

Terrill, Robert E. "Colonizing the Borderlands: Shifting Circumference in the Rhetoric of Malcolm X." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 86.1 (2000): 67-85.

*Quarterly Journal of Speech*  
Vol. 86, No. 1, February 2000, pp. 67-85

## Colonizing the Borderlands: Shifting Circumference in the Rhetoric of Malcolm X

Robert E. Terrill

*In the last year of his life, Malcolm X was faced with the task of crafting a viable public voice while remaining unfettered by existing ideologies. In a speech he delivered less than a week before he died, Malcolm addresses this task by repeatedly shifting the scene within which he asks his audience to define themselves. He explores the possibilities and the limitations of both the domestic and international scenes, and finally invites his audience to position themselves at the border between the two. There, he and his African-American audience might take advantage of the redefinitional potential of international identification without abdicating their rightful domestic position.* **Key words:** Malcolm X; Kenneth Burke; public address; rhetorical criticism; constitutive rhetoric

MALCOLM X was essentially an orator. He has been eulogized variously as "a remarkably gifted and charismatic leader," "an eloquent orator and street-corner spell-binder," "America's most thorough and relentless revolutionary dissident of the 1960s," "indisputably an orator of the first rank," and shortly before his death he was declared by the Oxford Union Society to be one of the greatest living orators.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, oratory was essential to Malcolm. He did his thinking orally, through the act of public address. As Peter Goldman puts it, Malcolm "did his cerebrating on his feet, in the heat of battle" (1979, p. 13). He did not sit down and write any systematic ideological tract, nor did he formulate any programmatic response to America's racial strife. Even the Autobiography was written by Alex Haley from extensive oral interviews with Malcolm.<sup>2</sup> Throughout Malcolm's public life he was criticized for his apparent reluctance to participate in political action, for relying instead upon his words.<sup>3</sup> Goldman writes that Malcolm X "could fairly be judged a failure by the conventional measures of leadership; he left behind no concrete program for the deliverance of black Americans, no disciplined following to carry on for him, no organization sturdy enough to survive his death" (1982, p. 311).

But Bayard Rustin suggests different criteria. Malcolm, he says, "has to be seen over and above the pull and tug of struggle for concrete objectives. . . . King had to win victories in the real world. Malcolm's were the kind you can create yourself" (in Goldman, 1979, p. 395).<sup>4</sup> These self-created victories are made possible because Malcolm's oral discourse invites the members of his audience to reject the definition imposed upon them by the dominant culture and to remake themselves. As Goldman puts it, Malcolm "was dealing in symbolic action—attempting the liberation of black people by altering the terms in which they thought and the scale by which they measured themselves" (1982, p. 327). This essay traces this symbolic action and alteration of scale as it is manifested in an exemplar of Malcolm's public address.

On February 16, 1965, almost a year after leaving the Nation of Islam and only five days before he was assassinated, Malcolm X addressed a racially-mixed audience at the Corn Hill Methodist Church in Rochester, New York.<sup>5</sup> In this speech, which I will refer to as his *Rochester Address*, Malcolm shifts circumference from the domestic scene to the global, and back again.<sup>6</sup> The global perspective can help Malcolm redefine the terms by

which his African-American audience is oppressed, but, on the other hand, it also can place distance between Malcolm's audience and the pressing problems in their immediate situation. Distance presents emancipatory potential, but also might entail a narcotic disengagement. In this speech, Malcolm explores the limitations and possibilities of both scenes, and finally invites his audience to join him at the border between the domestic and the global, a site that resists the limitations of both while not wholly rejecting either. The border is a site of potential symbolic emancipation that achieves form through the invitational rhetorical action of Malcolm's discourse.

Malcolm's rhetoric, then, is consummatory rather than instrumental; it fulfills its revolutionary purpose through its performance.<sup>7</sup> James L. Golden and Richard D. Rieke warn that "talk may become a serious impediment to effective revolution" because it may lead to "no actual accomplishments" (1971, p. 493). Similarly, Condit and Lucaites argue that because of Malcolm X's "implicit commitment to rhetoric as a means of social and political action," his range as a revolutionary is severely limited (1993, p. 309). While it is true, as they point out, that "Malcolm X did not change the racist underpinnings of America's economic structures, nor did he have a very direct impact on altering America's political system" (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. 308), the *Rochester Address* provides an opportunity to reassess the rhetorical potential of radical discourse. Malcolm X invites his audience to position themselves so that they can observe and critique the manifestation of power. As Archie Epps put it, "Malcolm X created, primarily with rhetoric, a radical view of the Negro experience in America" (1991, p. 7). Framing such a view, and then inviting an audience to share it, illustrates not only an actual accomplishment but also the emancipatory potential of rhetoric.<sup>8</sup>

To encourage the members of his audience to transgress the limited perspective allowed African-Americans, Malcolm invites them to refashion their identities and thus become a "people" other than that which the dominant culture has told them they must be. Maurice Charland has described the way that an exemplar of discourse, in his case a "White Paper" issued by supporters of Quebec independence within the Quebec Government, has the potential to call forth a "people" (1987, p. 134). But Malcolm's primary audience does not enjoy a relationship to power analogous to that of the primary audience of the "White Paper," and a study of Malcolm's discourse therefore suggests some limitations and modifications of Charland's theory. Individuals and groups without access to traditional avenues of power may also employ constitutive rhetorics, but these must differ from that described by Charland. Unlike a majority of the citizens of Quebec, for example, Malcolm's audience does not control a language that reinforces self-definition; indeed, in the *Rochester Address*, Malcolm seems convinced that this is the most significant problem faced by African-Americans. Perhaps more importantly, Malcolm's constitutive rhetoric differs from that described by Charland because Malcolm does not wish to invite his audience to accept a pre-existing ideology. Charland follows Louis Althusser's discussion of *interpellation* (1971, pp. 170-177), wherein a discourse calls forth its subject by assuming that such a subject position exists. For Malcolm, any such assumptions are highly problematic. Because African-Americans have not been allowed, in his view, to craft their own identity, any assumed system of beliefs would be necessarily inauthentic. Malcolm positions his audience to critique those identities imposed upon them by the dominant culture, and indeed Malcolm's last year is marked by the rejection of ideology.

## Rejecting the Straitjacket

When Malcolm X delivered the *Rochester Address*, the material from which he had fashioned his public persona was unavailable to him; he had to craft a new identity for himself and his audiences through a constant flux of contingency.<sup>9</sup> While the biography of Malcolm X has been told too eloquently and too often to warrant a detailed review here, two events in his last year figure prominently in the context for this speech because together they deny Malcolm two key inventional resources.<sup>10</sup> The first of these events is Malcolm's split from the Nation of Islam, which represented his rejection of the only codified system of beliefs he had ever accepted. In the *Autobiography*, he says about this event that he "felt as though something in *nature* had failed, like the sun, or the stars" (1965, p. 304). When he read his "Declaration of Independence" at a press conference on March 8, 1964 (Malcolm X, 1965e), Malcolm was freed from the constraints of the Nation of Islam, but he had built his public persona largely upon the scaffolding of those constraints. And the task was not, as Malcolm saw it, simply to invite his audiences to accept a new and improved dogma. In a letter published on October 4, 1964, Malcolm calls the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad a "pseudoreligion" and vows that "I shall never rest until I have undone the harm I did ... through my own evangelistic zeal" while a Nation of Islam minister. But in that same letter, Malcolm also declares "emphatically that I am no longer in Elijah Muhammad's 'strait jacket' and I don't intend to replace his with one woven by someone else" (Handler, 1964). Throughout the remainder of his life, Malcolm self-consciously avoided all such straitjackets and urged his listeners to do the same. The *Rochester Address* illustrates both through its form and its content Malcolm's effort to establish an unencumbered position while avoiding the marginalization of unengaged neutrality.

