

Insolently Famous: The Migration of Argentine Tango

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Abstract

In 1927, Borges wrote that 'the tango is the most widely known Argentine accomplishment. The one that has insolently made Argentina famous everywhere on earth'. Tango became a worldwide phenomenon in the twentieth century, migrating from Buenos Aires in two major phases of tango fever, what has been described as 'tangomania'. The first phase began around 1900 in Paris and lasted until the early 1920s, and the second phase can be traced from the 1980s/1990s in Paris and New York and continues to this day. This paper explores why one narrative of tango has gained authority and popularity over another during both periods of tangomania in a worldwide performance of identity. I examine the pivotal role that desire and fantasy, focusing on eroticism and the production and perpetuation of exotic, stereotyped masculinities, play in the global cinematic narrative of tango.