



The Mask of Art: Breaking the Aesthetic Contract

Film and Literature

Clyde R. Taylor

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"In this critique of aesthetics and the politics of representation, Taylor demonstrates astonishing breadth and depth in arguing for 'breaking the aesthetic contract' that excludes anything that does not conform to Eurocentric notions of beauty.... it brings to black studies and cultural critique an internationalism that emphasizes the richness of forms of creative expression outside the norms set by European aesthetics. Highly recommended..." ?Choice

Cultural critic Clyde Taylor exposes the concept of "art" as a tool of ethnocentricity and racial ideology. By examining various texts including *The Birth of a Nation* and *The Cotton Club*, Taylor demonstrates how rationales of "art" are used to mask personal, class, and cultural biases. Other works such as those by Toni Morrison, Chinua Achebe, and Spike Lee are scrutinized in terms of resistance to the dominant system of aesthetics.

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