challenge, it also enabled Day to create scenery much starker and powerful than what might have been achieved with the real landscape. His matted mountains flank Mopu Temple on all sides, trapping Clodagh and her nuns in this unfamiliar world. The expressive potential of the background paintings culminates in the iconic overhead shot of Ruth ringing the bell (Fig. 10), wherein the sheer altitude of the temple appears to attack her. This near-perfect synthesis of matte painting and camera placement speaks to the power of the creative harmony the Archers and their team frequently achieved and is a clear example of how they tell the psychological story of the characters as well as the literal one. [continued overleaf]



Figure 9, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

Figur

¹³ *Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff*. Directed by Craig McCall, Interview with Jack Cardiff, Modus Operandi Films, 2010.



Black Narcissus continues Powell & Pressburger's collaboration with cameraman Jack Cardiff and their use of technicolor. Cardiff's shot composition plays a key role in reinforcing Clodagh's feelings of repression, making use of frames within frames to visually force characters into boxes. The cinematography compliments the set design here by using the previously stated lattice dividers to create intricate netted shadows over the nun's faces, once again evoking the idea that the nuns are proverbial caged animals. These shadows become even more prominent as the film reaches its climax and descends into an expressionistic horror. Darkness occludes Ruth's face as she watches Clodagh open up and bond with Dean in a visual representation that this event, which she sees as a betrayal of her infatuation with Dean, pushes her over the edge and forces her to leave the ways of the convent behind. Compositionally, the framing of this sequence (Fig. 11) with Ruth placed on the far left and isolated from Clodagh and Dean, expresses Ruth's feelings of literally being pushed aside by this new coupling. This moment, in combination with Dean's subsequent outright rejection of Ruth, transforms her into the creature of hate in the third act. Cardiff uses POV shots from Ruth's perspective to chart her mental instability. In contrast to *AMOLAD* however, they do not bring the audience into the character's struggle

but rather alienate them from the character by personifying her as a lurking predator from a horror film. Despite this perceived divergence from Clodagh's character progression, Ruth still represents her mirror image in the way that Clodagh knows she also cannot be with Dean. Ruth's metamorphosis coincides with the peak of Clodagh's own disillusionment and frustration with the restrictive nature of their order.



Figure 11, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

Analysing the film on a visual level demands careful attention to the use of Technicolor. *The Archers* make similar use of the process as they did in *AMOLAD*, but not wanting to become repetitive, flip its relationship with the character and their reality. Where Peter's real world was vibrant and rich, Clodagh's is muted and desaturated true to her conservative existence. It is only in her flashbacks to her previous life that we see the vivid tones associated with Technicolor. This disparity highlights Clodagh's yearning to return to her previously luxurious existence before joining the order and is a constant visual reminder of the repression of her of inner passions. The washed out palette of her current

life is steadily broken by representatives of each nuns temptation. Mr Dean often wears richly coloured shirts and the flowers planted by Sister Philippa become more and more prominent. The film also draws great symbolic importance from the relationship between blue and red. Blue is the colour of the sky, of the convent at the start of the film and the accents on their robes. It is aesthetically calming and is linked with the purity of their religion. Red seems to hold a more nuanced meaning, initially associated with Clodagh's fond flashbacks in the colour of her old lipstick but ultimately, through its use in Ruth's scenes, comes to evoke the simmering passion and frustration brought on by the repressive rule of the order. The breath of Ruth's mental departure from the church and ultimately her sanity is accentuated by the red of her dress and the deep pink of lipstick (Fig. 12). This character change (in Ruth and by association in Clodagh) is underpinned by the sets as the red glow of the sunrise floods the temple in the third act.



