

Geoffrey Sirc

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X AS A BASIC WRITING TEXT

ABSTRACT: The Autobiography of Malcolm X offers important possibilities for basic writing classes. Malcolm's story allows students to reflect on the importance of literacy and their relations to it. It also allows them to chart, alongside Malcolm, their own perceptual growth: from a lack of knowledge, through a kind of jaded insider's savviness, to an intensified, ethical consciousness. The autobiography allows students to use personally meaningful sources to develop sophisticated scholarly inquiry. Malcolm's book teaches the importance of passion and strength of character as essential attributes to growth as a writer.

First of all we think the world must be changed.

—Guy Debord

Basic writers are almost wholly, racially other, by definition. Bartholomae affirms how they are seen institutionally “as childlike or as uncultured natives. There is an imperial frame to this understanding of the situation of those who are not like us. We define them in terms of their separateness. We do not see ourselves in what they do” (69). And like a non-native speaker, a basic writer, according to Bartholomae, “must write his way into the university by speaking through (or

Geoffrey Sirc, associate professor of writing at the University of Minnesota's General College, teaches the first-year basic writing sequence. He has published articles in Freshman English News, Computers and Composition, and various collections. His current work involves a theoretical overview of composition studies.

© *Journal of Basic Writing*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1994

approximating) a discourse that is not his own" (69). The basic writing student, in such a scheme, must learn a second, prestige dialect, just as those non-native speakers who want to make it in mainstream America must learn a second language. Such learning represents for Bartholomae "a social or historical struggle as an individual writer seeks to locate himself and his work within the privileged discourse of a closed community" (70). Malcolm X's autobiography, as the story of a person from one culture who successfully makes it in another culture, particularly at this level of "privileged discourse," becomes superficially and, I think, ultimately a fitting story for basic writers to use as a key text in their writing course. It allows us to raise many of the crucial questions about our work as basic writing teachers and forces us to deal with the unresolved notion of just how our students can join the institutional academic setting and the larger "culture of power" (Delpit's term).

The way *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* allows us to begin resolution of that question in the writing classroom turns on the way Malcolm's story resolves itself around a notion of ethical character. What I offer here, to enrich our view of students and reflect on our curricular practices, are snapshots taken from networked-classroom computer discussions as well as student papers and reflections from an ongoing classroom narrative in which basic writing is taught around *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

Outside-In

There are, of course, many levels on which to appreciate Malcolm's book. As the inspiring educational memoir of an outsider who becomes an insider (of sorts), it allows the center/margin question to be a central reflection in class. Penn Warren captured this inspirational reading in his characterization of Malcolm as

a latter-day example of an old-fashioned type of American celebrated in grammar school readers, commencement addresses, and speeches at Rotary Club lunches—the man who "makes it," the man who, from humble origins and with meager education, converts, by will, intelligence, and sterling character, his liabilities into assets. Malcolm X was of that breed of Americans, autodidacts and home-made successes, that has included Abraham Lincoln, P.T. Barnum, Booker T. Washington, Mark Twain, Henry Ford, and the Wright brothers.

Malcolm X would look back on his beginnings and, in innocent joy, marvel at the distance he had come. (161-62)

We see this “making it” most clearly in Malcolm’s self-analysis while in prison, getting his “homemade education” (Haley, 171), rejecting his self-as-hustler with a working vocabulary of less than 200 words—“I not only wasn’t articulate, I wasn’t even functional” (171), feeling “mentally, morally, and spiritually dead” (189)—in favor of a self “craving to be mentally alive” (179), one who sees how reading and writing can effect a radical self-transformation. It’s just the attitude, an enthusiasm for literacy, we want to foster in our students: “No university would ask any student to devour literature as I did when this new world opened” (173). Just as the convict Bimbi, who could command total respect in Charlestown State Prison with words, becomes a key role model to Malcolm, some of my students see Malcolm as a role model for their own homemade education. Doug, for example, got excited by this picture of Malcolm as a credible, street-savvy dude showing him the power of reading alternative texts. He himself showed up in class a few days later with a copy of Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice*, asking me if I’d read it and what I’d thought of it. And Meng, a Southeast Asian student, found Malcolm’s growth into Standard English Literacy daunting but inspiring: “I learned the way Malcolm studied method work. But it’s going to take me humongous time to learn like him.”¹

The theory guiding the literacy education in Malcolm’s autodidactic classroom-cell, however, was by no means formalistic; it was heavily content-bound. His literacy narrative is almost subsumed by its political context: his is the story of the street-wise needing to become hip to ideology, needing systematic thought to be able to read the blur of one’s life. His book’s message urges one to see the blindness, the self-degradation; to see oneself as another person, caught up in a system of dominance; to develop the need to adopt or fashion a hermeneutic for reading the difficult text life offers. The Nation of Islam provided that for Malcolm. The story becomes not just an intellectual coming of age, but an ethical, moral one as well. Just as Detroit Red (the hustling Malcolm Little) becomes ideologized through Elijah Muhammad’s teaching into Malcolm X (the preaching Malcolm Little), so too students can be allowed a similar ideologization. But because the ideology Malcolm learns from Mr. Muhammad is so literally black and white, this is the

level on which the book can pose the most problems for students. Not many white students want to keep hearing they are the devil. And not many black students, whose lives are too often object lessons in the repellent nature of racism, are ready to accept what seems suspiciously like reverse racism. So they reply that Malcolm became a racist. Or they trivialize Elijah Muhammad's teachings through denial. That was then, they say, but things are different now. It might be the response of the dominant to the nontraditional, but it could also be that students are able to see, as indeed Malcolm himself saw, the folly of holding too fast to received ideas, even those received from a purported savior.

There's a very fine line, it seems, between getting hip, seeing deeper, becoming aware, and getting too hip, seeing through, becoming savvy. Many of my students are caught up in the cult of savviness. They are the hip ironists, with David Letterman as their high priest. Their stance is the inside dopester's, whose motto, as Gitlin puts it,

is "never to be taken in by any person, cause, or event."
. . . The premium attitude is a sort of knowing appraisal. Speaking up is less important—certainly less fun—than sizing up. . . . Savviness flatters spectators that they really do understand, that people like them are in charge, that even if they live outside . . . they remain sovereign. . . . It transmutes the desire to participate into spectacle. One is already participating, in effect, by watching. (21)

If Malcolm takes one from outside to inside, there's a danger that one will be left there, with the hollow canniness of an insider. So when students in their reading come across the character of Freddie, for example, the towel attendant at the Roseland ballroom who schools Malcolm in the art of hustling, there is a tendency among them to stop at the point of Freddie's revelation: "The main thing you got to remember is that everything in the world is a hustle" (47). Some, indeed, read the rest of the story from that perspective, that he never stopped hustling. Pat, for example, focused on how Malcolm was a "fake": "Malcolm's whole life was one big power struggle. After he got a taste of it he couldn't quit." Such an interpretation fits in with a larger, cynical world view: "Look at the history books, look at the oppression that still goes on," said Sandra. "There will always be oppression," Brett concurred.

