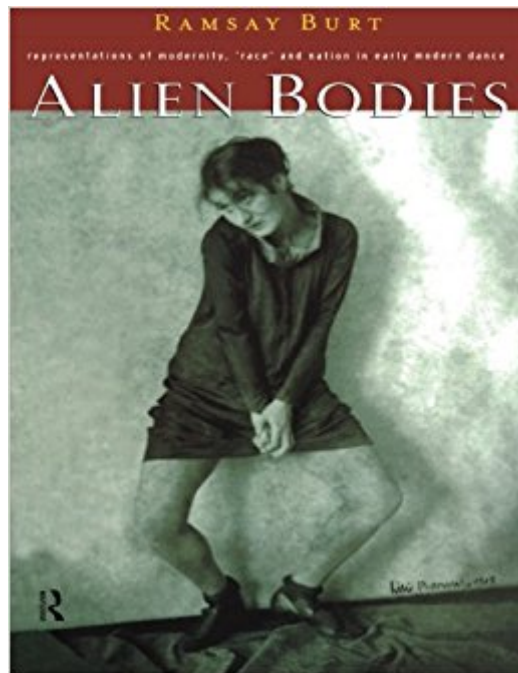




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Alien Bodies: Representations Of Modernity, 'Race' And Nation In Early Modern Dance



Synopsis

Alien Bodies is a fascinating examination of dance in Germany, France, and the United States during the 1920s and 1930s. Ranging across ballet and modern dance, dance in the cinema and Revue, Ramsay Burt looks at the work of European, African American, and white American artists. Among the artists who feature are: * Josephine Baker * Jean Borlin * George Balanchine * Jean Cocteau * Valeska Gert * Katherine Dunham * Fernand Leger * Kurt Jooss * Doris Humphrey

Concerned with how artists responded to the alienating experiences of modern life, Alien Bodies focuses on issues of: * national and 'racial' identity * the new spaces of modernity * fascists uses of mass spectacles * ritual and primitivism in modern dance * the 'New Woman' and the slender modern body

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"To this collective enterprise Ramsay Burt's "Alien Bodies makes a notable contribution. ...I cannot imagine pursuing my work without going back to "Alien Bodies again and again."-"The Drama Review

Ramsay Burt is the author of the highly acclaimed The Male Dancer. He is currently Senior Research Fellow in Dance at De Montfort University.

The value of Burt's book lies in its wide-ranging scope: taking the issue of how early modern dance

and the experience(s) of modernity articulated each other in early 20th century Europe and America, Burt focuses upon pressing questions of sexuality, identity, class, consumer culture, and so forth. Chapters on Josephine Baker and "primitivist" discourses of the body, as well as rationalism, mass production and the chorus line are engaging, if also open to debate. In this sense, the volume provides a good introduction to the "new critical studies" of dance, an approach which is informed by recent developments in cultural studies. However, the book is also marred by a number of factual errors (example: Burt incorrectly claims that "In 1922, [...] Le Corbusier and Jeanneret exhibited designs for La Ville Contemporaine"--unaware that Jeanneret and Le Corbusier are in fact the same person, and that the team consisted of Le Corbusier and Ozenfant) as well as editorial gaffes: names are misspelled, articles cited incorrectly. These mistakes are not simply slips or failures to catch typos, but rather reflect the book's main weakness, which is that it is at once too wide-ranging and almost exclusively dependent upon secondary sources, which suggests to me that Burt's expertise does not lie in historical research, but rather in broad synthesis. As such, the book provides a useful introduction to a number of different phenomena in early modern dance, and offers some ways of approaching dance through the lens of critical studies of culture, but its arguments remain open to challenge and revision.

Ramsey Burt incorporates so much in this book that it can be overwhelming but I suggest grabbing onto what you think is the good stuff and delve into it. He combines the historical, anthropological and political happenings of the 1920s and 30s with dance so well that it's hard to imagine thinking of any of them as separate, in any part. I would suggest this book to any student of the dance that has had some 20th century dance history background, so that you can concentrate on the theory and discourse presented in the book.

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