

Summary

Expressions of a dancing body in the American film musical of the classical era.

Actor – dance – cinematic universe

The aim of the thesis is to describe the somatic styles of three figures of the American film musical of the classical era: Fred Astaire, Judy Garland and Gene Kelly. As iconic personas working within that genre, they developed (fully configured or not) modes of musical spectacle based on their ambitions, bodily predispositions and the system in which they operated. Described from a phenomenological perspective, the protagonists of the thesis appear both as subjects functioning in specific space-times, interacting with culture and the categories developed within it (e.g. masculinity, femininity), and as powerful, living images that permeate audiovisual culture and shape successive generations of viewers of American classical cinema.

In the first chapter of the thesis, the author presents the optics adopted in the work, which consist of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics, supported in the field of film and media studies by Aby Warburg's theory of polarity and Nigel Thrift's non-representational theory. In the three chapters devoted to Astaire, Garland and Kelly, the author reconstructs the process of figuration of the personal patterns developed in relation to the cinema's dispositif and analyses the forces affecting the possibility of their full or incomplete figuration. Using the tools of the anthropology of spectacle (terms like show, masking, clowning), critical theory (strategies and tactics, tactics of the self according to Foucault), iconology (strong and weak images) or performance studies (gender, drag, camp), which go hand in hand with film analysis conducted from a phenomenological perspective, the paths of individual artists are described – their real and film bodies, linguistic modes of representation of these bodies, their modalities and ways of 'being' on screen, and the cultural models of their reception. In the conclusion the author points out to the last musical icon, Bob Fosse, as the person who closed off the possibilities for the development of the musical genre and delineates the fields for further research on the topic of the relationship between corporeality and the film medium.