Figure 12, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

Hein Heckroth's costume work pays a decidedly larger role here than in *AMOLAD*, cementing the differences between the conservatism of the western nuns and the liberal sensuality of the eastern natives. Herb Lightman points out this contrast in his 1947 essay in *American*

Cinematographer, “The brightly coloured costumes of the natives blend naturally with the flamboyant chambers of the palace, but contrast sharply with the austere white vestments of the nuns.”¹⁴ Exaggerated costuming is also used to accentuate how Clodagh and the nuns perceive certain characters. The characters of Kanchi and Dilip Rai are clad in over the top, luscious outfits, with Kanchi’s emphasising her sexuality by exposing her skin. But the most striking instance of this is in the character of Mr Dean who, contrary to the standards of male costuming at the time, is consistently the most scantily clad. He is often shown wearing high legged shorts and a T-shirt even appearing with no shirt at all for extended sequences. His nakedness emphasises his masculine physique and in turn his role as a sexual temptation to Clodagh and Ruth. The nuns themselves are linked by their uniformly restrictive habit. Their robes expose only a tight frame of their face and strip away a lot of visual distinctions between the group of women. It is as if their uniformity invites us to view them as a single collective psyche who are unanimously experiencing temptations of their repressed urges.

Memory is one of the predominant themes in *Black Narcissus*, and is expressed in flashbacks throughout the story. As discussed in our analysis of colour, this idea of two conflicting worlds, past and present, is reminiscent of the life and afterlife dynamic in *AMOLAD*. However the relationship between these two worlds is now reversed. Clodagh’s inner world, that is to say the world of her memory, is inferred to be her preferred existence and, unlike Peter’s ideal reality, is unattainable. She can never return to that life no matter how much Mopu reminds her. Her presence in Mopu begins to pick away at her, evoking these lost moments she has been repressing since joining the sisterhood. Sarah Street eloquently sums up this dilemma for us. “Clodagh’s memories of romance, sexuality and longing are summoned forth by Mopu in a complex way that introduces tension, since we know that these private moments are inappropriate in her current situation as a nun.”¹⁵ In this way, her new locale inspires a “return of the repressed”¹⁶. With this in mind, Clodagh’s real psychological arc emerges. We understand that Mopu is not repressing the nuns but rather forcing them to come to terms with what they have already repressed themselves from their years in the order. All this is to say that Mopu, initially threatening and alien to them, represents a positive force of change.

¹⁴ Lightman, Herb A. “‘Black Narcissus’ - Color Masterpiece.” *American Cinematographer*, vol. 28, no. 12, Dec. 1947, p. 432.

¹⁵ Street, Sarah. *Black Narcissus: Turner Classic Movies British Film Guide* (British Film Guides). Illustrated, UK, I.B. Tauris, 2005, p.45

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.45

Ruth's descent into insanity is the result of pent up emotions that grew twisted overtime and Clodagh's final encounter with her can therefore be interpreted as Clodagh letting go of these same pent up emotions, finally achieving balance in her mind. As Ian Christie puts it, "From the defeat of abandoning Mopu comes a personal, spiritual victory."¹⁷

Comparing the endings for Peter Carter and Sister Clodagh, we can see some key variance in their psychological arcs. Peter, when confronted with two realities; giving in to his guilt and joining his comrades in a perceived afterlife or overcoming his guilt and letting himself live to be happy with June, wins the day by proving he deserves to live and subsequently lives 'happily ever after'. Clodagh, conversely, does not have a choice between her two worlds, she cannot live in the world of her memory, she must persevere in her current life. This is the conundrum that ultimately triggers a psychotic break in Ruth. Her only option is to finally let go of what was but can no longer be and find a new appreciation for her present life. As Clodagh bids farewell to Mr Dean in the final scene against the backdrop of luscious, fully vibrant greenery and the temple fades into the fog of memory, we understand that Clodagh does exactly that. Both of these endpoints present us with a generally optimistic view of life. However the sacrifices Clodagh had to make on her journey to this end point and the uncertainty that she won't suffer more repression in remaining in the order make her arc the more nuanced one. We will continue to examine how the emotional journeys of Peter and Clodagh relate to and diverge from Victoria's in the following case study of *The Red Shoes*.

