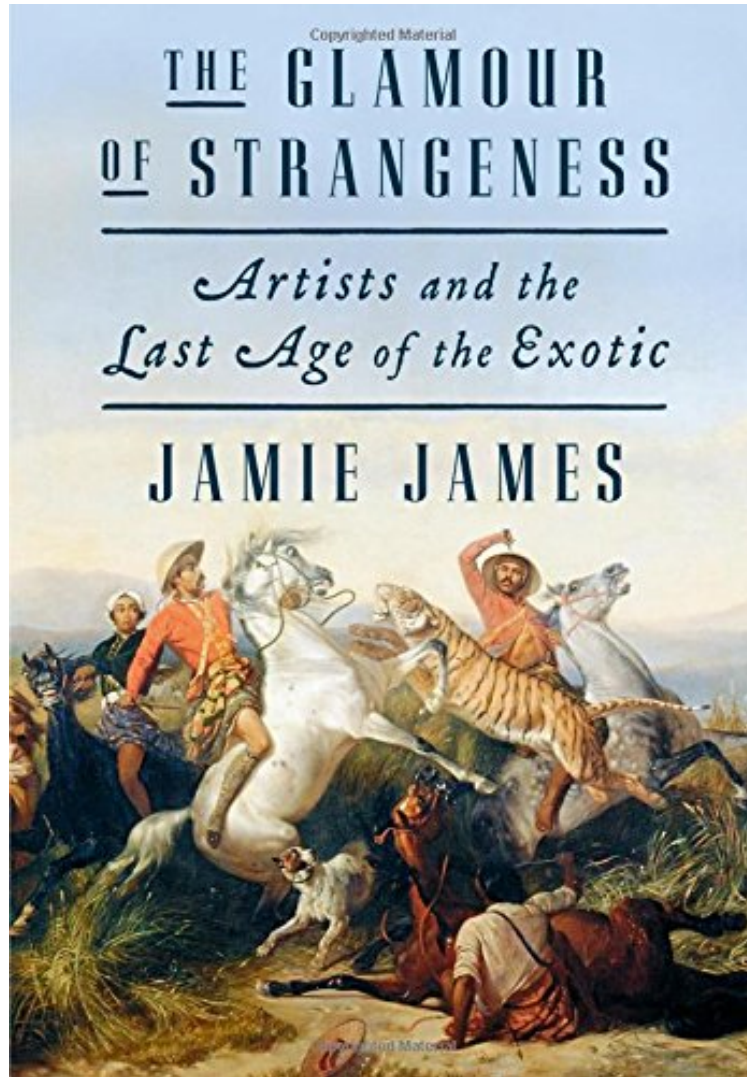


[Free pdf] The Glamour of Strangeness: Artists and the Last Age of the Exotic

The Glamour of Strangeness: Artists and the Last Age of the Exotic

Jamie James

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#822667 in Books Ingramcontent 2016-08-09 2016-08-09Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.40 x 1.28 x 6.34l, .0 #File Name: 0374163359384 pagesThe Glamour of Strangeness Artists and the Last Age of the Exotic | File size: 57.Mb

Jamie James : The Glamour of Strangeness: Artists and the Last Age of the Exotic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Glamour of Strangeness: Artists and the Last Age of the Exotic:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Extreme lives in extreme landsBy Washington readerJamie James writes that the genesis of this engrossing book lies in an experience during a trip to Angkor Wat in 1988, a time when Cambodia was all but closed to Westerners as its long civil war spluttered to a close. A soldier asked James what American money looked like. Inspecting Washingtons portrait on the duly proffered dollar bill, the soldier asked Is