The second key event in the last year of Malcolm's life occurred, in part, as a result of the first. Having rejected the theology of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm went to Mecca to become acquainted with Sunni Islam. Malcolm returned from his journeys with an increased appreciation of the possibilities of the international scene.<sup>11</sup> These experiences, as he puts it in the *Rochester Address*, "definitely broadened my understanding, and I feel, broadened my scope" (Malcolm X, 1992a, p. 147),<sup>12</sup> and it is this broadened scope that he wishes to share with his audience. At the same time, Malcolm also seems to have come to a new understanding of the limitations of this broadened scope, and is careful in the *Rochester Address* to avoid confining his audience within these limitations.

Goldman points out that for most of his life, "Malcolm's underlying purpose [was] making black and white Americans alike see themselves on a larger stage where the old majority-minority arithmetic was reversed and the future, if not the present, belonged to dark mankind" (1979, p. 223). During Malcolm's last year, however, his faith in that arithmetic of reversal seems to have been shaken. In *The Ballot or the Bullet*, a speech that Malcolm X delivered only a month after the split with the Nation of Islam and before his visits to Africa and Mecca, he advocated a simple identification with Africa as a means toward participating in such a reversal. "In fact," he tells his audience, "you'd get farther calling yourself African instead of Negro. They don't have to pass civil-rights bills for Africans. ... Just stop being a Negro. Change your name to Hoogagagooba" (Malcolm X, 1965d, p. 36). Later in 1964, though, Malcolm told students at the University of Ghana that whites who support the dominant American ideology are just as duplicitous in Africa as they are in America. They might seem friendly, but all they really want is

"to integrate with the wealth they know is here" (Malcolm X, 1991a, p. 13). The corruption that Malcolm X believed characterized the dominant American culture reached to the places that he had once thought of as the potential antidote for that corruption. In the *Rochester Address*, Malcolm understands the international scene to be very nearly as corrupt as the domestic one, so simple international identification offers no hope for liberation. Africa is not a virgin motherland, and African identity is corrupted by the presence of the white oppressor just as is African-American identity. This antidote, like the theology of the Nation of Islam, was no longer available to him.

So, near the end of his life, Malcolm lacked *a priori* "truths" to communicate to his audience; moreover, the demands of his public life and his admitted inability to refuse any opportunity to speak precluded him from formulating a coherent system of beliefs even if he had been interested in doing so.<sup>13</sup> Malcolm's constitutive rhetoric, then, also can be said to differ from that described by Charland because it is *doubly* constitutive. Malcolm X is not only rhetorically transforming his audience into a "people," but he must rely on his own discourse to define himself as a person.<sup>14</sup> Just as Malcolm X crafts for himself an authentic identity and then from that stance critiques the dominant culture, his discourse invites his audience to occupy a rhetorical space wherein they might themselves engage in a self-definitional critique.

### The Rochester Address

Malcolm's extended introductory remarks establish the invitational forms through which he appeals to his audience, beginning with a clear statement of purpose:

And my reason for being here is to discuss the Black revolution that's going on, that's taking place on this earth, the manner in which it's taking place on the African continent, and the impact that it's having in Black communities not only here in America, but in England and in France and in other of the former colonial powers today. (pp. 143-144)

He warns his audience that "we have to not only know the various ingredients involved at the local level and national level, but also the ingredients that are involved at the international level," because racial oppression has "become a problem that is so complex ... that you have to study it in its entire world, in the world context or in its international context, to really see it as it actually is" (p. 144). Malcolm is going to invite his audience to follow him through a series of shifts in circumference, and thereby help them to share his broader perspective.

When Malcolm tells his audience in Rochester "that in the Western Hemisphere, you and I haven't realized it, but we aren't exactly a minority on this earth" (p. 144), we hear the arithmetic of reversal that Goldman recognized and that his audience, perhaps, had come to expect. But here the reversal is not in preparation for some future action, but rather is implicated in a world-wide revolution that is happening right now. When Malcolm asks his audience to identify through an inclusive "we" with formerly colonized people who are infiltrating the former colonizers, he asks them to participate in subverting the pattern of oppression. He suggests that "the three major allies, the United States, Britain, and France, have a problem today that is a common problem": the "new mood" of the "African Revolution" is infecting their homeland (p. 146). One reason these former colonial powers share this problem is that "you find many of the Black people from the British West Indies have been migrating to Great Britain, and many of the Black people from the French West Indies migrate to France, and then you and I are

already here" (pp. 145-146). In other words, according to Malcolm X, physical migration is spreading a revolutionary mood among people of African descent. By crossing those international borders, those Africans are disrupting the oppressive authority of the colonial powers. The African emigrants provide a compelling model for Malcolm's audience of the potentially emancipatory *symbolic* action that he will ask them to undertake later in the speech.

Malcolm tells his audience that, because of the broadened scope he enjoys as a result of his recent journeys out of the Nation of Islam and to Africa and Mecca, he has "no desire whatsoever to get bogged down in any picayune argument with any birdbrained or small-minded people who happen to belong to organizations" (p. 147). For Malcolm, it seems that this rejection of the limitations of a mindset constrained by the dominant culture is implicated in a rejection of the limitations of formal argument: "I never like to be tied down to a formal method or procedure when talking to an audience," he says, because "when people are discussing things based on race, they have a tendency to be very narrow-minded" (p. 148). Perhaps to help his audience transgress these limitations, Malcolm proceeds not through formal argument but rather by constructing two comparisons between the domestic and international scenes, repeatedly stepping over perceived lines of separation between the two scenes and inviting his audience to follow him as he makes his connections.

### *Expansion*

In the first set of parallel constructions, Malcolm links together the images of black savagery that the dominant culture creates at home and abroad. The "racism practiced by America," he says, is the same racism that is involved in "a war against the dark-skinned people in Asia, ... a war against the dark-skinned people in the Congo, the same as it involves a war against the dark-skinned people in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Rochester, New York" (p. 150). In both the domestic and international scenes, Malcolm warns, the racism of the white dominant culture is manifested through "a science that's called image making" designed to make it "look like the victim is the criminal, and the criminal is the victim" (p. 151). This "science," as becomes clear, is Malcolm's term for the way that African-American self-perception is rhetorically constructed by the dominant white culture; throughout this speech, Malcolm works to expose this science *as* rhetoric and reclaim for his audience the right of self-definition.

Malcolm first illustrates this science in action with a domestic example: the press coverage of the Harlem riots of the previous summer. "During these riots," Malcolm notes, "the press, very skillfully, depicted the rioters as hoodlums, criminals, thieves, because they were busting up property" (p. 152). Malcolm admits that "it is true that property was destroyed," but points out that the inner-city African-American is "a victim of economic exploitation, political exploitation, and every other kind" (p. 152). The exploiters do not live in the ghetto, so "when the Black man explodes ... he's not trying to steal your cheap furniture or your cheap food. He wants to get at *you*, but you're not there" (p. 152). The rioting is a symbolic act of retribution against "landlords who are nothing but thieves, merchants who are nothing but thieves, politicians who sit in the city hall and who are nothing but thieves in cahoots with the landlords and the merchants" (p. 153).