¹⁷ Christie, Ian. *Arrows of Desire*. London, Faber and Faber, 2002.

Chapter 3

The Red Shoes:

An Expressionist Tale of Abuse



Figure 13

The Archer's next project would prove to be their most ambitious yet. *The Red Shoes* (1948) presents a culmination of many of the themes and design principles that we have thus far examined in their previous works (dual realities, symbolic use of Technicolor and costuming,) while delving deeper into concepts hitherto only hinted at, such as the channelling of expressionist traditions. In so doing, the Archers were able to create a more complex portrait of psychological trauma in the film's protagonist than ever before. The film itself appears to live a double life, alternating in the minds of the audience between a straight-laced musical full of fantasy and visual splendour, and a darker, expressionist tragedy that explores the subconscious against the backdrop of a traditional musical. This split personality is decidedly apt for the story of a dancer who cannot separate her own life from a fairytale. Based on a script written by Pressburger in 1937 for Alexander Korda, the story was originally much lighter and was intended to star Merle Oberon. This idea never came to fruition and the Archers bought back the script in 1946. Pressburger subsequently rewrote the story into the macabre, atmospheric musical we now know as *The Red Shoes*.¹⁸

It could be argued that the Archers interrogate the psyche of multiple characters present in the story but, for the sake of succinct analysis, we shall treat Victoria Page (portrayed by Moira Shearer) as our point of examination as the topography of her mental landscape is the most varied and well-charted by the film. Victoria is an aspiring ballet dancer who is seduced by the owner of a world class ballet company, Boris Lermontov (portrayed by Anton Walbrook). While initially cold and dismissive of her, Boris is soon won over by Vicky's talent and vows to make a great dancer out of her. The conflict arises when a young composer named Julian Craster joins the company and becomes another object of Victoria's affection. Both men pull her in opposite directions; Boris towards the world of dance and Julian towards a life of love. Victoria struggles with this conflict, perceiving it as the choice between ballet and love, or more broadly, art and life. On first viewing, this appears to be the root of Victoria's psychological torture with its similarity to the inner conflicts of previous Archer's protagonists, Peter and Clodagh. The climactic ballet performance of *The Red Shoes* seems to corroborate this, taking place in a world of Vicky's imagination as she likens her conflict with that of the ill-fated dancer. However, under closer scrutiny, Victoria's view of the situation

¹⁸ McLean, Adrienne L. "The Red Shoes' Revisited." *Dance Chronicle*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1988, p. 33. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1567717.

doesn't hold water. If we look at the two men pushing her to make this decision, it becomes clear that they are not the human embodiments of art and life that Vicky perceives them to be, but merely two possessive men, who manipulate her into believing she must decide. This sentiment is echoed by Adrienne McLean:

There is nothing in the film that demonstrates that ballet and marriage are incompatible, but that dancing for a particular company and marriage to a particular musician/composer are incompatible, because the two people involved are so egotistical and intolerant.¹⁹

With this revelation, we can push past the façade of the lighthearted musical and appreciate the film as a tragic expressionist portrait of emotional abuse.

From the start of the film, Boris is presented (or more aptly, presents *himself*) as a figure of mystery. He appears cold and unfeeling with an almost inhuman presence that would lead Vicky to believe he is the very manifestation of ballet and the uncompromising devotion it entails. This is made most clear in the early scene where Vicky performs a solo piece in a small theatre. Through innovative camera operation, we are placed in her head as she pirouettes for the audience, catching sight of them only briefly amidst the speed of her twirling. In this very instant, she notices Boris, watching intently from the middle row in a display of attention he has not graced her with up to this point. As she begins her second pirouette, searching for him in quick glances once more, she finds only the empty chair where he had been moments before. It appears to Vicky as if he has disappeared into thin air and she perhaps questions whether he was there at all. This gives Boris the presence of an ethereal spectre, a sort of phantom of the ballet. In a comedic contrast, we observe Boris alone in his office minutes later, scurrying around at the sound of someone knocking so he can get into a more dignified position before allowing the caller in. Taken together, these two moments provide an excellent picture of Boris as a character, a fragile man overly concerned with presenting himself as something more. We see a similar deception in Julian, as he flirts with and encourages Vicky in one scene before publicly scolding and humiliating her in the next when she can't keep to the timing of his music. This hot and cold treatment of her fits with a traditional method of emotional manipulation: punishment and reward. As the film goes on and Vicky begins to attribute events of the fairytale of *The Red Shoes* to her own life, she