this your king? He looks like a lady. At that moment James knew just how far away from home he was. Almost thirty years on, in the age of Househunters International when every corner of the planet is accessible to anyone with a passport and the right credit card, this incident would be unlikely to happen. This was not the case until well into the last century. Until rather recently, relocating to a distant country was an extreme and often irreversible act, entailing risks of all kinds. Those who chose to do it were often not quite normal, as James's fascinating portraits of six especially memorable and creative cases demonstrate. But there is no single template for the personality of the exote (his term for someone who reinvents himself under the influence of foreign surroundings): there seems to be a spectrum running from adventurous through eccentric to bizarre and crazy. Walter Spies, the multitalented German who immersed himself in Balinese culture and revitalized the local arts scene, charmed everyone he met. On the other hand, Maya Deren's burgeoning career as an avant-garde filmmaker was undone by her immersion in Haitian voodoo, which alienated her most influential supporters. It is hard to read the account of her possession at the wedding of friends in Westport, Connecticut (of all places) without concluding that this woman, whose innovations in film had attracted significant notice, had become unhinged. Similarly, there is no single template for the exotes' passions and pursuits. Although the title refers to Artists and the Last Age of the Exotic, James has chosen figures who were in reality polymaths. Spies was a musician as well as a painter; the Javanese painter Raden Saleh was an amateur paleontologist; the writer Victor Segalen was a doctor and an archaeologist, etc. They were not solitary figures, either: one of the most interesting aspects of the book is its treatment of the impact of its subjects' lives and work on others. A random selection from the index presents an astonishing variety of eminent persons who crossed their paths: Charlie Chaplin, Noel Coward, Henri Rousseau, Franz Liszt, Paul Robeson, and Queen Victoria just for starters. This is a most erudite book but not an academic one. It is blessedly free of the tendentious cant about cultural appropriation, Orientalism, colonialism/postcolonialism and so on that taints many studies of similar subjects. There is a lively thread of personal experience running through the book -- James describes his travels in the footsteps of some of his subjects, and prefaces and concludes the book with lessons he has drawn from his own life as a Texan transplanted to Lombok by way of New York and Bali. He has the too-rare knack of elegantly combining detail, analysis, and narrative with remarkable concision; this book contains more richness than most volumes three times its length manage to achieve. By examining the lives of these gifted people who gave themselves over in the most extreme ways to strange new homelands, *The Glamour of Strangeness* should be irresistible to any thoughtful person who has ever become smitten even fleetingly with a foreign place or culture.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Full of interesting folks to pursue further. Something about ...By DLW

Full of interesting folks to pursue further. Something about JJ's writing seems to lack a real focus as these are very different lives, but they are all extremely well fleshed out while still leaving you hungry for more information.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A fun read

By Cassandra Langer

Fun read full of interesting facts about a fascinating group of eccentrics. Well written, researched, and entertaining

According to Paul Bowles, a tourist travels quickly home, while a traveler moves slowly from one destination to the next. In *The Glamour of Strangeness*, Jamie James describes a third species, those who roam the world in search of the home they never had in the place that made them. From the early days of steamship travel, artists stifled by the culture of their homelands fled to islands, jungles, and deserts in search of new creative and emotional frontiers. Their flight inspired a unique body of work that doesn't fit squarely within the Western canon, yet may be some of the most original statements we have about the range and depth of the artistic imagination. Focusing on six principal subjects, Jamie James locates a lost national school of artists who left their homes for the unknown. There is Walter Spies, the devastatingly handsome German painter who remade his life in Bali; Raden Saleh, the Javanese painter who found fame in Europe; Isabelle Eberhardt, a Russian-Swiss writer who roamed the Sahara dressed as an Arab man; the American experimental filmmaker Maya Deren, who went to Haiti and became a committed follower of voodoo. From France, Paul Gauguin set sail for Tahiti; Victor Segalen, a naval doctor, poet, and novelist, immersed himself in classical Chinese civilization in imperial Peking. In *The Glamour of Strangeness*, James evokes these extraordinary lives in portraits that bring the transcultural artist into sharp relief. Drawing on his own career as a travel writer and years of archival research uncovering previously unpublished letters and journals, James creates a penetrating investigation of the powerful connection between art and the exotic.

"Esoterically learned and always entertaining . . . [Jamie James] may be a blue-chip professional writer (and one with a subtle sense of language and a very good idea of where his reader is), but there's no question that his new book is the work of an amateur in the strictest, most laudable sense: the one who acts, in this case writes, out of love . . . Quite a few readers will, I'm sure, pick up James's book to nourish dreams of escaping the malfunctioning contraption of the homeland." Joseph O'Neill, *The New York Times Book Review* [An] entertaining, erudite study of a rarefied group of people whose experience of other cultures transcended mere travel. Tash Aw, *Financial Times* "[A] richly detailed, absorbing cultural history . . . Abundant primary sources inform James' sharply drawn, sympathetic portraits." Kirkus (starred review) "James is merrily entertaining in his exceptional erudition and nimble eloquence, and fluently and movingly

insightful in his psychological, sexual, social, and aesthetic interpretations as he tells these astonishing, often tragic tales of intrepid self-creation and ardently chosen homelands."Booklist (starred review)A riveting account of some mightily other livespeople of learning longing to be elsewhere, body or soul, and picturesquely succeeding: just as Jamie James does in his calling as their chronicler and kindred spirit. Gini Alhadeff, author of *Diary of a Djinn*About the AuthorJamie James is the author of *The Snake Charmer*, *Rimbaud in Java*, and other books. He has contributed to *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Atlantic*, among other publications. He regularly reviewed art exhibitions and contributed features to *The New Yorker* and served as the American arts correspondent for *The Times* (London). He has lived in Indonesia since 1999, and is a recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Grant.