

BOOK REVIEW

Msia Kibona Clark. *Hip-Hop in Africa: Prophets of the City and Dustyfoot Philosophers*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2018. 312 pp. \$32.95. Paper. ISBN: 9780896803190.

Clark's *Hip-Hop in Africa: Prophets of the City and Dustyfoot Philosophers* extends and advances the scholarship on hip-hop as a Black Atlantic expression with various forms, functions, and cultural, linguistic, and artistic diversities. The six chapters, with foreword and afterword, pay attention to the role of the cultural artists as prophets and philosophers whose contributions are no less valuable than those found in the scholarly texts. Taking a culturally constructive approach, Clark presents how hip-hop artists construct narratives on political institutions, social change, sexuality, gender, migration, and identity, mediating and interpreting social-economic and political realities for their audience based on the artist's social, political, and ideological perspective. Clark opens up the definition of what constitutes African hip-hop beyond music produced by Africans on the continent by accounting for migration, descent, origin, and aesthetics; thus, African hip-hop or hip-hop in Africa accounts for and moves beyond nationality, geography, mobility, and movement to accommodate Africans with hyphenated identities, and multiplicities of geographical and social locations. The book offers a cross-national survey of artists from many African countries and provides specific and regional examples.

Chapter One blends the history and the indigenization of hip-hop broadly and specifically in Africa. Clark explores the remote cultural links between African expressive and musical traditions and hip-hop while noting its specific and immediate origins in the Bronx borough of New York in the 1970s by African American and Caribbean immigrants. Extending the previous chapter, Chapter Two examines the historical, socioeconomic, and postcolonial condition in the politicization and indigenization of hip-hop in Africa and the labor of pioneering artists of the genre as well as the diverse ways that social reproduction and technological innovation in sounds and medium of distribution have contributed to the growth of the genre. Drawing examples from Ghana, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania, and the East African region, Clark explores how the diverse elements of hip-hop culture, emceeing, DJing, graffiti, and break-dance worked together to produce localized versions or iterations of hip-hop on the continent.

Clark advances the genealogies of hip-hop in Africa in Chapter Three by situating Franz Fanon's work on national culture and the evolution of

colonized intellectuals in relation to the stages of the growth of hip-hop in Africa. As Clark argued, hip-hop's evolution in Africa moved through the same stages as colonial intellectuals: from initiation or assimilation, alienation, and combat. Using the fanon framework of the stages of evolution of colonized intellectuals to read the stages of the evolution of hip-hop in Africa offers an interesting angle that allows us to move beyond the sound of hip-hop to the intellectual depth of the lyrics as combat literature. Further, Clark reveals the numerous functionalities of hip-hop in Africa in campaigns, the discourse of human rights, development, the electoral process, and the experience of hip-hop artists with the state, which moves between cooptation and persecution of hip-hop artist.


Chapter Four turns to the gendered and sexual politics in hip-hop in Africa from the relatively late entry of women in the genre and its predominantly masculine aura, to ways that women in hip-hop challenge social norms, gender construct, gender oppressions, sexual codes, and respectability politics. In this, Clark shows how female artists insert themselves into local and global feminist dialogues on various forms of violence against women, the hegemonic ideas of beauty, hair, shape, and size, economic realities of women from rural-urban women, domesticity, unequal wages, and spirituality.

Further, in Chapter Five, the author explore the experiences of African migrants in hip-hop in the United States and the ways they articulate immigration, the experiences of the diaspora, negotiate place and identities, as well as belonging and alienation. Specifically, Clark turns attention to the various practices of artistic expression by Africans and African American hip-hop artists, from loaning sound, styles, aesthetics, fashion, instrumentation, and blending African American Vernacular English to code-switching. The author uses select artists to illuminate the points and themes and issues discussed from racism and discrimination, rejection of assimilation, the stereotypes of Africans, homecoming and the complexities that come with it, to constructing an alternative story of their countries that contradicted the story constructed by mainstream Western media.

Finally, in Chapter Six, Clark examines the imbrication of language, class, culture, and location in the appropriation of hip-hop culture. Clark argues that language contributes to artist fluency, expressivity, and situations where artists commit faux pax. Language also forms cultural identification in many ways, shapes the insider and outsider's matrix, and influences acceptance and rejection. The misunderstanding and misappropriation of linguistic and cultural knowledge, symbols, norms, nuances, and cultural cues on both sides fuel tropes and stereotypes and entrench wrong beliefs and attitudes, distortions, or incorrect interpretations of one another's culture.

The book joins and contributes to the ever-increasing scholarship on hip-hop but also detours in significant ways to provide distinctive insight and contribution to this nascent field. Clark's insightful and brilliant weave of the historical linkages, resonances, and parallels of cultural flows between African and African American music and self-expression situate hip-hop in Africa beyond

thoughtless duplicating or mirroring but also weigh/assess creative and innovative syncretism on both sides. Scholars across a wide range of disciplines, from music, gender, sexuality, black studies, visual culture, and beyond, will find this book an invaluable resource.

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