¹⁹ Ibid, p.44

cements her misconceptions of the two men by conflating them with characters in the ballet. As H. Lightman points out in his 1949 article for *American Cinematographer*, “As she dances, the characters in the ballet identify themselves with the personalities involved in her own life”²⁰ Boris is cast as the demonic shoemaker, who’s presence in the tale represents devotion to art and Julian in turn is cast as the lover, obviously embodying devotion to love.

To see the full depth of Vicky’s psychological arc, we must breakdown the now famous ballet performance of *The Red Shoes*. Through its placement in the middle of the film, this 13 minute segment of uninterrupted ballet provides a climax to our hero’s story in the first half and sets into motion the tragedy to follow in the second. Most importantly, it is the most unobstructed view the film provides of Vicky’s inner conflict, taking us deep into her subconscious as she is shown to break through reality itself and into the expressive world of her own imagination. The opening scene of the performance plays out as any other traditional ballet but once the demonic shoemaker appears before her, Vicky is struck by his resemblance to both Lermontov and Julian. At this point, the synthesis between her art and her life begins and we are plunged into an expressionist world of her mind’s creation. From this point on she is both Victoria Page and the dancer and therefore, according to her delusion, must ultimately face the same tragic end. On the surface, the similarity between the death of the dancer and Vicky’s eventual suicide would lead us to believe that the film is positing a commentary on life imitating art. Having established that the conflict in Vicky’s mind stems from her emotional abuse however, we understand that the only parallels between her life and this fairytale are the ones she imagines and enacts herself. Her conflation of her reality with the tale of *The Red Shoes* is merely a coping mechanism to deal with the mental trauma these two obsessive men have wrought.

With *The Red Shoes*, the Archers fully embraced the design traditions of the expressionist period which they had briefly flirted with in *Black Narcissus*, as the entire ballet sequence plays out like a silent film of the 1920s. To achieve this effect, Powell initially split the art direction between both Alfred Junge and past Archers costume designer, Hein Heckroth. Powell intended that Junge design for the sections of the film set in the real world to make use of his realist style, while Heckroth, a painter first and foremost, would design the ballet

²⁰ Lightman, Herb. “The Red Shoes.” *American Cinematographer*, vol. 30, no. 3, Mar. 1949, p. 83.

sequence. Junge is reported to have been displeased with this setup and left the production, leaving Heckroth the sole designer.²¹ The ballet sequence began life as series of paintings by Heckroth which the score was then composed to. The similarities to the design of films such as *Caligari* and *Waxworks* (Paul Leni, Leo Birinski, 1924) are undeniable²², with both the environments and the aesthetic of the shoemaker bearing striking resemblance to that of *Caligari*. In one key moment, as the dancer tries to go home and stop dancing for the night, an extended shadow of the shoemaker creeps across the floor to pull her back outside (Fig. 14). This immediately conjures up thoughts of Murnau's *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922) (Fig. 15) as well as more contemporary horror films which are its spiritual descendants. The surrealist nature of the vistas which Vicky dances through in this sequence evokes the twisted, illogical set constructions of that period. There is also many instances of realist imagery in the first half of the film, (a newspaper floating in the wind, Vicky's theoretical 'wall' between her and the audience) which subsequently reappears in the ballet sequence transformed through the lens of expressionism. The newspaper becomes a dance partner for Vicky, the audience becomes a raging sea. This confirms the notion that what Vicky experiences during the ballet sequence is a manifestation of her subconscious. In this way, the film falls in line with Gerard Saul's interpretation of expressionism: "The Expressionist screen... comes through as a portal onto an inside world, through which – as in *Caligari* – the audience is transported into the nightmarish space of the twisted inner world of the narrator."²³ These expressionist touches are not only effective in conveying Vicky's strained mental state but clue the audience into how they should actually be reading the film. Not as a plot driven Hollywood musical but as the subtle expressionist tragedy it really is.