Malcolm notes that "just as this imagery is practiced at the local level, you can understand it better by an international example" (p. 153). For a representative example

Malcolm turns to the bombing of rebels in the Congo.<sup>15</sup> When "planes were dropping bombs on African villages," Malcolm says, "I heard no outcry, no voice of compassion for these thousands of Black people who were slaughtered by planes" (p. 153). Malcolm again shows the "image making" at work, pointing out how the press gets the "white public to support whatever criminal action they're getting ready to involve the United States in": for example, "They refer to the villages as 'rebel held' ... as if to say, because they are rebel-held villages, you can destroy the population, and it's okay" (p. 153); the pilots were called "'Anti-Castro Cuban,' that makes them okay"; and "they're able to do all of this mass murder and get away with it by labeling it 'humanitarian,' 'an act of humanitarianism'" (p. 154). This manipulative rhetoric is effective, Malcolm explains, for it was only after the white press "referred to the hostages as 'white hostages' " that he heard an outcry among American whites (p. 155). But, Malcolm points out, the villagers in the Congo "only held a hostage in the village to keep the mercenaries from murdering on a mass scale the people of those villages" (p. 156). Within the perspective toward which Malcolm is inviting his audience, the looting in Harlem has been revealed as a strategic act and the rhetorical manipulation of the dominant culture is exposed. Similarly, the holding of hostages in the Congo is not an act of savagery but a strategic act of self-preservation that must be understood in its proper context. Like the "landlords who are nothing but thieves," in Malcolm's broader context the American-trained pilots are exposed as murderers while the villagers are the victims.

In both the domestic and international scenes, the racist culture uses the press to manipulate Black images for the purpose of continued oppression. As Malcolm puts it, "they use their ability to create images, and then they use these images that they've created to mislead the people" (p. 156). Note that in both scenes the science of image making relies primarily on the practice of naming; when whites are in control of the terms, their definitions of such things as "murderers" and "victims" create a distortion of reality. To expose this "science," Malcolm reframes the terminological manipulation through a shift in circumference. Malcolm has invited his audience to accompany him across the domestic border to a position from which they might read the oppressive rhetoric.<sup>16</sup>

### *Reduction*

Malcolm wonders aloud if his audience is thinking, "What does this all have to do with the Black man in America?" (p. 156). Indeed they might be, for in presenting first a local and then a global example, Malcolm has led his audience away from a narrow focus on American racism and invited them to share with him a larger *but* perhaps more detached context within which to frame the problem. But Malcolm is not advocating separatism, either physical or psychological. He does not want his audience to abandon their claims on the rights and privileges of full American citizenship, and this is an important difference between much of his rhetoric while a minister of the Nation of Islam and that during his last year. Malcolm's focus here is on helping his audience to develop alternative visions of their problems within the domestic scene. Thus, he next brings the insights available in the larger frame to the narrower domestic scene. Specifically, Malcolm argues that the responses the United States made to the newly independent African states have been translated to the domestic scene for use against the newly rebellious African-Americans.

Malcolm X again relies on an explication of the way that the white dominant culture

manipulates images for the purposes of continued oppression, but he invites his listeners to participate in a more subtle and complex relationship between the domestic and international scenes. This relationship is reinforced by the text; rather than the independent articulation of domestic and international image making that Malcolm outlined earlier, the text here presents a recursive undulation through which the two scenes overlap and merge. This coupling prepares Malcolm's audience for the position to which he eventually invites them: the border between the two scenes, where they might exploit the advantages of both.

Picking up his audience in the international scene, Malcolm tells them that in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, "they had a conference of dark-skinned people" (p. 158) and that "it was the spirit of Bandung that fed the flames of nationalism and freedom not only in Asia, but especially on the African continent" (p. 159).<sup>17</sup> The domestic scene is immediately implicated, for "the flames of nationalism, independence on the African continent, became so bright and so furious," that they couldn't be confined. When the colonial powers began to feel this heat, Malcolm says, "they passed the ball to the United States" (p. 160). It wasn't that they didn't want to stay in Africa, but that "the Black man" would "no longer allow himself to be colonized, oppressed, and exploited" (p. 159). The Americans then had to refine their oppressive tactics: "Instead of coming over there with gritted teeth, they started smiling at the Africans," a tactic that Malcolm calls "benevolent colonialism" or "philanthropic imperialism" (p. 160). This strategy was shifted to the home front, for:

just as [the Americans] had to change their approach with the people on the African continent, they also began to change their approach with our people on this continent. As they used tokenism and a whole lot of other friendly, benevolent, philanthropic approaches on the African continent ... they began to do the same thing with us here in the States. (p. 162)

The integration efforts at the University of Mississippi and the University of Georgia are, for Malcolm X, examples of these token moves. Again, when whites control the language they make these tokens appear legitimate. "They fooled the people in Mississippi by trying to make it appear that they were going to integrate the University of Mississippi. ... Now, mind you, and after one of them got in, they said there's integration in Mississippi. They stuck two of them in the school in Georgia and said there's integration in Georgia. Why," Malcolm says to the white members of his audience, "you should be ashamed" (p. 162).

Implicated in the rapid scenic shifts that characterize this part of Malcolm's speech is a shift in agency. As before, the revolutionary mood originated in Africa and spread throughout the Diaspora. But here this transference is not the result of a physical migration but rather the effect of a sort of Pan-African *Zeitgeist*. "Somehow or other," Malcolm says, this revolutionary mood "slipped into the Western Hemisphere and got into the heart and the mind and the soul of the Black man in the Western Hemisphere who supposedly had been separate from the African continent for almost four hundred years.... Though there was an ocean between us, we were still moved by the same heartbeat" (p. 159). Malcolm believes that as "the Black man in Africa got independent" and became "master of making his own image," the "Black man throughout the Western Hemisphere, in his subconscious mind, began to identify with that emerging positive African image," and that identification "made him become filled with the desire also to take a stand" (p. 161). African-Americans *already* are connected intimately to the African

homeland, and there is no need for the Africans to emigrate to the United States for African-Americans to reap the benefits of this relationship. By inviting his audience to follow him through his shifts of circumference, Malcolm has made it possible for the African-American members of his audience to recognize their potential consubstantiality with the Africans without entirely redefining themselves as Africans.

Malcolm has presented domestic and international scenes that are intimately connected and parallel in their corruption, and he has invited his audience both to read the corruption and to participate in the interconnectedness. Malcolm cannot advocate a simple identification with either scene, for neither represents an antidote to the oppression of the other. At the same time, a simple rejection of either scene would invite his audience to ignore the subtle interrelationships that Malcolm has described. The perspective resulting from such a rejection would be either too narrow or too broad, too completely circumscribed by the domestic scene within which his audience must live or too completely divorced from it. The most productive site of potential emancipation, then, would be at the border between these two scenes, where Malcolm and his audience might avoid the limitations and exploit the benefits of both.

### *Proposition*

As he begins his conclusion, Malcolm illustrates the emancipatory potential of the border and suggests that it can be realized within the United Nations. Throughout the last year of his life, Malcolm advocated using the United Nations as a forum to charge the United States with human rights violations, and much of his time abroad during the last half of 1964 was spent attempting to gain African support for African-American liberation.<sup>18</sup> In the *Rochester Address*, the U.N. is presented as an arena within which consubstantiality between African-Americans and other dark-skinned people might be brought to bear on the domestic race issue, but it is the border position itself that is primary.

Malcolm establishes historical precedent for the impact of the international scene on the domestic by reminding his audience of the dismal prospects for African-American employment before World War II: "all they'd let us do is shine shoes, wait on table, and preach" (p. 166). It wasn't until the war created a manpower shortage at home that "they let us in the factory" (p. 167). Post-war African-American progress, to the extent that there was any at all, was not due to any "change of heart on Uncle Sam's part" (p. 167) or a "sudden awakening of their moral consciousness," Malcolm tells his audience, but was instead a result of extrinsic war-time forces. "It was world pressure. It was a threat from outside" (p. 167). Thus, Malcolm continues, "Any kind of movement for freedom of Black people based solely within the confines of America is absolutely doomed to fail" (p. 168). To remain entrapped by the confines of the domestic scene is to remain enslaved-emancipation follows only from a broadening of circumference.

