

Ideologies of the Baroque Body: Oxford Studies in Dance Theory

The baroque period (1600-1750) was a time of great change and upheaval in Europe. This period saw the rise of new scientific ideas, the development of new artistic styles, and the emergence of new social and political structures. These changes also had a profound impact on the way that people thought about the body.



Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body (Oxford Studies in Dance Theory) by Mark Franko

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In the medieval period, the body was seen as a sinful and corrupt entity. However, during the baroque period, there was a growing interest in the body as a site of pleasure and beauty. This new interest in the body was reflected in the development of new dance forms, such as ballet and opera.

Dance became an increasingly important part of court life during the baroque period. Kings and queens used dance to display their wealth and

power, and courtiers used dance to impress their superiors. Dance was also used to educate young people about the social graces.

The development of new dance forms led to a new understanding of the body. Dance theorists began to write about the ideal proportions of the body and the correct way to move. They also developed new techniques for training dancers.

These new ideas about the body had a profound impact on the way that people dressed, behaved, and thought about themselves. The baroque body was a contested site, subject to multiple and often contradictory ideologies.

The Medicalization of the Body

One of the most significant changes in the way that people thought about the body during the baroque period was the medicalization of the body. This process began in the Renaissance, when doctors began to use dissection to study the human body. This led to a new understanding of the body's anatomy and physiology.

The medicalization of the body had a profound impact on the way that people thought about health and disease. It also led to the development of new medical treatments.

One of the most important medical developments of the baroque period was the theory of humors. This theory held that the body was composed of four humors: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. Each humor was associated with a different temperament.

The theory of humors was used to explain a wide range of diseases. For example, an excess of blood was thought to cause fever, while an excess of phlegm was thought to cause colds.

The theory of humors also had a significant impact on the way that people thought about the body. It led to the belief that the body was a delicate and fragile entity that needed to be protected from disease.

The Idealized Body

The medicalization of the body led to a new ideal of beauty. This ideal was based on the classical Greek ideal of the human form. The classical Greek ideal was characterized by symmetry, proportion, and harmony.

The baroque ideal of beauty was also influenced by the Catholic Church. The Church taught that the human body was a temple of the Holy Spirit. This led to the belief that the body should be kept pure and chaste.

The idealized body was often depicted in art and literature. Paintings and sculptures of the baroque period often feature idealized figures with perfect proportions and flawless skin.

The idealized body was also a goal for many people. Men and women used a variety of methods to improve their appearance, such as diet, exercise, and cosmetics.

The Contested Body

The baroque body was a contested site, subject to multiple and often contradictory ideologies. On the one hand, the body was seen as a source

of pleasure and beauty. On the other hand, the body was also seen as a source of sin and corruption.

This tension between the body and the spirit is reflected in the art and literature of the baroque period. Baroque art often features images of both beauty and decay. For example, Caravaggio's painting "The Calling of Saint Matthew" depicts a group of people gathered around a table. The people in the painting are dressed in fine clothes and they are enjoying a meal. However, the painting also features a dead body lying on the floor.

The tension between the body and the spirit is also reflected in the dance of the baroque period. Baroque dance was often characterized by its sensuality and eroticism. However, baroque dance was also used to express religious themes.

The baroque body was a complex and contradictory entity. It was a site of both pleasure and pain, beauty and decay. The baroque body was a contested site, subject to multiple and often contradictory ideologies.

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