The Red Shoes also stands as the pinnacle of Jack Cardiff's work with the Archers. Cardiff revisits certain staples of his work in the previous two films in his repeat use of hyper subjective POV cinematography and compositional storytelling. While well practiced methods from Cardiff's point of view, the idea of POV shots in a musical was somewhat revolutionary at the time. Martin Scorsese, to whom Michael Powell is a hero, notes this break with

²¹ Bowyer, Justin, and Mike Figgis. *Conversations with Jack Cardiff: Art, Light and Direction in Cinema*. London, Batsford, 2014. ch. 3

²² Moor, op.cit., ch.6

²³ Saul, Gerald, and Chrystene Ells. "Shadows Illuminated. Understanding German Expressionist Cinema through the Lens of Contemporary Filmmaking Practices." *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2019, p. 110. Crossref, doi:10.2478/ausfm-2019-0006.

traditional musical convention in an interview: “The way Fred Astaire had it in his contract said you have to keep photographing [the dancer] from head to toe... [Powell & Pressburger] changed all that... What they did was make a film about what goes on inside the dancer’s head”²⁴



Figure 14, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

²⁴ *Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff*. Directed by Craig McCall, Interview with Martin Scorsese. Modus Operandi Films, 2010.



Figure 15, credit: Prana Film

This is precisely what Cardiff's subjective cinematography accomplishes, allowing us to see the world just as Vicky sees it. This technique is abundantly present in an aforementioned scene where she performs in a small theatre as Lermontov watches. We, as Vicky does, only catch the quickest glances of Boris in the crowd against the speed of her twirling. To communicate the kinetic energy Vicky feels, the camera whip pans around and around, mimicking exactly what a dancer would in fact be seeing. Cardiff uses a similar whip pan effect to transition Vicky from country to country as she tours the world with Lermontov. The repetition of this technique in both cases likens the excitement of touring with the ballet company to the exhilaration of dancing itself. Interestingly, Cardiff parts ways entirely with this effect in the latter half of the film, opting for dissolves instead. This change slows Vicky's love affair with ballet to an almost lethargic gait, mirroring her drift towards Julian and away from the company. In this we begin to appreciate the ability of Cardiff's camera to convey the feelings of our main character.

On a compositional level, Cardiff's work is essential in both establishing a divide between the real world and that of the ballet and ultimately how these two worlds begin to amalgamate. During the frequent rehearsal scenes before the climactic ballet, the dancers are shot from a super wide angle that exposes the edges of the stage and rigging above it, in many instances framing in the other dancers off to the side preparing to go on. The framing drives a hard divide between reality and the dance with these constant reminders of the theatrical artifice. Moreover, the rehearsals are often shot from side stage to background the empty seating area. These trends are once more shunted in the ballet sequence (where the stage is extended and framed as reality) and in the film's second half as Vicky begins her self-fulfilling prophecy. Certain key shots in the finale of the ballet are recreated precisely at the end of the film. The image of the dancer's dirty, swollen legs within the red shoes as she dies (Fig. 16) is reproduced when Vicky's legs are mangled after her fall (Fig. 17). The poetic repetition of this image brings home the tragedy of Vicky's delusion, presenting it as the final act of her commitment to living out the fairy tale.



