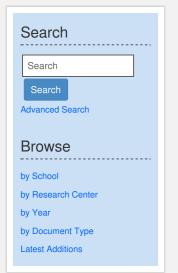
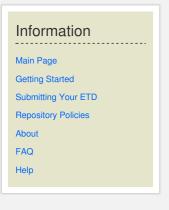
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# "INSUBORDINATE" LOOKING: CONSUMERISM, POWER AND IDENTITY AND THE ART OF POPULAR (MUSIC) DANCE MOVIES

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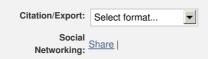
#### **Abstract**

The dissertation distinguishes the cultural and historical significance of dance films produced after Saturday Night Fever (1977). The study begins by examining the formation of social dancing into a specific brand of commercial entertainment in association with the popularity of Vernon and Irene Castle as social dancing entertainers around 1914. The Castles branded social dancing as a modern form of leisure through their exhibitions of social dancing in public, through products that were marketed with their name, in a book of illustrations for "Modern Dancing" (1914), and through Whirl of Life (1915), a film they produced about the origination of their romance and popularity as dancing entertainers. The chapter emphasizes the way in which the Castles represent their success in romance and entertainment as validated by pleasures reflected back to them by their audiences. The chapter concludes with an analysis of The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle (1939) in which Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers commemorate the Castles' influence upon audiences to symbolically participate in popular social dancing through consumption of their products. The second chapter looks at the way in which representations of youth dancing in musical entertainment produced in the late 1950s and early 1960s similarly mythologized their power through dominant discourses of the folk musical, surveillance, deviance, and instruction in Blackboard Jungle, West Side Story, and Bye Bye Birdie.

The last chapter performs a close reading of dance movies produced after 1977. Dancing styles originating from disco and hip hop subcultures in the 1970s are signified in dance movies as a source for representing renewal of community, popular art, and public space by their proximity to audiences, popular song, and artifice. Modern innovations in media technology accommodate these transformations.

The dissertation argues that dance movies mimic folk musical rhetoric to validate popular culture as a source of renewal for traditional arts. The dissertation concludes that dance movies are a paradoxical modern genre of folk film musicals that reconstruct traditional relations of folk performance and reception as a consumer process that commemorates cultural progress and social change through symbolic participation in social dancing to popular song.

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