Once again, the dominant culture's distortion of the language that defines the African-American experience is a dangerous tool of oppression that his audience must learn to read. Referring to the 1954 *Brown* decision, Malcolm urges his audience: "Brother, look at it!" The "men on the Supreme Court are masters of legal-not only of law, but legal phraseology" (p. 168). Being such masters of language, Malcolm reasons, they should have been able to hand down an airtight desegregation decision. Instead, they intentionally produced a document so obtuse and full of loop-holes that ten years have passed and segregation remains. "They knew what they were doing," Malcolm



assures his audience. "They pretend to give you something while knowing all the time you can't utilize it" (pp. 168-169). And, for Malcolm, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is merely more of the same. In his opening remarks, Malcolm X told his audience that they needed to "study" the American race problem "in its international context," so they could "see it in a different light, but ... with more clarity" (p. 144). Here at the end of his speech, after he has led his audience back and forth across the border of the domestic and international contexts, he tells them that they now can "see all of this subterfuge, this trickery, this maneuvering," and that, especially, "the young generation of Blacks that's coming up now can see that as long as we wait for the Congress and the Senate and the Supreme Court and the president to solve our problems, you'll have us going in circles for another thousand years" (p. 169).

It is in this new, broader perspective that Malcolm X situates the United Nations as a place where the global and domestic scenes might interact. Expanding the scope of the civil rights struggle through a redefinition of it as a struggle for human rights, according to Malcolm X, can allow the Africans to identify with the African-Americans and the African-Americans to identify with the Africans. Malcolm recalls seeing "African diplomats at the UN crying out against the injustices that were being done to Black people in Mozambique, in Angola, the Congo, in South Africa," and wondering "how they could talk all that talk ... and [then] see it happen right down the block and get up on the podium in the UN and not say anything about it" (p. 169). He now understands that African diplomats cannot interfere with the American civil rights struggle because "If any of them open up their mouths to say anything about it, it's considered a violation of the laws and rules of protocol" (p. 170). If the Movement were redefined as one for human rights, then the Africans would not be barred from supporting it. Similarly, on the domestic side, Malcolm believes that "anyone who classifies his grievances under the label of human rights violations, those grievances can then be brought into the United Nations and be discussed by people all over the world" (p. 170).

This vision of the emancipatory potential of the U.N. is compelling because Malcolm has situated it at the border between the domestic and international scenes, a point that glances between intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives on the American civil rights struggle. But the statement that closes the speech suggests that this U.N. plan should not be understood as the single, teleological fulfillment of Malcolm's rhetorical development:

And therefore we want to get into a body or conference with people who are in such positions that they can help us get some kind of adjustment for this situation before it gets so explosive that no one can handle it. (p. 170)

The qualified nouns, ambiguity, and general equivocation disqualify this as a ringing endorsement of a plan of action. Malcolm's conception of the U.N., then, helps to define the interstitial space he has marked out. But within this space, consubstantial with both the domestic and international scene, various organizations and programs and forums might arise temporarily.

### Colonizing the Borderlands

After Malcolm left the Nation of Islam, he needed to craft a viable identity for both himself and for his audience. Because an empowering and productive emancipatory

project could not rely entirely upon either a wholesale rejection of, or assimilation with, either the domestic or international scene, Malcolm crafted a constitutive rhetoric that invites his audience to inhabit a symbolic space between the two. In the *Rochester Address*, Malcolm does this by illustrating the complex interrelationships in the domestic and international scenes. Just as the white press manipulates images of African-Americans in Harlem, so it manipulates images of Africans in the Congo; just as tokenism is practiced abroad by the colonial powers, so it is practiced at home by the United States. These parallels invite the audience toward viewing the American racial struggle in a broader perspective, one within which the corruption and manipulation are exposed. Malcolm repeatedly widens and then shrinks the circumference within which events are understood, crossing between the two scenes and inviting his audience to follow him in these symbolic migrations.<sup>19</sup> Finally, he settles at the border. There, he and his audience might take advantage of their consubstantiality with the non-white people of the world without forfeiting their intimate connection to the domestic scene; they are liberated from the confines of the domestic scene without relinquishing their rightful claim to participate within it. The United Nations is presented as one institution that straddles this border, and that therefore may be exploited as a venue within which the emancipatory potential of Malcolm's perspective might be realized. But, it is the insight that the border makes possible that is of primary importance, and the potential power of the U.N. makes sense only when seen within that perspective.

The disposition of the *Rochester Address* emphasizes the self-creative potential of this border space as a site wherein Malcolm and his African-American audience may be able to assemble new and more authentic self-concepts. Twice in the speech, Malcolm repeats a short narrative about his split from the Nation of Islam and his formation of two new organizations, the Muslim Mosque, Incorporated, and the Organization for Afro-American Unity. In these twin autobiographical interludes Malcolm talks about his frustrations within the Nation of Islam and his subsequent attempts to make his own way. They also mark his scenic shifts. The first interlude occurs just before Malcolm expands the argument to discuss the bombing in the Congo (pp. 147-149); the second comes immediately after Malcolm again reduces the scene to the domestic by discussing the American corruption of the term "integration" (pp. 163-165). Coming at these turning points in the rhetorical movement of the speech, these autobiographical statements position Malcolm X and his self-fashioning rhetoric as the agents by which this expansion and reduction take place. Put another way, Malcolm's speech performance places himself and his personal development at the common edge of the domestic and international perspectives; by inviting identification with himself, he invites his audience also to occupy this interstitial rhetorical space and thus claim the borderlands as a potential site of symbolic emancipation.

This emancipatory potential is a function of the liminality that characterizes the borderlands.<sup>20</sup> As Victor Turner puts it, individuals or groups occupying a liminal position are "betwixt and between all fixed points of classification," (1974, p. 232) and therefore might "acquire a special kind of freedom" because their position "liberates them from structural obligations" (1982, pp. 26-27). Malcolm has invited his audience beyond the confines of the dominant culture's terministic screen, where they are free to "think hard, about cultural experiences they had hitherto taken for granted" (Turner, 1982, p. 42). It is a place where those constituted through Malcolm's discourse might step

back and observe the dominant culture, to "really see it as it actually is." Molefi Asante has suggested that "the rhetoric of black revolution is isolationistic," that it "seeks to carve out an area that the Black audience can call its own," a "moral or psychological territory" that is "free of white intervention" (Smith, 1969, p. 21; see also Asante, 1987, p. 11). Malcolm's rhetoric, both in this speech and in others, does carve out a decolonized space for both himself and his audience. But in passing back and forth between the contained and the container, transgressing the boundaries that the white dominant culture has erected in order to maintain oppression, Malcolm's rhetoric invites a non-isolationist connection to *both* scenes. Indeed, both of the autobiographical inter-ludes in the *Rochester Address* stress Malcolm's desire to engage the dominant culture and his frustration at being unable to while a member of the Nation of Islam. The borderland that Malcolm defines does not repeat the Nation's isolationism and confinement, and in this way differs from the ritual liminality described by Turner.<sup>21</sup> The constitutive rhetoric of Malcolm X positions himself and his hearers simultaneously as *a part of* and *apart from* the dominant culture (Burke, 1945, pp. 21, 78), and retains the potential for interaction with it. In fact, such interaction and influence is invited by the common ground that these borders share with the dominant culture, while the incipient separation defuses the threat of cooptation.

These borderlands are further marked by a telling chiasmus that is repeated at almost every transition throughout the first half of the speech, when Malcolm indicts the white American press for making it "look like the victim is the criminal, and the criminal is the victim" (pp. 151, 152, 153, 156). As the speech develops, Malcolm moves from the domestic to the international, and then from the international to the domestic, forming through the disposition of his speech chiasmus in large scale. Thus, the speech itself is an amplified echo of this central, recurring statement. The figure, however, performs a more potent rhetorical function.