Figure 16, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank



Figure 17, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

The Red Shoes bares the same technicolor wizardry the *Archers* were known for at that time but deploys it to slightly different ends. The relationship between what is muted and what is vibrant has so far marked changes in reality (Peter's monochrome afterlife, Clodagh's striking memories of Ireland) but used to mark a change in location and mood. The film begins with our protagonists in London, presented here as a grey industrialised hub of activity. Everything from the streets to the abundant brickwork has a slightly desaturated look broken only by the blood red of the telephone boxes and London buses. As the ballet company takes Victoria to Paris and Monte Carlo, the scenes are splashed with a rainbow pallet, emphasizing how these changes of scenery enchant Vicky. We the audience are equally brought in by these striking vistas. Through this shared emotional response, we understand how Vicky is swept up and seduced by Lermontov's promise of a globe-trotting ballet adventure. Peter Fraser succinctly summarises this idea in his 1987 article for *The Cinematic Journal*: "the highlights of the sky and the blue-green sea in the background... ..take the narrative out of the common realm of

London streets and backstage exercises-into a world of pure poetry”²⁵. Throughout the varying locales, muted or otherwise, the colour is a constant. It makes an early impression in the title card of the film (a glorious tableau of storybooks and candles) where the “The Red Shoes” is scrawled on a bare wall in a deep red paint (Fig. 18).



Figure 18, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

There is uncanny impression of blood from the lettering which is continued throughout the film whenever the words “The Red Shoes” appear. It reads as a deliberate effort on the part of the Archers to communicate that this is not a typical fairytale; it is dangerous and should be treated with caution. The color red’s role as symbol of passion is still present too. There is the somewhat obvious link with the red shoes themselves but the more interesting occurrence of red is in the scene where Boris, in an indignant rage, smashes a mirror in his office. It takes place later on in the film when he hears of Vicky and Julian’s engagement and we get a rare glimpse into Boris’ undisguised emotions. What catches our eye is the deep red robes he is wearing and how they harken back to the red dress Ruth donned in *Black Narcissus* at the height of her emotional breakdown. It is no surprise then that this is where Lermontov officially takes on the role of villain in his attempts to steal Vicky back.

²⁵ Fraser, Peter. “The Musical Mode: Putting on ‘The Red Shoes.’” *Cinema Journal*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1987, p. 51. Crossref, doi:10.2307/1224907.

This is example leads to the costume design, which plays an important role in linking Vicky's reality with that of the fairytale and reinforcing the breath of her delusion. Much like in the design segment, there are many instances of small, initially insignificant details to the costume work in the real world that are called back to or paid off in the ballet sequence and vica versa. In the Monte Carlo sequence, Julian is wearing a distinctive yellow scarf that at first glance serves to homogenize his attire with the fashion of the locals. However during the ballet sequence, an identical yellow scarf is worn by the lover (Fig. 19) and instantly links the two characters in the minds of the audience as it surely did in Vicky's. Similarly, the black robes of the priesthood worn by the lover in the finale of the ballet are reflected in Julian's long black coat at the end of the film. Interestingly this connection is not as exact a translation as the scarf, eluding perhaps to the tenuous nature by which Vicky relates the fairytale to her own life. Another striking costume choice is observed in early scenes in the film (opening scene and briefly in Monte Carlo) in which Vicky is inexplicably styled as a princess, tiara and all (Fig. 20). The intricacy of the costume itself indicates how deliberate a choice it was and so may refer to how Vicky sees herself; as the archetypal princess²⁶ in a fairytale saved from a life of monotony by the art of ballet. We can fully explore the use of costume design by not discussing the symbolism of the titular red shoes. The shoes themselves feature so prominently in the film. Their significance can be interpreted in a number of ways. In accordance with the fairy tale, we can at once link them with Vicky's self-destructive obsession with becoming a great dancer. But it is important to note a key detail of the ballet performance here. In Vicky's mental adaptation of the fairytale, the shoes function only as an extension of the shoemaker. At any point in the ballet, where the dancer appears to fight back against the shoes, the shoemaker is always there to show who is really pushing her to dance. Therefore, it is Boris himself that embodies Vicky's obsession with becoming a great dancer while the red shoes, in my opinion, symbolize her genuine love for ballet that Boris so easily exploits. Having previously established the Archer's use of red as an indicator of passion, it is no great leap to conclude that the red shoes (like June's lipstick) are an object of affection for Vicky. This furthers the idea that Vicky only thinks she is choosing between her art and her life when in actual fact it is the selfish desires of Boris and Julian that are pulling her apart.

