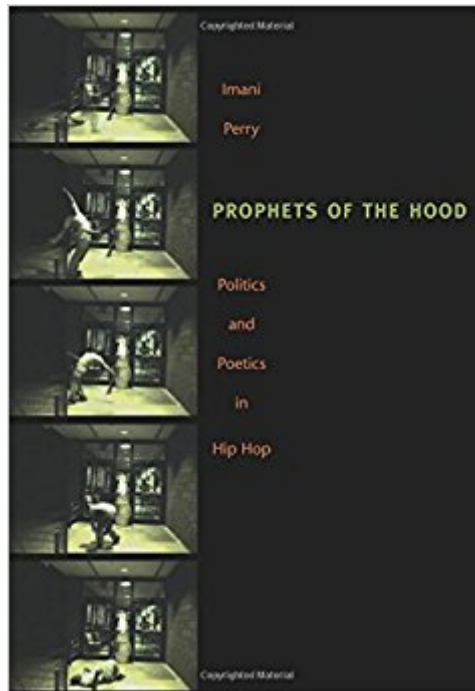




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# Prophets Of The Hood: Politics And Poetics In Hip Hop



## Synopsis

At once the most lucrative, popular, and culturally oppositional musical force in the United States, hip hop demands the kind of interpretation Imani Perry provides here: criticism engaged with this vibrant musical form on its own terms. A scholar and a fan, Perry considers the art, politics, and culture of hip hop through an analysis of song lyrics, the words of the prophets of the hood. Recognizing prevailing characterizations of hip hop as a transnational musical form, Perry advances a powerful argument that hip hop is first and foremost black American music. At the same time, she contends that many studies have shortchanged the aesthetic value of rap by attributing its form and content primarily to socioeconomic factors. Her innovative analysis revels in the artistry of hip hop, revealing it as an art of innovation, not deprivation. Perry offers detailed readings of the lyrics of many hip hop artists, including Ice Cube, Public Enemy, De La Soul, krs-One, OutKast, Sean "Puffy" Combs, Tupac Shakur, Lil' Kim, Biggie Smalls, Nas, Method Man, and Lauryn Hill. She focuses on the cultural foundations of the music and on the form and narrative features of the songs—the call and response, the reliance on the break, the use of metaphor, and the recurring figures of the trickster and the outlaw. Perry also provides complex considerations of hip hop's association with crime, violence, and misogyny. She shows that while its message may be disconcerting, rap often expresses brilliant insights about existence in a society mired in difficult racial and gender politics. Hip hop, she suggests, airs a much wider, more troubling range of black experience than was projected during the civil rights era. It provides a unique public space where the sacred and the profane impulses within African American culture unite.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Prophets of the Hood is the most comprehensive and intellectually original study to date of hip hop as a complex and innovative literary narrative form. Written with a refreshing blend of savvy critical rigor and brave and imaginative narrative verve, Imani Perry’s study is an impressive analysis of late-twentieth-century American popular culture.” —Daphne A. Brooks, Princeton University

“Imani Perry has written the most subtle and nuanced treatment of hip hop that I know. Her complex view of hip hop as black democratic space subject to prophetic utterance and mainstream cooptation is powerful. Her call for the local engagement and global vision of the underground to revitalize hip hop is compelling. Her seminal work should silence all naive or ignorant trashers of this vital cultural form!” —Cornel West, Princeton University

“Imani Perry’s Prophets of the Hood is an extraordinary and brilliant book. Eschewing a rigid division between the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ in hip hop, she takes the discussion of rap to new depths and greater heights with a probing analysis of the poetic and political dimensions of the art form. With lucid explanations, crisp writing, and sharp analysis, Perry has managed to actually say some very important things in a strikingly fresh manner. With the storytelling skills of Nas, the passion of Tupac, the lyrical dexterity of Lauryn Hill, the verbal mastery of Talib Kweli, and the conceptual acuity of krs-One, Perry has produced a stunning, magnificent work of art.” —Michael Eric Dyson, author of *Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur*

“‘Prophets of the Hood’ is the most comprehensive and intellectually original study to date of hip hop as a complex and innovative literary narrative form. Written with a refreshing blend of savvy critical rigor and brave and imaginative narrative verve, Imani Perry’s study is an impressive analysis of late-twentieth-century American popular culture.” —Daphne A. Brooks, Princeton University

Fascinating analysis of poetry and rap - well-written, convincingly argued, and engaging throughout.

Must read if you are a music lover or HIP HOP head

What a language and voices that we have been avoiding for ages? It has become loud and clear that we may not be able to ignore the Prophet and its message, if we want a bright and

constructive future. Good and timely delivered.

Thorough and dynamic work. Academic writing style full of information to be savored over time or devoured in an enrapturing read.

Imani Perry is a wonderful writer and analyst. Her book is remarkable in its approach to the subject of Hip Hop's role in the black community.

To write a book about rap and hip hop, and to not once mention homophobia, is an extremely glaring oversight.

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