If, as Gitlin says, the savvy view privileges intellectual bystanding as participation, in many of my students, there ex-

ists the feeling that they can discuss Malcolm X without even reading the book. Angie, as a radical African American, for example, is very savvy in her paper explaining the resurgence of interest in Malcolm X. Her paper begins, "Trying to make sense out of the 'so called' phenomenon of Malcolm X's resurgence in American culture is very easy. It came and it went, it went as fast as it came." Angie, I discovered from her work on the informal writing tasks I give to students, rarely did the reading. But, of course, why should she? Malcolm is already-read for her. Students try desperately to see through Malcolm. "Malcolm wanted power," is the way Kelly sizes him up. "Malcolm wanted money," suggests Matt. But a nonsavvy student like Carla isn't so sure: "I don't think Malcolm wanted power, but more to be himself." I mention that I liked the scene where Malcolm whips the Army guy with his mind, but Kelly sees through that too: "On the train scene with the Army guy, Malcolm loved having power over him." For too many of my basic writers, the world boils down to the manipulators and the manipulated; no wonder Freddie is their patron saint. Teika likes that scene with the Army guy because it shows Malcolm "using power white people did not even think he had. . . . It was mental power [,] a hustle." She represents the savvy African American view. She likes that street-knowledge is now legitimized mother-wit. As a savvy African American, Teika will confidently assert: "race is base simply on the color of you skin, you could be brought [up] around all black people if your white you'll always be white." And so, for Teika, what explains Malcolm's "fall" in the Nation of Islam is not betrayal by Elijah Muhammad (as many of the white students remark), but Malcolm forgetting the insider's cardinal rule: "Malcolm wasn't betrayed he simply forgot that everything is a hustle."

The savvy view is the view of conventional wisdom. I allow my students to critique this view early on, by having them comment on the sound-bites from some person-on-the-street interviews that *Emerge* magazine conducted for its issue commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Malcolm's assassination. Many of these snippets of conversation show the smug confidence and utter wrong-headedness of the savvy reading of Malcolm:

Malcolm X—he was the one that shot Martin Luther King Jr., right? Didn't he supposedly commit some crime or another?

He was the troublemaker, right? Martin Luther King did it peacefully and this guy did it unpeacefully.

Malcolm X was a little too . . . radical isn't the word; violent is better.

(“Remembering” 29ff.)

It is precisely because Malcolm's story is so slippery, so unresolvable, that it resists conventional interpretations. Such easy summaries of his mission or his person become absurd. Even given the amount of published commentary on Malcolm X, the reader is often left with a frustrating feeling that truth has somehow eluded the writer. X is a screen then that becomes too cloudy and dense to see through. Not surprisingly, in the need for an easy reading, the conventional reading seems inflected by racism. Ben commented that “Malcolm was obsessed with hatred . . . and Blacks are obsessed with dwelling on it for the rest of their lives.” How else but as racism can I interpret a misreading like Julie's: “I think he was a jerk who insulted blacks, whites, christians and any body else who didn't agree with him. . . he was a total hypocrit”? Julie, in fact, wound up sounding exactly like one of the snippets from *Emerge*: “Malcolm was to radical for society. King wasn't.” “He's totally negative,” Erick noted, “and has nothing good to say about white people.” Jackie agreed with Erick, calling Malcolm a “black supremacist.”

Rhonda, another white woman, demonstrated her racism, apparent throughout the term, in her final course evaluation:

I am so tired of hearing about racism that I would love to scream at everyone whining about America to go home! I have never discriminated against anyone purely based on race. Those people that yell about “black pride” and us “white devils” should journey back to Africa. Then make a choice to stay there or return. The same is true for every ethnical group.

She drew on these views throughout her coursework, wondering, for example, in a discussion of the book's concluding chapters, “if Malcolm was so happy in Mecca, why didn't he take his family there?” For her, the thought of Malcolm being forced in Mecca to acknowledge goodness in some whites is delicious justice after reading so much white devil; she gloats about “how he must have been feeling to see white people at the ceremonies.” Her take on Malcolm in the media was not surprising. She saw right through Malcolm's complaints about

how unfairly represented he was, ignoring the countless examples Malcolm provides of the way his words were twisted to present him as threat. Instead, she focused only on how lucky Malcolm was that the media gave this radical African American voice any press coverage at all: “the press in America was always making him feel important.” Any attention was more than he deserved, and as such must have been positive. Charlie, on the other hand, observed that “Malcolm as a person has this way of cutting through all the society-media murk and introducing the simple but yet truth full picture.”

Rhonda’s final paper on Malcolm became an apotheosis of her views, as she wrote on how this book should never be used as material in a required class. In trying to argue against the book, yet not wanting to seem overtly racist, she ends up in the contradictory mode of condemning a book she feels she must claim is wonderful: “It is a marvelous book that will stimulate and challenge readers to explore their own ideas and to examine their choices in life. . . . [But] it is simply not appropriate for any English class, where the focus of intent should be thoughts and combining sources into coherent information that is useable by anot[h]er.” According to Rhonda, the book should not be used because the classroom is “incredibly diverse, [since] it is an unwarranted assumption that no students will be offended by the contents of Malcolm X’s autobiography.” If we are to believe the doublespeak of her cultural affront at having Malcolm’s story lent the institutional legitimacy of a college syllabus, Malcolm’s story is simply too real, too wonderful for her:

By putting this book into the classroom, the meanings and experiences are even more removed from the meaning in the book, because not only is the life of this man so incredible that it resembles pure fantasy, but by scrunching this exploration of immensely important social and racial issues into a 10 week course, much of the opportunity for comparisons and reflections are eliminated. . . . The message of hope and perseverance that Malcolm preached was invaluable—much to wonderful to be lost as simply another story that students have to read to pass an English class.