²⁶ Moor, op.cit., ch. 6



Figure 19, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank



Figure 20, credit: *The Archers*; J. Arthur Rank

We have not spoken about editing in any great detail in the previous chapters but it feels essential here given how effective it is in blending Vicky's world with that of the fairytale in her mind. Reginald Mills was nominated for an Academy Award for his work on this film and even, on a superficial level, it is plain to see why. The ballet sequence alone is held together through boldly precise match cutting that transports us great distances across Vicky's subconscious. In one moment, Vicky (as the dancer) is being swarmed a horde of body painted creatures before the spotlight swoops in and appears to teleport her to an empty stage, away from danger. The effect is dated by today's standards but no less effective. The editing gives a distinct flow to the dance that evokes the impression that we are watching an uninterrupted ballet performance. It is undoubtedly Mills' precise cutting that pulls us and Vicky through the everchanging landscape of her mind which achieves this effect. Beyond the ballet sequence, we see the fruits of Mills' craft in how the editing of Vicky's tragic death deliberately intercuts between her and the ballet taking place inside. The two incidents are cut together in such a way that it flows like one singular event, completing the fusion of real life and the fairytale. The net effect does not leave the audience with any thoughtful ideas about how life can imitate art but rather the grim idea that this was what she was driven to do.

The depiction of Vicky's psychological trauma in *The Red Shoes* overall marks a progression in how Powell & Pressburger tackled subjects of the mind that would have been taboo to explore in much detail at the time. By proxy, Vicky's arc is infinitely more cynical than the protagonists' of the *The Red Shoes*' two predecessors. Peter had to overcome guilt to be with the one he loved, Sister Clodagh had to let go of her past and her repressed urges to move on with her life, but there is no clear answer for Victoria. How can she choose between these two men who have deluded her to believe the only two things that make her happy in life are mutually exclusive? The previous films both drew hard distinctions between the dual realities they presented to each character; life and death, Mopu and memory, but within Vicky's mind fantasy and reality become irreconcilable and she dies unable to tell the difference.

Conclusion

As evidenced in my analysis, trends emerge in the methodology by which Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger depict mental trauma on screen. From the first emergence of technicolor, the Archers work with Jack Cardiff was at the cutting edge. Starting with the comparatively simple color experiments in *A Matter of Life and Death*, with its binary transitions between monochrome and polychrome, to a full and nuanced tonal control in *The Red Shoes*, they proceeded to sharpen the storytelling potential of the process to a fine point. They developed a sort of color language, spoken throughout the three films discussed here in the emotional significance of vibrancy and the meaning of the colour red.

There is also a palpable through line of expressionism in the designs of the Archers' films. The seeds of which are planted even amidst the realist tendencies of *A Matter of Life and Death*. Peter's afterlife, while grounded in its office aesthetic, is an expression of his imagination and preconceptions. The matte paintings representing the gates of this afterlife and the huge stadium where the court is held, echo this through their grandiosity and impossible size. But ultimately the real influence of expressionism in their works lies in *Black Narcissus*' fabricated Mopu and *The Red Shoes*' psychedelic ballet performance. This gradual embrace of the traditions of that era is likely due to the changeover in designers from Junge to Heckroth, but is just as likely a result of Powell's persisting urge to experiment.