Chiasmus, with its antimetabolic turning back upon itself, represents for Malcolm the pretzel logic of the dominant culture. And, it is the oppression that follows from the dominant culture's manipulation of signs that is, for Malcolm X, most damaging. In the *Rochester Address*, Malcolm eloquently denounces this manipulation:

When you teach a man to hate his lips, the lips that God gave him, the shape of the nose that God gave him, the texture of the hair that God gave him, the color of the skin that God gave him, you've committed the worst crime that a race of people can commit. (p. 157)

"This," Malcolm argues, "is how you imprisoned us" (p. 158). He calls it, simply, "the worst form of slavery that has ever been invented by a so-called civilized race and a civilized nation since the beginning of the world" (p. 158). This insidious and pervasive vocabulary denies access to any positive or authentic African-American self-concept; from Malcolm's perspective, at the very fulcrum of his central chiasmus, the dominant culture has twisted and obscured the truth. Malcolm X takes control of this figure, fashioning it himself but this time developing it through carefully crafted parallelism, straightening out the confusion and untangling the linguistic Gordian knot with which the dominant culture constrains African-American self-definition.

Asante has reminded us that "to be defined by whites is to remain a slave, and slavery is anything but a pleasant memory to the black race" (Smith, 1969, p. 9). More recently he has argued that "enslavement of the mind is the most pernicious kind of enslavement

because the person so enslaved will never be able to see clearly for himself" (Asante, 1988, p. 40) and, in wry understatement, that "to speak the same language as the oppressor does not lead to a positive result" (Asante, 1987, p. 115). The rhetorical subversion that characterizes Malcolm's discourse is an attempt to "attack the architectonics of authoritarian discourse" (Asante, 1987, p. 32) and thus destabilize it. Maulana Karenga calls this an "oppositional logic" characterized by "subversive reason" (1993, pp. 6-7). The collective identity Malcolm forges, however, is not *merely* oppositional. Malcolm does not expend all of his energy in negative attack; Malcolm is inventing as well as destroying.<sup>22</sup> Goldman notes that Malcolm X primarily was interested in "the decolonization of the black mind" (1982, p. 312), but Cornel West suggests a compensatory generative function when he argues that "the decolonization of the mind, body, and soul that strips white supremacist lies of their authority, legitimacy, and efficacy ... is sustained by urgent efforts to expand those spaces wherein Black humanity is affirmed" (1992, p. 49). The rhetoric of Malcolm X does not only *decolonize* the Black mind, but at the same time it *colonizes* a space wherein an authentic and emancipatory African- American identity might flourish and from which the dominant culture might be critiqued.<sup>23</sup>

On December 20, 1964, during one of the many speeches Malcolm X gave at Harlem's Audubon Ballroom, he describes the political contours of this rhetorical space. While making a comparison between the domestic and international scenes similar to that which governs the *Rochester Address*, Malcolm says that the newly-emerging African nations utilize a strategy which he calls "positive neutrality":

If you want to help us, help us; we're still not with you. If you have a contribution to make to our development, do it. But that doesn't mean we're with you or against you. We're neutral. We're for ourselves. (1965c, p. 132)<sup>24</sup>

Malcolm and his audience can tread both sides of the border, reaping benefits where available but without forming permanent-and confining-alignments. In November, 1964, Malcolm warned a Harlem audience: "Don't let the [white] man know what you're against or who you're against. It's tactical suicide." Malcolm puns: "A black man that's committed is out of his mind. Be uncommitted" (1970b, p. 90). Such a stance has emancipatory potential because it is a constantly moving target, migrating between the contained and the container, transgressing the border between the two and avoiding confinement in either. As bell hooks (1990, pp. 341-343) has noted, there is a way to claim marginalization as a "space of resistance," a space that because of its relationship to the dominant culture is a "central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse." There, one can avoid "estrangement, alienation, and, worse, assimilation and cooption" because terms of self-definition might flourish beyond the control of the dominant culture. "Understanding marginality as a position and place of resistance," hooks argues, "is crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonized people." The borderlands that I have described, and at which Malcolm has constituted his audience, are defined by this claiming of the margins.

Kenneth Burke (1945, p. 362) reminds us that constitutions are *scenic*; they are incipient acts, attitudes, that may constitute future agents and invite future acts. The *Rochester Address* constitutes Malcolm's audience by constantly shifting scenes, promising emancipation through the alchemical potential of transgression.<sup>25</sup> The "White Paper" analyzed

by Charland positions the *"peuple Québécois"* so that their future actions are, to some extent, determined. Once they are made a "people," then the citizens of Quebec are *required* to pursue sovereignty. They must seek land, become grounded. "While classical narratives have an ending," Charland explains, "constitutive rhetorics leave the task of narrative closure to their constituted subjects" (1987, p. 143). Malcolm's rhetoric does leave the task of self-definition to those who would be constituted through his discourse, but it denies narrative closure because it denies the *telos* of ideological commitment. To complete the story by demanding a separate land, as Malcolm often did while a minister for the Nation of Islam, would be to freeze his "people" as a stationary target, permanently aligned either with the container or the thing contained. This is not, then, a temporary state of ambiguous flux between the fixed narrative poles of beginning and end; Malcolm's liminality is perpetual.<sup>26</sup> It is *nomadic*, a space within which Malcolm's constituents and the dominant culture are *"in a perpetual field of interaction"* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 17). The rhetoric of Malcolm X constantly vibrates against the dominant culture, sounding a tattoo of critique resistant to the silence of cooption.

## Conclusion

Malcolm's voice reverberates through contemporary American culture like that of no other orator of the 1960s, yet he left no organization that continues his emancipatory project. Though various individuals and movements have gathered themselves under Malcolm's mantle in the decades since his death, none continues to work toward the borderlands in the way that I have suggested that Malcolm's rhetoric does. This is neither disjunction nor paradox, but a coherent consequence of Malcolm's thorough rejection of codified ideology.

One reason that Malcolm's rhetoric continues to resonate culturally, for example, is that many African-Americans may find themselves in a position similar *to* that which he occupied and see his rhetoric as offering a viable model for confronting that situation. Michael Dyson suggests that interest in Malcolm is "rooted in a characteristic quest in black America: the search for a secure and empowering racial identity," and, further, that "that quest is perennially frustrated by the demands of American culture to cleanse ethnic and racial particularity at the altar of a superior American identity" (1995, pp. 90-91). In other words, Dyson suggests that African-Americans are faced with the need to craft a viable identity *in between* an insular racial separatism and the final sacrifice of assimilation, procuring the advantages of both possibilities without being required to make a debilitating choice between the two. Similarly, Comel West argues that Malcolm X critiques the dilemma of "double-consciousness," which forces African-Americans to live "betwixt and between" the black and white worlds-traversing the borders between them yet never settled in either" while always "viewing themselves through the lenses of the dominant white society" (1994, pp. 138-139).<sup>27</sup> West suggests that "Malcolm X does not put forward a direct answer" to the question of how to break free from this "tragic syndrome," but close attention to Malcolm's public address shows that he did, indeed, present an emancipatory mechanism. Expanding and contracting the scenic circumference within which African-Americans are invited to define themselves breaks the confining boundaries and opens the possibility of a new self-definition; colonizing the borderlands between these circumferences makes this redefinition perpetually available to those who refuse to become permanently aligned with pre-determined options.

Malcolm's immediate audience in Rochester, as was often the case near the end of his life, was racially mixed. In the thirty years since his death, his appeal has crossed racial boundaries. His white listeners, then and now, also are invited to see their domestic culture from a new perspective, to feel the fragmentation of the logic of container and contained, and to witness the emancipatory potential of the border. Malcolm's discourse illustrates the fragility of power that is grounded in the maintenance of a single relationship between the intrinsic and the extrinsic, and shows that such relationships might be exposed and deconstructed by a shift in perspective. This is the threat that Malcolm's rhetoric implies—not of violence, but of a radically subversive perspective that decenters the dominant culture of the West. Malcolm's white listeners, then and now, are surely meant to feel this threat. However, for white Americans who find nationalist perspectives suddenly too narrow to account for the rapid globalization that has characterized the recent past, Malcolm demonstrates a balance of domestic and global interests that revitalizes the domestic scene. By offering a position from which his audience—Black or white—might critique any set of rigid categories, any naturalized ideology, Malcolm's is a discourse of perpetual empowerment.

