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To Dazzle the Eye and Stir the Heart. The Red Lantern, Nazimova and the Boxer Rebellion,

Cinematek - VDFC, Vlaamse Dienst Voor Filmcultuur, Bruxelles 2012, 1 videodisc (PAL, 165 min.) : DVD video, sound, black and white (tinted); 4 3/4 in. 207 pages : illustrations (some color).

Based on a film restoration begun in 1995, "To Dazzle the Eye and Stir the Heart. The Red Lantern, Nazimova and the Boxer Rebellion" is an excellent example of a philological reconstruction of a silent movie through its relationship with the historical and cultural context of the time. The publication is actually both a book, with twenty essays, and a DVD with two versions of the same movie and additional contents. The project is representative of a trend that in Italy, for example, can be found in certain publications by the Cineteca of Bologna: the restoration of a silent film becomes an opportunity for an analysis of the film itself, and historical issues related to its creation.

The elements of interest in the publication move along three different levels. First, the film *The Red Lantern* (Albert Capellani, 1915), a digitized version of the original colour copy restored by the Royal Belgian Film Archive. In addition to the accurate reconstruction of the original film (for example restoring the intertitles by comparing and translating different versions), the authors paid special attention to the musical elements. Firstly through the reconstruction of the original score which had never been heard again after the premiere in 1919. Then, through the composition of a new sound design that corresponds to the soundtrack of the second version of the film on DVD. Finally, by presenting some musical themes from the early 20th century inspired by the film itself, its main protagonist, actress Alla Nazimova and the contemporary interest in exoticism. In this sense, the publication pays homage to the sound dimension of silent film, following a recent trend in film studies. Secondly, the materials and documents contained in the DVD extras focussing on the 1919 premiere and

on the cultural context in which the film was created. Although it is almost impossible to find all the spectacular elements originally included in the program at the Rivoli Theatre in New York in 1919, the DVD recreates a version of the program that is very close to the original one. This includes music and songs in Oriental style, a ballet, a travelogue of China showing life scenes in some cities of that country and a cartoon taken from one of the most popular animated series of the silent era made by Max Fleisher. All of these elements help to recreate the richness and complexity of a theatre program in which the film was certainly the main attraction, but not the only one. In addition, the same elements allow us to understand the nature of the Oriental imaginary in the early 20th century. *The Red Lantern* is not the only film from the silent period set in the East, as the authors point out in their publication. On the contrary, it is the result of a widespread interest in the East in the late 19th century, but also of the historical events that led to the birth of the so-called "Yellow Peril" in Western culture. For this reason, the DVD extras contain actuality novelties from the early 20th century that try to explain the events of the Boxer Rebellion (1900), emphasizing the bloodiest incidents, such as the attacks against the Catholic missions and the rebels' beheading of Westerners. All of the above gives us an idea of the cultural background of *The Red Lantern*, as well as the film's appeal for the audience of the time. Finally, some of the DVD extras focus specifically on the main protagonist, Alla Nazimova. The DVD includes a screen test of the actress, a newsreel showing Nazimova performing a dance and songs inspired by her interpretive skills. Actress, producer and screenwriter, Alla Nazimova is one of the most fascinating figures of early cinema and the focus on her work here is representative of recent critical interest in the female protagonists of the seventh art.

The third level of interest in the publication lies in the research and analysis presented in the book. Some of the essays describe in detail the contents of the DVD, providing technical information and ex-

plaining the criteria that informed the selection of audiovisual materials. Other essays reconstruct the cultural context in which the film was made. The contributions that analyze American Orientalism from a historical and anthropological point of view are particularly interesting. The attraction of the East was a mix of fascination and repulsion, based on stereotypes that form part of a long anti-Chinese literary tradition which was present in Western culture, while the allure expressed itself in the appreciation of exotic set designs and oriental costumes. The book tries to analyze how these subjects were accepted by the public and evaluate how Chinese culture was portrayed. Among the most important topics addressed in the book are the role of Oriental women between the 19th and 20th centuries, the foot-binding tradition, inter-racial sex and the offspring that resulted from such unions, and the social and historical implications behind the Boxer Rebellion. The analysis reveals the intention of contextu-

Joshua Yumibe,

Moving Color: Early Film, Mass Culture, Modernism,

Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J. 2012, pp. xvii + 192

Federico Pierotti,

La seduzione dello spettro. Storia e cultura del colore nel cinema,

Le Mani, Genova 2012, pp. 296

Colour was a neglected topic in film studies until recently.¹ Yet, since the second half of the 2000s, the academic research on cinematic colour has burgeoned and so have the publications pertaining to colour and cinema.² Some scholars adopt a *textual* perspective, isolating a noteworthy canon, while others choose a *contextual* paradigm, enlarging the viewpoint to the modes of production and consumption of colour movies. Richard Misek, for instance, joins the latter approach in *Chromatic Cinema. A History of Screen Color* (2010), where he traces an unorthodox history of cinema from the beginning up to the present time through the various colour tech-

alizing the film, one could say making it “speak,” through paying attention both to the culture that produced it and the audience to whom the film is addressed. This methodological choice allows us to see the publication as contributing to the field of visual anthropology.

Finally, equally important is the book’s rich iconographic display. In addition to promotional stills and screenshots from the film, the authors have as a result of thorough research been able to use photographs, posters, magazine pages, and postcards from public and private collections to illustrate the book. In this respect, the iconographic and historic reconstruction of the promotional campaign that anticipated and prepared the cinematic release of the film appears particularly accurate.

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nologies that have been practiced (“film color,” “surface color,” “absent color,” “optical color” and “digital color,” as stated by the five chapter headings).

In 2012 two new books promoted further reflections on chromatic cinema from a contextual standpoint: *Moving Color: Early Film, Mass Culture, Modernism* by Joshua Yumibe and *La seduzione dello spettro. Storia e cultura del colore nel cinema* by Federico Pierotti.³

As the subtitle suggests, Yumibe’s study focuses on the three decades of silent cinema, broadening the account of the four most common colour processes in early film (hand colouring, stenciling, tinting and toning) to the wider horizon of mass culture and modernism between 19th and 20th century.

Yumibe starts from a *physiological* definition of colour: cinematic color is thought about primarily as a sensory experience. To make his point he refers to two of the most authoritative theories of the past. Indeed, while Newton described colour as an objective and measurable feature (different hues correspond to different wavelengths of a dismantled beam of light), Goethe in his *Farbenlehre* (1810) claims the subjective and perceptual character of colour: colour