Looking back to the beginning, at the story of Peter Carter, it strikes us just how externalized his mental state was. Much of this analysis has been dedicated to establishing what the symbolism of his two worlds means and while the intended meaning is ultimately clear, one can't help but wonder why this inner turmoil wasn't more apparent in David Niven's performance. We do not get the sense from Peter himself that he is feeling this guilt but rather from the situation he is placed in. Niven is surely not to blame for this discrepancy. It was more likely down to J. Arthur Rank's studio and to some degree Powell & Pressburger. When we consider the reputation of Niven as the funny, charismatic charmer that he was, it follows that the Archers would not have been permitted to have such a man portray such a flaw explicitly to allow the hero to appear so vulnerable. We see a similar tepidity in Deborah Kerr's Clodagh. We garner little sense of her repressed urges from her character in isolation. The Archers solution to this problem was to externalize the psychological states of the

characters in each case, an imaginary afterlife for Peter and the mirror character of Ruth for Clodagh. This gave them the opportunity to explore these concepts so thoroughly under the veil of subtext and symbolism. It follows that many of the innovative technical means by which they depicted the psyches of their characters spanned from this same restriction. In this *Red Shoes* marks an apotheosis of sorts for the Archers. Just as they perfected their technical and design abilities to interrogate these psychological issues, they were at the height of their popularity and used the resulting creative control they had to push the envelope, allowing Vicky's mental trauma to come out through Moira Shearer's pitch perfect performance. They achieved a level of harmony here between expressionist designs, filmmaking craft and performance that in my eyes, they had not touched before but in many ways, as I discussed here, were always working towards.

Powell would eventually go on to push his exploration of psychological trauma even further in his seminal feature, *Peeping Tom* (1960). In which he depicts themes much darker than any explored here and in a much more explicit way. Tragically, the industry showed its refusal to mature when film critics on mass slated the film.²⁷ When taken in context with The Legion of Decency's appeal to ban *Black Narcissus* upon release²⁸, we can observe that the main detractors of the Archer's work were historically the very group the films were critical of. It is heartening then that despite all this resistance on the part of institutions and critics to fully acknowledge the breath of the Archers' achievements in storytelling at the time, many filmmakers grappled with their more challenging works and were inspired by their methods. Traces of the techniques they pioneered and themes they channeled can be parsed from films as recent as *Whiplash* (Damien Chazelle, 2014), where the repeated use of whip panning and the imperious drum teacher Terence Fletcher appear as if lifted directly from *The Red Shoes*. Martin Scorsese has always stated how much he was inspired by Powell and the Archers, likening the subjective approach of *Red Shoes* to how he shot the boxing matches in *Raging Bull* (1980) and championed *Peeping Tom* until it was properly restored.

This long lineage of inspiration to filmmakers extends all the way down to myself. Over the course of researching the Archers, analyzing their films and ultimately writing this

²⁷ Gabbard, O. Glen. *Psychoanalysis and Film* (The IJPA Key Papers Series). 1st ed., New York, Routledge, 2001, p.208

²⁸ Macnab, Geoffrey. *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry*. Abingdon-United Kingdom, United Kingdom, Routledge, 1993. p.69

dissertation, I have learned a great deal about filmmaking. This is not limited to the expression of mental trauma which I have specifically discussed herein, but to any idea. To study the Archers is to study the very language of filmmaking and how they used it to speak to audiences about themes the industry would have them avoid. As an aspiring creator of Film and Television, the process of this dissertation has been immensely informative. Through what I have learned from Powell & Pressburger and their use of symbolism in their craft, it is a language I feel I too, in all my future projects, can now begin to speak.

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Nosferatu (Directed by F.W. Murnau, Prana Film, 1922)

One of our Aircraft is Missing, (Directed by Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger, The Archers, 1942)

Peeping Tom (Directed by Michael Powell, A Michael Powell Production, 1960)

Raging Bull (Directed by Martin Scorsese, United Artists, 1980)

Red Shoes, The (Directed by Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger, The Archers, 1948)

Spy in Black, A (Directed by Michael Powell, Irving Asher Productions, 1939)

Waxworks (Directed by Paul Leni & Leo Birinski, Neptune-Film A. G., 1924)

Whiplash (Directed by Damien Chazelle, Bold Films, 2014)

Wizard of Oz, The (Directed by Victor Fleming, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939)