But this empowerment comes at a price. Grounded in a fundamental distrust of boundaries, a rejection of all possible straitjackets, ultimately Malcolm rejects even those lines of demarcation necessary to group cohesion—remember Malcolm's warning to his followers that they "be uncommitted." Simply, his rhetoric cannot sustain a movement. Malcolm's own O.A.A.U. is an illustrative case—intended to embody the radical ambiguity that characterized the rhetoric of his last year, it never was a particularly robust organization. As Louis Lomax puts it, "Malcolm issued his call but the black people did not answer; Malcolm founded his organization but there were few joiners" (1968, p. 136).<sup>28</sup> These organizations existed only as extensions of Malcolm's persona, and lacked the definitional clarity that would have allowed them to survive his death. The same instability and ambiguity that supply the borderlands with their emancipatory potential make it almost impossible for a viable political organization to be supported there.

Because the emancipatory potential of Malcolm's rhetoric achieves form only within his public discourse, careful analysis of that discourse is imperative if its potential is to be realized. Anthony Appiah has suggested that the need to establish a public identity in the spaces between pre-existing ideologies may be the classic dilemma of marginalized groups (1985, p. 25), and if so then the importance of critique can be generalized. As public dialogue becomes increasingly fragmented and multivocal, as "the very character of a collective identity, and the nature of its boundary, of who is a member of the collectivity" become increasingly problematic (Charland, 1987, p. 135), individuals and groups who choose inflexible commitment risk being confined, marginalized, coopted, and silenced. These are fates that Malcolm, both in death and life, avoided; his speeches invite others to avoid them, too. He showed a way to remain viable in a volatile world—a way that requires relying on rhetoric. Some may answer his invitation, and others may hew out similar positions because, as for Malcolm, it is their only alternative. In any case, the interstitial positions that allow continued participation in the public sphere will be negotiated through rhetoric, because, as Malcolm understood, in rhetoric lies the emancipatory potential of shifting one's perspective. Close attention to public address becomes ever more important, then, for it is through such criticism that rhetoric is made available as equipment for living.

## Notes

*Robert E. Terrill is Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and Culture at Indiana University. This essay derives from his dissertation, Symbolic Emancipation in the Rhetoric of Malcolm X, completed at Northwestern University under the direction of Michael C. Leff. A very early draft was presented under different title at the 1993 SCA Annual Convention in Miami Beach, Florida. The author thanks Leff, G. Thomas Goodnight, Robert L. Ivie, Andrew King, Philip Wander, and two anonymous QJS reviewers for comments and suggestions.*

<sup>1</sup> Respectively: Lincoln (1965, p. 433); Boulware (1967, p. 12); Condit & Lucaites (1993, p. 291); K. K. Campbell (1971, p. 150); and reported in Illo (1966, p. 12).

<sup>2</sup> See Alex Haley's "Epilogue" (Malcolm X & Haley, 1965, pp. 383-424). Michael Dyson notes that "The autobiography is as much a testament to Haley's ingenuity in shaping the manuscript as it is a record of Malcolm's own attempt to tell his story" (1995, p. 134).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Kenyatta, later a close associate of Malcolm X, once said about Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam that "They clean people up, don't drink, don't smoke, but they don't *do* anything. Don't even vote" (in Goldman, 1979, p. 93). In the *Autobiography*, Malcolm notes that "it could be heard increasingly in the Negro communities: 'Those Muslims *talk* tough, but they never *do* anything, unless somebody bothers Muslims'" (Malcolm X & Haley, 1965, p. 289). Goldman notes that Malcolm X "was always somewhere else, it was said, with a lavalier mike or a little knot of reporters, hooting, heckling, scolding, accusing, but never participating" (Goldman, 1979, p. 8). Joe Wood reports Thurgood Marshall's assessment of Malcolm X: "All he did was talk" (1992, p. 15).

<sup>4</sup> This critique and Rustin's rebuttal are a recurring pattern in writings about Malcolm X. Joe Wood, for example, notes that "Malcolm, in the end, gave us no coherent ideology, but he did leave us with a site for Black political discourse" (1992, p. 15). Similarly, A. Peter Bailey says that "When someone asks, 'what did he leave, there are no buildings, no this, no that,' I say, 'Minds. He left minds'" (in Jones, 1985, p. 18).

<sup>5</sup> As was most often the case, Malcolm did not give this speech a title; the editors of both anthologies in which it appears call it: "Not Just an American Problem, But a World Problem" (Malcolm X, 1989b; 1992a). The two versions differ only slightly, and I rely on the version published in 1992, edited by Steve Clark. Photographs of Malcolm delivering the speech show a racially-mixed audience in the first few rows (see Malcolm X, 1989b, the plates facing p. 97). This is the last speech Malcolm delivered that survives in print, but the last one he delivered was at Barnard College, in New York, on February 18, 1965. No recording of that speech was made, and no text is available, but excerpts reported in the press have been collected (Clark, 1992, pp. 176-178).

<sup>6</sup> Robert L Scott notes that "a strong sense of *scene* permeates militant Black Power rhetoric" and that "we would be well advised to try to see the scene as the Black Power militants tend to" (1968, p. 101). Scott is referring to rhetors and groups who were influenced by Malcolm X, but scene is also central to Malcolm's rhetoric. "Circumference," is Kenneth Burke's term for the breadth or scope of a scene (1945, p. 77).

<sup>7</sup> J. Robert Cox (1974) has described a "continuum" in protest rhetoric. At one end might lie direct physical confrontation against the dominant culture for the purpose of achieving specified goals; the other end of the continuum might be represented by symbolic acts that are not directed toward effecting specific changes in the dominant culture and may entail no direct engagement with it (see also Lake, 1983). Karlyn Kohrs Campbell assigns an instrumental role to African-American protest rhetoric, arguing that it is "a way of symbolically reordering Black experience so that concerted action becomes possible" (1971, p. 158) and that it "prepares (the speaker) and his Black audience to struggle with

Whites on concrete, pragmatic levels as equals" (p. 159). This limitation on the range of protest rhetoric is in alignment with Eric Hoffer's prescribed role for the "man of words" in a mass movement: protest rhetoric is used to discredit the prevailing order so that others, or the rhetors in new roles, can later do the real business of effecting change (1951, pp. 129- 133). Such a proscribed role for the rhetoric of protest seems at odds, however, with Campbell's insistence in the same article that the rhetoric of radical Black nationalism should be seen as symbolic action.

<sup>8</sup> I do not mean to suggest that rhetoric such as Malcolm's does not have its limitations; I discuss some of these in my conclusion.

<sup>9</sup> Thus, Malcolm's rhetoric can be described as "epistemic," as Robert L. Scott suggests in his landmark essay: "rhetoric may be viewed not as a matter of giving effectiveness to truth but of creating truth," a truth that the rhetor has "created moment by moment in the circumstances in which he finds himself and with which he must cope" (1967, pp. 13, 17).

<sup>10</sup> The best source of biographical information, of course, is the *Autobiography* (Malcolm X & Haley, 1965); regarding the last year of Malcolm X, see Goldman (1979) and Breitman (1967). Excellent short biographies are provided by Benson (1974), Dyson (1995, pp. 3-17), and Goldman (1982).