A racist student like Rhonda, then, speaks in a kind of code, in which the complaint about racism is the real problem, not the object of the complaint: “To tell you the truth,” she said in our

last networked conversation, apparently rehearsing her views for the course evaluation, “i am so tired of hearing about nothing but black and white issues and racism and every other form of classifying people that i wish some one would talk about something else for a while . . . i am so tired of the races whining about everything under the sun! name one group of people that doesn’t have a legitimate bitch. . . you can drum a point to death, untill there is only frustration not thought.” Her code is similar to Kevin’s: “I think Malcolm was the one who was actually brainwashed, not the people he was caling brainwashed.” Or Missie’s, who claimed, “First he went to school with white people and that was fine and then he went out with a white girl, but then in the end of the book he said that the white man builds up subconscious defences against anything he doesn’t want to face, but all through the book Malcolm did that to[o].” Malcolm is the racist, not the people he is calling racist.

Inside-Out

Elijah Muhammad becomes a key character in terms of student reaction. Many students have their whole view of Elijah permanently set after they read what they characterize as Elijah having betrayed Malcolm. Ann: “I thought that it was really sad in the chapter ‘Out’ how Elijah turned against Malcolm along with some of his ‘close brothers’. Elijah was such an ass the way he went around screwing all of the women!” Jack: “I personally lost all respect [for Elijah]—I compare him to a modern day Jimmy Bahker.” Oystern: “Elijah became jealous of Malcolm’s success.” Their response to Elijah is a savvy one. They see right through him, only too happy to put another entry in their file of crooked preachers exposed by the media. But such a seeing-through of Elijah Muhammad’s teachings ultimately makes me uncomfortable. I’m especially uncomfortable with their reaction to Yacub’s History (the story of the Big-Headed Scientist who breeds the white race in exile on Patmos with 59,999 followers), which very few of my students take seriously. They scoff at the ridiculous notion of some evil-genuis black scientist breeding the white race as a demonic revenge scheme. They see through Yacub just like *New York Times*’ journalist M. S. Handler saw through him, when he called the “history . . . a theory stunning to me in its sheer absurdity” (Haley xi).

I’m uncomfortable because such a savvy reading sees right

through the value of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam both in Malcolm's life and the lives of many African Americans who belong to the Nation today. It overlooks the fact that such an organization could in some way respond to a genuine problem in which those who overlook it might be subtly implicated. And is Yacub's History any more ridiculous than the mythology underlying any other religion? Seeing the story as "the demonology that every religion has," Malcolm asserts that the tale acts as the "key lesson of Mr. Elijah Muhammad's teachings" (164). I want to recapture what they see beyond, I want to stop Elijah's "message to the black man" from disappearing so soon, without a trace. Degraded though he may be, Elijah provided Malcolm with the hermeneutic key to utterly change his life, to turn him from social parasite to social force. So I like the comment from Vo, an Asian student, that "Muhammad teaching help Malcolm free his people that's a positive gain," or Carla's "Elijah taught Malcolm many things, and I think Malcolm would agree that those things were worth embarrassment if necessary." A savvy reading of Elijah—where his alleged adulterous affairs with his secretaries negates any value in his theories—negates the need to accede to the "true knowledge" (Haley 162) Malcolm claims Muhammad provided him.

Overlooking Elijah Muhammad so quickly means that students can focus mainly on Mecca and what many of them see as Malcolm's ultimate restorative cure, his conversion from seeing "white devil" to embracing all races. So I hear a lot of the importance of Malcolm becoming a "True Muslim": Curtis: "I think the trip to Mecca helped Malcolm understand what the real meaning of the islam religion is." Bill: "Too bad Malcolm didn't go to Mecca earlier." And when Holly asked why everyone in Mecca was so helpful and caring, Mike replied, "That is the way of Muslims." What bothers me about this line of thinking is not the way my students become instant experts on the Islamic faith, but the way they are so quick to embrace Malcolm's deeper immersion into Eastern Muslim practices because they see it as removing the blinders of racism from his eyes. For many students, it becomes a relief. They can finally like Malcolm unequivocally. When the discussion turned to what Malcolm's organization would be like if he were alive today, Ann could confidently assert, "I think that today he would definitely let whites join. . . . Malcolm had much to learn in Mecca!" Courtney observed in our final discussion of the book that "the last few [chapters] are what made the whole thing worthwhile." "True

Muslim,” then, in their eyes means a person who doesn’t hate all whites. There’s a kind of appealing, reductive logic operative; another equation in this mathematics is Elijah Muhammad = liar = hustler = “such an ass” (Ann).

In their rush to move beyond Malcolm as “fiery Black Muslim” (282), students become very much like the core of white media sympathetic to Malcolm in his time yet tired of hearing him repeatedly call them devils. It’s interesting to watch news-reel footage of Malcolm returning from Mecca after writing his famous letter: The reporters have all read the letter’s copy and eagerly await him at the airport ready to have him embrace integrationist goals. Malcolm dissuades them: “I don’t think that I ever mentioned anything about working toward integration” (*Malcolm X*). They want to deny, see beyond the realities that made Malcolm harp on a philosophy of separation. They don’t want to admit that Malcolm can both recognize all human beings as valid, but also admit the impossibility of peaceful co-existence among them. When I commented on how Elijah’s message must have something to offer, given the Nation of Islam’s continued popularity, Rhonda misperceived what I meant by his message. She thought I was referring to the religion of Islam and not the social code set down in Muhammad’s book. So she hipped me: “geoff—it is not elijah’s message the muslem religion is much older than that.” She doesn’t even consider the other message, the “true knowledge.” Students, then, can be as selective in their “truths” as they love to point out Malcolm was in his reading. They seize on the “True Islam” he finally learns, but ignore the “true knowledge” of Elijah Muhammad’s Afrocentric revisionism. I think Charles, an African American, captures a little of the spirit of “true knowledge” in one of his observations. In a discussion of whether blacks and homosexuals can be compared, Shah saw no comparison (“people can choose to be gay”), but Charles considered the question and determined that being born black doesn’t make you black, that racial identity is a kind of choice, too: “Being black is a development not a birthright[.] For instance Brain [i.e., Bryant] Gumble isnt black. . . . Why does he try to hide that . . . A man of his caliber should do much more for us.”