<sup>11</sup> Malcolm X returned from Africa, as Goldman puts it, "with his wispy beard and an astrakhan hat, both of which immediately became fashions in Harlem, and a slightly moderated view of white people, which did not" (1979, p. 183). Actually, his view of white people was only *very* slightly modified, if at all. Malcolm X had for many years enjoyed talking with white college students, and he had been introduced to the race-blindness of orthodox Islam through his studies with Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi several months prior to his trip to Mecca. And, when he visited Mecca in 1959, Malcolm X undoubtedly had seen the same multi-racial *haji* that he witnessed in 1964. Malcolm's alleged Mecca revelations-that not all whites are the devil, and that in Islam race is irrelevant-are things that he could not have avoided knowing before he went. Indeed, his post-Mecca public discourse suggests that whatever softening of his racial attitudes had occurred was largely negated-or at least made irrelevant-by the unrelenting racist climate of America. Malcolm put it this way: "I kept being asked the question by some reporters, 'We heard you changed.' ... I smiled and all. But I would say to myself: How in the world can a white man expect a black man to change before *he* has changed? ... How do you expect us to change when the causes that made us as we are have not been removed?" (Malcolm X, 1965f, p. 22). Elsewhere, Malcolm noted that "travel broadens one's scope. It doesn't mean you change-you broaden. No religion will ever make me forget the condition of our people in this country" (Malcolm X, 1989a, p. 70). Much more important to Malcolm's rhetorical trajectory than any modification of his collective judgment of white people is his more nuanced understanding of the complexities of the international scene and the potential for corruption that it contains.

<sup>12</sup> Subsequent references to the *Rochester Address* will be by page number only.

<sup>13</sup> "Some writer said one of my weaknesses is that I can't resist a platform. Well, that's probably true" (Malcolm X, 1989a, p. 65).

<sup>14</sup> Molefi Asante has suggested that this double rhetorical work is common among Black revolutionaries: "In the identity crisis, each revolutionist has to hew out his own definition from the forest of cultural possibilities in an effort to elicit response from his audience when he appeals to them on the basis of this new definition" (Smith, 1969, p. 7; see also Gregg, 1971).

<sup>15</sup> Malcolm discussed the situation in the Congo often throughout the last months of his life, perhaps because it provided a particularly vivid example of the sort of international racist conspiracy that he saw developing. Usually, the discussion of the Congo was implicated in a discussion of the way the white press manipulates images of Africa, just as it is in the *Rochester Address* (see Malcolm X: 1965b, pp. 93-96; 1969, p. 309; and 1991b, p. 79).

<sup>16</sup> Burke notes that "the choice of circumference for the scene in terms of which a given act is to be located will have a corresponding effect upon the interpretation of the act itself" (1945, p. 77). He also reminds us that "In times of adversity one can readily note the workings of the 'circumferential' logic, in



that men choose to define their acts in terms of much wider orbits than the orbit of the adversity itself (1945, p. 84).

<sup>17</sup> The Bandung Conference was held April 18-24, 1955, and was attended by representatives of twenty-nine either newly independent or soon to be independent Asian and African nations. It is generally acknowledged as the cradle of the "non-aligned" movement, which consisted of nations resistant (to varying and often contested degrees) to forced Cold War alignment with either the U.S. or the U.S.S.R. (Ling, 1985; Singham & Hune, 1986, pp. 65-71). The stance that Malcolm X eventually endorses for African-Americans, both in the *Rochester Address* and in other speeches and statements, bears much resemblance to non-alignment, even to the potential importance of the United Nations (Gopal, 1983, pp. 36-39).

<sup>18</sup> This U.N. project occupied much of Malcolm's time during his last year, and the theme recurs throughout his rhetoric; it figures prominently, for example, in *The Ballot or the Bullet*. Goldman suggests that Malcolm X "never quite abandoned the dream of a formal human rights case against the United States. But the people he had working on the petition never finished it — only a rough outline ever got on paper — and Malcolm had begun to despair of bringing it before the UN anyway. Privately, among the brothers, he admitted his discouragement—conceded that the support wasn't there and wasn't likely to be as long as the Africans depended on American aid and American investments" (1979, p. 241). Condit and Lucaites correctly point out that it is impossible to know to what extent Malcolm realized that "U.S. dollars had paid for the United Nations and had 'bought' much of Africa through various aid programs" (1993, p. 306). However, in Malcolm's *Appeal to African Heads of State*, circulated in July, 1964, as a memo among the delegates at the second meeting of the Organization for African Unity in Cairo, he repeatedly urges the delegates not to become "enslaved by deceitful, 'friendly' American dollarism" (Malcolm X, 1965a, p. 77). He clearly understood the difficulty, if perhaps not the danger, faced by newly-independent African nations if they protested too loudly against the United States.

<sup>19</sup> The rhythmic shifts of scene that characterize the *Rochester Address* are also evident in *The Ballot or the Bullet* (Malcolm X, 1965d) and *On Afro-American History* (Malcolm X, 1990). Thomas W. Benson (1974) noticed a similar rhythm of "confinement and enlargement" in the *Autobiography*.

<sup>20</sup> For a description of the relationship between symbolic borderlands and liminality, see Mae Henderson (1995, p.5).

<sup>21</sup> Turner does, however, allow that liminal individuals and groups "can generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behavior of those in mainstream social and political roles in the direction of radical change" (1982, p. 33).

<sup>22</sup> This is one difference between the rhetoric of Malcolm's last year and that sanctioned by the Nation of Islam. As Corne! West points out: "The basic aim of black Muslim theology—with its distinct black supremacist account of the origins of white people—was to counter white supremacy. Yet this preoccupation with white supremacy still allowed white people to serve as the principal point of reference. In short, Elijah Muhammad's project remained captive to the supremacy game" (West, 1994, p. 142). This was the very game from which Malcolm's rhetoric, in contrast, was designed to break free: "Malcolm X's notion of psychic conversion can be understood and used such that it does not necessarily entail black supremacy; it simply rejects black captivity to white supremacist ideology and practice" (West, 1994, p. 143).

<sup>23</sup> Liminal spaces are necessarily generative, as places of experimentation and investigation wherein new individual and cultural identities are forged (Turner, 1982, p. 33). Gloria Anzaldúa believes that "Living in a state of psychic unrest, in a Borderland, is what makes poets write and artists create" (1987, p. 73).

<sup>24</sup> Similar statements are evident in the discourse of Malcolm's final months. For example, on February 15, Malcolm told his Harlem audience: "Now, this doesn't mean we're anti-outside of Harlem. This doesn't mean we're anti-Bronx or anti-White Plains or antiwhite or anti-German or anything like that. But it means we're pro-Harlem" (Malcolm X, 1992b, p. 131).

<sup>25</sup> Malcolm X's shifts in scene allow him to exploit what Burke calls a "paradox of substance"; by establishing a site wherein the Africans and the African-Americans can share common ground, Malcolm invites the differentiation between them to soften. At such a site of consubstantiality, "the intrinsic and extrinsic can change places" (Burke, 1945, p. 24), forming a third site that is neither wholly intrinsic nor extrinsic.

<sup>26</sup> This emphasizes another important difference between the liminality described by Turner and that which I am attributing to the rhetoric of Malcolm X. For Turner, liminality "represents the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions" (Turner, 1974, p. 237). Those who "have no cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity," such as those constituted through Malcolm's discourse, Turner refers to as " marginals." (1974, p. 233). Both bell hooks and Malcolm X seem to suggest that there is an emancipatory and viable potential in a *permanent marginalization* that holds no promise/threat of resolution .

<sup>27</sup> On "double-consciousness," see Du Bois (1989/1903, p. 5), Adell (1994), Dickson (1992), and Reed (1992) . Gerald Early describes a similar dilemma: "Our profound past of being African, which we must never forget, must be balanced by the complex fate of being American, which we can never deny or, worse, evade" (1992, p. 74).