The thing about Malcolm, in terms of this notion of savviness, is that he is not savvy. Speaking out for him is more important than sizing up: “I’m for truth, no matter who tells it. I’m for justice no matter who it is for or against. I’m a human being first and foremost, and as such I’m for whoever and whatever

benefits humanity *as a whole*" (366). If Malcolm became hip to the workings of the inside, the conventions, he didn't remain there for long. He repositioned himself in opposition, out of the Nation of Islam, out of America even. His story, then, allows students the possibility of getting outside the conventional reading, to reflect upon education and position. My students are afforded reflection as to where they stand in relation to the "culture of power." They can think of education in at least two ways: learning how (or if) they can fit into the existing pattern, and learning how they can (if they choose) try to help reshape that pattern. Malcolm's story, if it closes on anything, closes on the notion of social justice, a value for which there is no "inside" information. Penn Warren said the autobiography had the power of a folk ballad (171). Malcolm demonstrates that all fixed positions are just that, positions, which can be resisted and changed. The movement of Malcolm Little—from Detroit Red, through Minister Malcolm X, to arrive at El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz—is one of self-naming, self-activation, a journey through received names and positions to the arrival at one's personal truth.

Student as Malcolm

Students, too, can go beyond the system of Malcolm's own thought, to arrive at their own response to their situation. The book allows students to begin street-critical readings of Malcolm's story. They can become "homemade" theorists, using knowledge that personally matters to them, whether from books or records or magazines. They can go outside of, in a sense, conventional notions of student behavior and student writing, to carve out their own stance as writers, their own uses for writing. Take Jim's critique of Malcolm as cult figure, a very witty, literate, negative response to the book. His girlfriend was in a cult in high school, he did some reading on it then, and he asked if he could draw on the literature he amassed at the time to use in his paper on Malcolm. He brought into his paper the sources that had become meaningful in his own life's problem-solving:

Are the Black Muslims a cult, and if so how should that effect the credibility of Malcolm X, whose ideas were based on their teachings. To determine whether or not the Black Muslims were a cult, we must first determine what a cult is. According to a pamphlet distributed by

Free Minds Inc., a group that provides information about religious cults, a cult is usually characterized by, a leader who claims divinity or a special relationship with God, members that put goals of the cult ahead of individual concerns, and perhaps most importantly, involvement occurs not by conscious choice, but by artificial conversion through the use of manipulative techniques.

Jim's reading of the book proceeds to isolate those events and passages that fit Elijah and Malcolm into the Free Minds' schema. This is typical of students who pick up on Malcolm's knowledge/power message. Roger used readings and rap records with which he was familiar to support points in the various papers he wrote. For his analysis of Allan Bloom, after hearing so much about how absolutely essential canonical writers like Shakespeare are, Roger couldn't resist bringing in (even if he can't cite it properly) the noncanonical H. Rap Brown to snuff out Bloom's Eurocentric lamp of learning, much like Malcolm brought his new learning to bear against Eurocentrism in his own time:

Europeans will always excel in institutions of higher learning when they set the curriculum, it is easy to learn when all you study about is like you because it is interesting. (H. Rap Brown 1968) I began realizing this when I was in high school. I saw no sense in reading Shakespeare. After I read Othello, it was obvious that he was a racist. From reading his poetry, I gathered he was a faggot. But we never discussed the racist attitude in his works. This was when I really began to raise questions. I was in constant conflict with my teachers in high school. I would interpret the thing one way and they would say it was wrong. Well how could they tell me what Shakespeare was thinking. I knew something was wrong, unless the teachers had a monopoly on truth or were communicating with the dead.

For his essay on "life today," twenty-some years after the death of Malcolm X, Roger decides to do a street-scholarly critique of contemporary African American leadership, complete with a gloss on his slang and the use of rapper Chuck D as last-word source:

Rev Jesse Jackson was and is supposed to be a man of God but he has a contract with Coors beer and also Playboy magazine (Interview) which is contradictory to what

he believe's, advocating the consumption of alcohol and exploiting women. Being in a governmental position he know's about the lies and deception but refuse's to expose the problem to the people because the so called brother wants a peice of the pie or he is scared shitless and does not want to end up like the rest of the down leaders, dead. Forgetting your peoples best interest in order to get what you want is not a leader, it is a sell out stunt(not a real action but a faked one) which goes to prove "Every brova aint abrova just cause of color just as well could be undercover."

But he went even further, giving me articles from the hip-hop magazine *The Source* to read. After all, I had been giving him texts to read all quarter, so it seems only fair he be allowed to drop a little science on me. This goes beyond homemade education, it's homemade cultural literacy. As we read and studied ideology in Malcolm, we looked at the ideologies inscribed in popular songs, and for the rest of the quarter, I often got tapes to listen to from students. I like it; it breaks up the one-way educational flow. I felt bad early on in the course one quarter because I had neglected a few months earlier to buy the February 1990 *Emerge* when I saw it on the newsstand, with its 25th anniversary cover story on Malcolm which might have offered my students a contemporary take on the book; but there was Roger, a few weeks into the quarter, bringing it in for me to read.

There is something typically Malcolm about powerful insight coming from such unexpected sources. In Malcolm's book, something as nothing as a student paper helps cause a media explosion; Malcolm informs us that C. Eric Lincoln's *The Black Muslims in America* (one of the two media texts, along with the documentary "The Hate That Hate Produced," crucial in making the Nation of Islam known nationally) was written thanks to a student paper: "Lincoln's interest had been aroused the previous year when, teaching at Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia, he received from one of his Religion students a term paper . . . [written by] one of Atlanta's numerous young black collegians who often visited our local Temple Fifteen" (236). Malcolm then goes on to cite the student's paper, just as compositionists like myself draw on student writing as important source material. Malcolm builds his life in large part on street knowledge: on Sammy the Pimp's observations, conversations with prosti-

tutes, letters from his family, old books in a prison warehouse, and, of course, Elijah Muhammad.

There is something truly democratic in this, in the way traditional privilege is upended. As such, Malcolm's story allows real scholarship, with an inner drive and fire of its own, rather than the mere insider tracings of received or conventional scholarship. Since his story is always evolving, it allows students to bring in things they encounter, things that mean something to them, to help with their reading of both Malcolm and the other texts we read. "Did anyone see Attallah Shabazz on tv last night?" Ann asked in a discussion of the book's last chapters. "Attallah explained things from her childhood very different than the book did. For example she said that she grew up in a very romantic family. But in the book Malcolm made it clear with his wedding and other things that he didn't believe in all of that Hollywood romance. So what's up with that? Could the book be wrong?" Ann is learning a couple of things here: first, to use these kinds of lived sources, like Attallah Shabazz's televised interview, as a device to help develop a reading; moreover, she's learning the basic need to interrogate a text, to wring some kind of truth from it. The best kind of source-logic seems to dramatize that dissonance, allowing voices to chatter in the text (e.g., H. Rap Brown counterpointing Allan Bloom). A dissonance has been created in her mind that she will use her next paper (on Malcolm and women) to figure out. Ann, like many students in a Malcolm X writing class, is internalizing that chatter and developing a stance, an ethic, a characterized reading made from a definite position. And that's the story of Malcolm: how one comes, through education and reading, to develop an ideological purchase on the chaotic text of life. What happened to Ann reflects "true knowledge" gained and hard-won, not just passed on.

Ann, we can say, is a serious student, one who has learned to see the doubled world, the world that is and the world that should be, one who relies on textual mediation to pursue further inquiries. She discovered that texts (even televisual ones) can help one read life just as Malcolm did. Roger was also interesting in this regard. He liked to pepper his network discussion of the book with facts picked up from his own life and reading. He was a young African American student with a lot of lore on which he would draw in his reading of the autobiography (note the reference in here not only to his alternative history texts, but to Flavor Flav): "J Edgar Hoover had sell-out

blacks infeltrate the Nation of Islam To get the low down, and the people who assasanated [Malcolm] were not real members, that whole thing was set up by HOOVER! BELEIVE THAT BOYEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" Or Jen, who asked in another networked discussion, "did you guys see that commentary of Spike Lee where he was saying in his movie that malcolm and martun luther were one in tha same[?]" Malcolm's is the kind of story that makes very affordable the logic of source-driven exposition, with any valid source counting to show how the book makes sense of the world and vice-versa.

Street-Academic

Since Malcolm's story allows this outside-inside-outside dynamic, I tried to reflect that logic curricularly by moving from the autobiography to reading various institutionalized notions of students and education. That way, I felt, my basic writers could better understand the social forces that work to define them. They might learn, through reading educational theory's depiction of them, how what seems real, what seems true and common-sensical, is simply the conventional, and no truer than anything else. Through Malcolm, they saw common sense ideas about blacks and whites revealed as nothing more than convenient (to some) ways to organize the world. When, for example, Malcolm told his 8th grade teacher, Mr. Ostrowski, whom Malcolm had always thought of as a natural advisor, that he wanted to become a lawyer, my students read what this teacher said to the young black who had gotten the highest marks in his class:

Malcolm, one of life's first needs is for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me, now. We all like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer—that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you *can* be. You're good with your hands—making thngs. Everybody admires your carpentry shop work. Why don't you plan on carpentry? People like you as a person—you'd get all kinds of work. (36)

That moment represented a turning point in Malcolm's own history: "It was then that I began to change—inside" (37). Students might achieve a similar demystification; they might, upon reading a selection of articles relating generally to education, Bloom and Hirsch, specifically, come to see how judgments

about them are ideological constructions made to appear common-sensical and "realistic." Post-Malcolm, they came to Allan Bloom's positioning of them as "clean slates" (47) and "natural savages" (48) with a better understanding of the stakes involved in the struggle over their interpretation. They could more critically read descriptions of what their education should consist of and how it should strive to inculcate them into a tradition with which many of them were not too familiar but one they began to suspect had little to offer. They read Bloom moaning that:

Today's select students know so much less, are so much more cut off from the tradition, are so much slacker intellectually, that they make their predecessors look like prodigies of culture. The soil is ever thinner, and I doubt whether it can now sustain the taller growths. (51)

Or they heard E. D. Hirsch sigh that we simply have to face the facts about "the way of the modern world" when it comes to education, how multicultural education "should not be the primary focus of national education. It should not be allowed to supplant or interfere with our schools' responsibility to ensure our children's mastery of American literate culture" (18). And they read him rail at

just how fragmented the American public school curriculum has become . . . [since our curricular offerings in high school now] include not only academic courses of great diversity, but also courses in sports and hobbies and a "services curriculum" addressing emotional or social problems. All these courses are deemed "educationally valid" and carry course credit. . . . Cafeteria-style education, combined with the unwillingness of our schools to place demands on students, has resulted in a steady diminishment of commonly shared information between generations and between young people themselves. (20-21)

Since they had watched Malcolm become a kind of homemade deconstructionist of common-sense wisdom, finding alternative views in traditionally degraded sources like Yacub's History, I offered them a traditionally degraded source, an interview with the rapper Ice Cube, to which they could contrast such ideas. African American rappers turn out to be interesting educational theorists. Reflecting on the contemporary high school curriculum, Cube remarked:

They need to have a whole new list of classes. . . They need to have a course on how to raise babies, given the percentage of people who leave high school and have babies. See they'll make some shit like that career planning an elective. That's why you got people out there don't know what to do. Girls, they say fuck it and go in the county line. Then they sit home watching *Donahue* and thinking, Yo if I have another baby I can make some more money. That's the way they go, getting paid, looking fly, but then they kids be home looking filthy. All because they don't teach you how to cope in the motherfuckin' society. (Tate, 78)

Once the playing field became leveled, with no source more privileged than another, they were able to weigh (in terms of music, for example) whether they believed along with Allan Bloom, that contemporary music "ruins the imagination of young people and makes it very difficult for them to have a passionate relationship to the art and thought that are the substance of liberal education" (79), or whether they felt, like Ice Cube, that modern music represents one of the few traces of the real surviving in an era of exhausted neotraditionalism: "[Kids] ain't listening to what their grandfather be saying. They're getting the real deal on the records" (79). Brett, for example, a white student, weaves in citations from Malcolm X, Ice Cube, and an interview with LA gang members in order to develop his thesis that "black students are being turned off towards education" because "the system seems to have better success in the white society."

Malcolm's book, then, would seem an ideal tool to use to teach academic writing, in the way it encourages the logic of sources, only with vivid, more vital sources. But the book is better at teaching passion in academic writing than usage. Jim's paper, even though a witty approach to the book, had no conclusion and a slew of apostrophe errors. And his was one of the better ones. Roger's paper on Bloom and Hirsch offered a terrific critique: "Europeans came to America and could not survive, so the native americans helped them, taught them how to plant, cultivate, hunt, etc., then after a big feast for thanks they got up off the table and killed everyone they could get their hands on, but Bloom states that young Americans, in comparison to euros we were natural savages." But his paper would be greeted far less enthusiastically, I fear, for formal reasons, by any other teacher in any other department on campus. And so I

wonder, just where do we put the pressure. Is the problem to install a program of bidialectalism, to figure out strategies to get Roger's wonderful ideas into acceptable form, or is it to rethink the place and form of academic writing? We're back to the center/margin question and Bloom/Hirsch's the-tradition-ain't-broke-so-don't-fix-it agenda. Malcolm's is the story of an African American who thoroughly mastered the prestige discourse and was rewarded with martyrdom; Ice Cube's is the story of how insistence on the vernacular, in both language and form, leads to a huge recording contract.

Any answer available to this seeming contradiction lies, I think, in the figure of Malcolm as represented in his text. What I find interesting about the commentary on Malcolm's book is a similar thematic strand beginning with one of the first reviews of the book (from a 1965 *Newsweek*) and continuing right up through to my students' analyses. It's the notion of Malcolm as a self-cancelling text, as being simply too unstable a figure finally to support a consistent reading:

But Malcolm had become a reed bending with every fresh wind. He could talk Pan-African mysticism one day, gun clubs for Negroes the next, separate-but-equal black and white campaigns against racism on the third. ("Satan in the Ghetto" 132)

James Farmer, lately the National Director of the Committee of Racial Equality, has called Malcolm X a "very simple man." Elijah Poole, better known to the Black Muslims as Muhammad and, indeed, as Allah, called him a "star gone astray." An editorial writer of the *Saturday Evening Post* put it: "If Malcolm were not a Negro, his autobiography would be little more than a journal of abnormal psychology, the story of a burglar, dope pusher, addict and jailbird—with a family history of insanity—who acquires messianic delusions and sets forth to preach an upside-down religion of 'brotherly' hatred." Carl Rowan, a Negro, lately the director of the United States Information Service, substantially agreed with that editorial writer when he said, in an interview after Malcolm's assassination, that he was "an ex-convict, ex-dope peddler who became a racial fanatic." Another editorial writer, that of the *Daily Times* of Lagos, Nigeria, called him a martyr.

Malcolm X may have been, in varying perspectives, all

these things. But he was also something else. (Warren 162)

I say if Malcolm X, Brother Malcolm, had undergone this kind of transformation, if in Mecca he had decided that blacks and whites can unite, then his life at that moment would have become meaningless in terms of the world struggle of black people. So I say I do not believe it. (Cleage 15)

Malcolm's project was to make his life, once written down, the principal testament to Muhammad's Truth, a combination of holy text and ex-slave narrative.

And thanks to this strategy, black folks who're looking to put flesh on Malcolm's icon (and many don't even try) have a book that gives them—and particularly the black male—a model for being black. Inevitably the autobiography also suffers from the agenda; tailored to make points, the book ultimately fails as a comprehensive life-and-times telling. Malcolm knew this, and offered, after his break with Muhammad, to remake the story along post-Nation, humanist lines. But Alex Haley vigorously discouraged his subject from making changes, suggesting instead that Malcolm tack on the story of his Mecca trip. That addition—a second strategy—confuses the first strategy by recasting Malcolm's Black Muslim revelation in Black humanist light. What we just have to ask is: what did Malcolm really stand for? Ultimately, the autobiography says too many different things to be politically or religiously pedagogical, in a coherent way. And it ends up concealing Malcolm X. (Wood 44)

There is a sense that because he is unresolvable, he is less valuable; or he is only valuable when, through force of critical will (Penn Warren and Cleage) a reductionist meaning is insisted upon. Such a textual notion, one in which heavy revision is needed until the univocal reading is arrived at, is prevalent in our field. It affirms the need to force a reading, to reach closure. When Bartholomae speaks of the occasion of university writing as "an invitation to bring forward certain kinds of experience and to let others remain silent" (76), he speaks to a view of academic writing in which showing one world doubled in another is seen as a problem, as static. This is just the problem *Newsweek* '65, *et al.* have with Malcolm. Even Malcolm himself

admits the open-endedness of his self/text: "I'm man enough to tell you that I can't put my finger on exactly what my philosophy is now, but I'm flexible" (428). Rather than seeing the autobiography's doubled strategy as problematic, we can see it as the only kind of coherent sense worth insisting on. A doubled reading is more realistic, especially for growth in writing-as-ethos, than the modernist, uniformal one. It's one that represents the often complex, contradictory confusion of life. All texts are palimpsestic. Some students, baffled by Malcolm-as-unresolved, may reject his text ostensibly along lines such as "The way Malcolm changed his mind throughout the book" (Jamie). This marks a refusal to deal with the unresolvable, to acknowledge and explore what the odd, shifting, polymorphous text might mean. Could Elijah Muhammad, perhaps, be both hustler *and* savior? Rather, the doubled meaning is rejected out of hand because of that very difficulty in summation. Ann, then, made a sensible comment, a double-focused one that interrogates, rather than rejects, the unresolvable: "I love the fact that Malcolm was prepared to die for his people rather than hustle what he was doing for money but I hate it when he talks about the morals of society in America were bad because of the way in which women dressed." The autobiography might not close on a neat reading, but it changes lives. Erick even cites Spike Lee's jacket blurb:

[T]he book is very inspiring in that when you believe something go with it stay right on top of it till the day you die, it is like what Spike Lee said about it "The most important book I'll ever read. It changed the way I thought; it changed the way I acted. It has given me courage that I didn't know I had inside me. I'm one of hundreds of thousands whose life was changed for the better." (cover)
That is pretty intense for someone to say.

We see this doubled strategy at work, for example, in Keith Gilyard's recollections of childhood: "I couldn't shoot a basketball high enough to make a goal but I began learning how to dribble and saw my first pair of dead wide open eyes on a fat man lying amid a crowd in front of the fish market with a thin jagged line of blood across the width of his throat" (24). It is ball and death, childhood and death, innocence and death—self-cancelling texts, to be sure; too-hard lessons for a kid to process, impossible lessons to resolve. Malcolm, then makes us change the way we read *all* texts: books, (our)selves, the world. The reading that asks for resolution, for escape from the maze,

is the bogus reading, the old reading, the already-read reading, the historical reading. Malcolm ushers in the post-historical reading where all formal bets are off, where the basic truth and justice of the message are what counts, despite the appearance: "I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against" (Haley 366). Certain student writing—e.g., "Brain Gumble isnt black. . . . Why does he try to hide that?"—might not count as much in a traditional curriculum but to me it is a powerful truth. Too often composition disallows the exuberant, the peculiarly styled—especially from basic writers. Imagine if Charles' Bryant Gumble riff counted as writing. Imagine a curriculum built on inference, innuendo, a little nonsense, but a solid ethical base, one concerned more with new knowledge than old forms: a curriculum which allowed ideas to appear so contradictorily, they might even cancel each other out . . . *just like in life*. Such a curriculum would suit us well for the journey, as Malcolm suggests in his notes from the road:

You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to *re-arrange* much of my thought patterns previously held, and to *toss aside* some of my previous conclusions. This was not too difficult for me. Despite my firm convictions, I have been always a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds it. I have always kept an open mind, which is necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of intelligent search for truth. (Haley 340)

Gilyard's book is instructive here for another reason. His structural strategy, poetic home language alternating with received academic style, becomes an autocritique of the politics of the bidialectal. Like Malcolm, Gilyard is a balancing act between street and scholar. Gilyard shows it in his alternating structure, and Malcolm shows it in the way his medium and message were fused:

I knew that the great lack of most of the big-named "Negro leaders" was their lack of any true rapport with the ghetto Negroes. How could they have rapport when they spent most of their time "integrating" with white people? I knew that the ghetto people knew that I never left the ghetto in spirit, and I never left it physically any more than I had to. I had a ghetto instinct. (310)

The Gilyard/X take on bidialectalism refines the notion of literacy as a bridge. Gilyard reflects on the bridge that will take him from his home in Harlem to a new home in Queens, enabling him to function in both worlds. But he learns some deeper “true knowledge”: “another truth, which all should know: Most times a bridge is just another two-way street” (26). Education is not just a one-way yellow brick road out of urban reality and on to the Emerald Culture of Power; it’s a bridge that runs both ways.

Many of my white students never have to know that truth. It’s a truth that goes beyond clothes and rap records, beyond even language, all the way to character. Will they ever go into the textual world Gilyard and Malcolm are from? Another theorist of race, New York Knick Doc Rivers, sees this bridge become one-way at a crucial point. He offers a critique of athletic shoe marketing that speaks to this: “The shoe companies say, ‘Let’s make our shoe the street-est, blackest shoe out there,’ because the kids want to be like the city kids . . . They want to dress like them, talk like them, everything except live in the same neighborhood” (de Jonge 38). The savvy attitude is one that can’t settle for the open text. It must close on a one-way resolution. Savviness is a kind of one-way street itself: the savvy reading fixes Malcolm *there*. But the two-way reading can go between worlds: Malcolm is there *and here*. Some students, it seems, can see *out there*, but not *in here*. So it’s not surprising that they can’t see through their firm belief in how the powers of “true Muslimhood” turned Malcolm into an integrationist.

Homer Simpson As Us

Malcolm’s, then, is a book for the long haul, a book that can change a life (Malcolm: “People don’t realize how a man’s whole life can be changed by *one* book” 393). It shows how life is a journey charged by unexpectedness, with serious implications for our choices. At one point, Haley says how, during a press conference Malcolm gives, you could drop a pebble out the window and it would land on a spot where Detroit Red used to sell dope. Most of my students don’t pick up on that reading, but some do; and I have to believe others will—later, as pieces continue to fall into place for them. There are various stages of perceptual growth that can be charted as students work their way through the book, from innocence, to an insider’s smugness, to a principled reading—what Gitlin would call speak-

ing out rather than sizing up, or what Sledd would define as “character,” when he states his fears concerning a “character”-less curriculum in literacy education: “ability, power, and information, without character, may combine to do great harm” (15). Some students can see through almost anything except the bars of their own perceptual cages. Kirsten, in speaking of the turn in Malcolm’s book—from the sensational Hollywood nature of his pre-prison years, to the growth of Malcolm as ideologue—isolated exactly the point where students who have no clue get hung up: “I think the book is starting to get more confusing now because it is dealing with a lot of things we don’t know about.” So Julie, who had blithely dismissed Malcolm as “a jerk,” flatly asserted, “I don’t think he did that much for civil rights he didn’t help Martin Luther King at all.”

I confess, of course, to my enthusiasm for students who seem formed by an ethos, who write with a character informed by decency. Vikki, for example, read a nitpicking discussion over the network regarding Malcolm and Elijah and who’s responsible for what and finally had to cut through it all: “From what I’ve been reading it is to my understanding that Malcolm is a hero. Self-sacrificing. . . . A fighting cause to help direct black[s] to overcome economic and political power struggle was part of his message. Self awareness in chapter Out.” She was the only one in that class who focused on Malcolm’s message, who understood Elijah’s “true knowledge.” Doug was another rarity in this regard. He was a young white student who used the retro-hippie network code-name, “Daffodil,” and, in keeping with such self-styling, he revealed a neo-hippie’s tendency for openness toward a person’s story of oppression. Unlike most of his fellow-students, Doug was not interested in games of cynical acuity, rather he wanted to allow justice to speak. As he listened to another round of how badly Malcolm misjudged the white man, he spoke up: “I’m thinking about how the black people called the whites devils and I don’t blame them. . . . The whites were obsessed with there race.” One of Doug’s final comments to the other students in class was “I really admired the way Malcolm learned everything himself from the books and people he [k]new. . . . The book in some places has been insperational to me.”

Most of the others took the conventional view of Malcolm as culprit in the victimization and character assassination of the white race or as simply confused, misguided. There is a thinness to blanket put-downs of Malcolm, such as those by two

upper-class, always-well-dressed, white, sorority students: Kelly, who stated "I do not feel that Mal. was a sympathetic character at all," and Missie, who added, "I didn't think he was sympathetic either. I thought he was kind of a jerk. . . . I just didn't like his overall attitudes about everything but towards the end of the book he got worse. The epilogue was kind of harsh he cut on white people a lot."

One of the wonderful benefits of cultural literacy, according to Hirsch, is its ability to capture our "national character" (17), and I think Malcolm's book succeeds here, too: for our "national character" is finally, perhaps, the "true knowledge," the deeper meaning of "white devil." I want Malcolm's story to do for my students just what Hirsch says educational material shouldn't—"supplant or interfere with our schools' responsibility to ensure our children's mastery of American literate culture" (18)—because I have seen the fruits of American literate culture and they're murder: "I do not believe this somber situation [of black students' self-segregation on college campuses] is the fault of the white students, who are rather straightforward in such matters and frequently embarrassingly eager to prove their liberal credentials in the one area where Americans are especially sensitive to a history of past injustice" (Bloom 92). Students don't know Elijah's "true knowledge," many don't even know who Malcolm X was, and no emphasis on a prestige dialect or cultural literacy or the insider "culture of power" truths educators putatively withhold from certain students will ever bring that knowledge about. I'm not trying to *withhold* anything from anyone's children. Quite the opposite: I want to *bestow* on them interesting things—like Yacub's History, for example. Yacub's History is not on Hirsch's list; but if Malcolm wouldn't have learned Yacub's History, he wouldn't have been Malcolm X. But then, Elijah Muhammad is not on his list, either. Hirsch tries to sell his notion of cultural literacy in part on its status as "the common currency for social and economic exchange" (22), on how it will rescue blacks from being "condemned in perpetuity to oversimplified, low-level tasks" (11). That's a shockingly deceitful message to the black man—or to anyone of nonprivileged status (as Penn Warren notes, one of the values of Malcolm's book is that race becomes "metaphor" 164). Just as Malcolm's book tells me to go to a hustler for an economics lesson and to Yacub's History for teachings in genetics (or is it ethics?), so I'll go to a rapper, Chuck D, for my educational theory:

We have to have black schools that teach you how your black ass will survive in America, and the meaning of family. . . . [Traditional education of blacks] just doesn't teach us the hypocrisies and the double standards, and how to make it as a black person. I can go to college and high school and get the top grades, and when I go out into the job market, I don't know anything about business. Which means business is a family thing, you know what I'm saying? If you're not family, you're not gonna get that fucking job! . . . Money is not the answer, control is the answer. Control over curriculum, over education. (47-48)

The very notion of the "multicultural" is simply another name for nontraditional, both students and texts that do not correspond to the canon. Malcolm's autobiography is not part of the tradition. And neither is Malcolm. Ultimately, then, Malcolm serves as a point at which the whole discussion—nontraditional students, ways of reading and writing, notions of the academy, multiculturalism, ideology vs. "good writing"—comes together. Berthoff speaks out against critics who would grudgingly allow books like *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, but not in terms of literature, rather sociology perhaps. The question, for Berthoff,

is not of totally disparate categories of performance, out of reach of each other's standards of valuation, but of different histories, or circumstances, or doctrines and conceptions, of "the self"; different working postures and strategies, . . . different expressive intentions embraced and different effects sought, each having its own reasonable measure of virtue. (315)

What Malcolm allows us to do, I think, is change the world. When all voices are heard, I have to believe, something can happen. We learn to value not capital-T Truth, formal and theoretical, but small-t truths, lived and often wildly informal, like Malcolm's own story. For Penn Warren,

Malcolm X let the white man see what, from a certain perspective, he, his history, and his culture looked like. It was possible to say that that perspective was not the only one, that it did not give the whole truth about the white man, his history, and his culture, but it was not possible to say that the perspective did not carry a truth, a truth that was not less, but more, true for being seen

from the angle of “Small’s Paradise” in Harlem or of the bedrooms to which “Detroit Red,” the “steerer,” brought the “Ivy League fathers” to be ministered to by the big black girl, whose body had been greased to make it look “shinier and blacker” and whose Amazonian hand held a small plaited whip. (169)

Some of my students realize the powerful opportunity for legitimizing other ways and forms of knowing offered by Malcolm’s story. Teaching Malcolm has made me realize it, and why I will continue to use Malcolm’s book in my basic writing classes. I am now far more interested in complex, nontraditional prose from students than I was in the past. I don’t think it’s keeping them from any sort of power. I think it’s helping them theorize in order to change the world. Malcolm’s story means a focus on basic values of respect, decency, and the imperative for knowledge—values no more a “construction” than a human being is a construction: “We declare our right on this earth. . . to be a human being . . . to be given the rights of a human being, in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary” (*Malcolm X*). The use of texts like Malcolm’s autobiography in a writing curriculum means a new focus on mission, message, meaning, and character. It means using language to record a content of the truths of experience rather than an archaeology of discourse’s forms and conventions. It means teaching the exploration of powerful ideas rather than the simulation of stock forms. That copy of *The Source* Roger brought in for me to read had a most interesting article that Roger told me he thought I would be especially keen on. And I was. It was about an older African American who operates a pirate radio station out of his home in California, broadcasting his voice to his community as a counter-discourse. The author of the article, James Bernard, in reflecting on the way the old man’s use of some two-bit Radio Shack technology is actually changing the world at a local level, speaks to the core of why I continue to use Malcolm X in my basic writing class:

We are all Homer Simpsons who don’t think any of us have Anything To Say, so we remain mere spectators to the Dialogue. We need an entirely new way of speaking to each other that will inject more of our voices into this National Dialogue. Once we begin to ask questions that concern us, you may be surprised that the person with

whom you've been watching *All My Children* may have some answers. Neither of you will ever be the same. (29)

I can think of no better use for a writing course than to allow things to never be the same.

Note

¹In all excerpts from students' writing and networked discussions, I have preserved students' exact forms.

Works Cited

- Bartholomae, David. "Writing on the Margins: The Concept of Literacy in Higher Education." *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*. Ed. Theresa Enos. New York: Random, 1987, 66-83.
- Bernard, James. "Suffocated." *The Source* (Sept. 1990): 28-29.
- Berthoff, Warner. "Witness and Testament: Two Contemporary Classics." *New Literary History* 2 (1971): 311-29.
- Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Cleage, Reverend Albert. "Myths About Malcolm X." *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times*. Ed. John Henrick Clark. New York: Macmillan, 1969, 13-26.
- D, Chuck & Hank Shocklee. Interview in *Spin* Oct. 1992: 47-48, 123.
- de Jonge, Peter. "Talking Trash: The Art of Conversation in the N.B.A." *New York Times Magazine* 6 June 1993: 30-32, 34, 38.
- Delpit, Lisa D. "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children." *Harvard Educational Review* 58 (Aug. 1988): 280-98.
- Gilyard, Keith. *Voices of the Self*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991.
- Gitlin, Todd. "Blips, Bites & Savvy Talk." *Dissent* 37 (Winter 1990): 18-26.
- Haley, Alex. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Grove, 1966.
- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Boston: Houghton, 1987.
- Malcolm X*. Prod. Marvin Worth. n.d.
- "Remembering Malcolm X." *Emerge* Feb. 1990: 29, 31, 33-34.
- "Satan in the Ghetto." *Newsweek* 15 Nov. 1965: 130, 132.

- Sledd, James. Letter to the Editor. *The Council Chronicle* 2.5 (June 1993): 15.
- Tate, Greg. "Manchild at Large." *The Village Voice* 11 Sept. 1990: 77-79.
- "The Time Has Come 1964-1966." *Eyes on the Prize, America at the Racial Crossroads*. Prod. James A. DeVinney & Madison Davis Lacy, Jr. PBS. 1990.
- Warren, Robert Penn. "Malcolm X: Mission and Meaning." *The Yale Review* 56 (1967): 161-71.
- Wood, Joe. "Looking for Malcolm: The Man and the Meaning Behind the Icon." *The Village Voice* 29 May 1990: 43-45.