<sup>28</sup> The "Statement of Basic Aims" of the O.A.A.U. is reprinted as "Appendix A" in Breitman (1967, pp. 105-111). At the "Founding Rally of the OAAU" (Malcolm X, 1970a), Malcolm read the text, commenting on and revising it extemporaneously. Goldman reports that the "the bank account (was) so depleted, at \$36.72 in November 1964, that the OAAU and MMI fell to squabbling over phone bills and were obliged to send out their press releases via third-class mail in order to save pennies" (1979, p. 432). By 1973, membership in the OAAU had dwindled to a handful and "its most visible activities in Harlem were the annual commemorations of Malcolm's birth and death" (Goldman, 1979, p. 393).

## Works Cited

Adell, S. (1994). *Double-consciousness/doublebind: Theoretical issues in twentieth-century Black literature*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and philosophy*. (B. Brewster, Trans.). New York: Monthly Review Press.

Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The new Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute.

Appiah, A. (1985) . The uncompleted argument: Du Bois and the illusion of race. *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 21-37.

Asante, M. K. (1987). *The Afrocentric idea*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Asante, M. K. (1988). *Afrocentricity* (rev . ed .). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.

Benson, T. W. (1974). Rhetoric and autobiography: The case of Malcolm X. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 60, 1-13.

Boulware, M.H. (1967). Minister Malcolm: Orator profundo. *Negro History Bulletin*, 30, 12-14.

Breitman, G. (1967). *The last year of Malcolm X: The evolution of a revolutionary*. New York: Pathfinder Press.

Burke, K (1945). *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Campbell, K. K. (1971). The rhetoric of radical black nationalism: A case study in self-conscious criticism. *Central States Speech Journal* 22, 151- 160.

Charland, M. (1987) . Constitutive rhetoric: The case of the *Peuple Québécois*. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73,133-150.

Clark, S. (Ed .) (1992). *February 1965: Th£ final speeches*. New York: Pathfinder Press.

Condit, C. M. & Lucaites, J. L. (1993). Malcolm X and the limits of the rhetoric of revolutionary dissent. *Journal of Black Studies*, 23, 291-313.

Cox, J. R. (1974). Perspectives on rhetorical criticism of movements: Antiwar dissent, 1964-1970.

- Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 38, 254-268.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1986). *Nomadology: The war machine* (B. Massumi, Trans.). New York : Semiotext(e).
- Dickson, B. D., Jr. (1992). W.E.B. Du Bois and the idea of double consciousness. *American literature*, 64, 299-309.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1989). *The souls of Black folk*. New York : Penguin Books. (Originally published 1903).
- Dyson, M. E. (1995). *Making Malcolm: The myth & meaning of Malcolm X* New York : Oxford University Press.
- Early, G. (1992, December). Their Malcolm, my problem: On the abuses of Afrocentrism and Black anger. *Harper's Magazine*, pp. 62-74.
- Epps, A. (Ed.). (1991). *Malcolm X: Speeches at Harvard*. New York: Paragon House.
- Golden, J.L. & Rieke, R.D. (1971). *The rhetoric of black Americans*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.
- Goldman, P. (1979). *The death and life of Malcolm X* (2nd ed.). Urbana : University of Illinois Press.
- Goldman, P. (1982). Malcolm X: Witness for the prosecution. In J.H. Franklin & A. Meier (Eds.), *Black leaders of the twentieth century* (pp. 305-330). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Gopal, K (1983). *Non-Alignment and power politics: A documentary survey*. New Delhi: V.I. Publications.
- Gregg, R B. (1971). The ego-function of the rhetoric of protest. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 4, 71-91.
- Handler, M. S. (1964, October 4). Malcolm rejects racist doctrine : Also denounces Elijah as a religious 'faker.' *New York Times*, p. 59, c. 1.
- Henderson, M. G. (1995). Introduction: Borders, boundaries, and frame(work)s. In M.G. Henderson (Ed.), *Borders, boundaries, and frames: Cultural criticism and cultural studies* (pp. 1-30). New York: Routledge.
- Hoffer, E. (1951). *The true believer: Thoughts on the nature of mass movements*. New York: Harper & Row.
- hooks, b. (1990). Marginality as a site of resistance. In R. Ferguson, M. Gever, T.T. Minh-ha, & C. West (Eds.), *Out there: Marginalization and contemporary culture* (pp. 341-343). New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art.
- Illo, J . (1966). The rhetoric of Malcolm X. *Columbia University Forum*, 9, 5-12.
- Jones, L.C. (1985, February 26). Talking book: Oral history of a movement *Village Voice*, pp. 18- 22.
- Karenga, M. (1993). The oppositional logic of Malcolm X: Differentiation, engagement and resistance. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 17,6-16.
- Lake, R.A. (1983). Enacting red power: The consummatory function in Native American protest rhetoric. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 69, 127-142.
- Lang, L. (1985). *Bandung, thirty years later: Proceedings of the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Bandung Conference*. Budapest: Hungarian Peace Council.
- Lincoln, C. E. (1965, April 7). The meaning of Malcolm X. *Christian Century*, pp. 431-433.
- Lomax, L. E. (1968). *To kill a black man*. Los Angeles: Holloway House Publishing Company.
- Malcolm X and Haley, A. (1965). *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Grove Press, Inc.
- Malcolm X. (1965a). Appeal to African heads of state. In G. Breitman (Ed.), *Malcolm X speaks* (pp. 72-77). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally submitted July 17, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1965b). At the Audubon. In G. Breitman (Ed.), *Malcolm X Speaks* (pp. 88- 104). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered December 13, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1965c). At the Audubon. In G. Breitman (Ed.), *Malcolm X Speaks* (pp. 115- 136). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered December 20, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1965d). The ballot or the bullet. In G. Breitman (Ed.), *Malcolm X speaks* (pp. 23-44). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally presented April 3, 1964).

- Malcolm X. (1965e). A declaration of independence. In G. Breitman (Ed.), *Malcolm X speaks* (pp. 18-22). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally presented March 8, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1965Q). Speech at Militant Labor Forum ,Jan. 7, 1965, on "Prospects for Freedom in 1965." In *Two Speeches By Malcolm X* (pamphlet) (pp. 18- 27). New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Malcolm X. (1969). Communication and reality. In J. H. Clarke (Ed.), *Malcolm X: The man and his times* (pp. 307-320). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. (Originally delivered December 12, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1970a). The founding rally of the OAAU. In G. Breitman (Ed.), *By any means necessary: Speeches, interview, and a letter by Malcolm X* (pp. 33-67). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered June 28, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1970b). The homecoming rally of the OAAU. In G. Breitman (Ed.), *By any means necessary: Speeches, interviews, and a letter by Malcolm X* (pp. 133-156). New York : Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered November 29, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1989a). The Harlem 'hate-gang' scare. In G. Breitman (Ed), *Malcolm X speaks* (pp. 64- 71). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered May 29, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1989b). Not just an American problem, but a world problem. In B. Perry (Ed.), *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches* (pp. 151-181). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered February 16, 1965).
- Malcolm X. (1990). *Malcolm X on Afro-American history* (3rd ed .). S. Clark (Ed.). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered January 24, 1965).
- Malcolm X. (1991a). I'm not an American, I'm a victim of Americanism. In S. Clark (Ed.), *Malcolm X talks to young people: Speeches in the U.S., Britain, and Africa* (pp. 10- 18). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered May 13, 1964).
- Malcolm X. (1991b). See for yourself, listen for yourself, think for yourself: A discussion with young civil rights fighters from Mississippi. In S. Clark (Ed.), *Malcolm X talks to young people : Speeches in the U.S., Britain, and Africa* (pp . 48- 82). New York : Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered January I, 1965).
- Malcolm X. (1992a). Not just an American problem, but a world problem. In S. Clark (Ed.), *February 1965: The final speeches* (pp. 143- 170). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered February 16, 1965).
- Malcolm X. (1992b). There's a worldwide revolution going on. In S. Clark (Ed.), *February 1965: The final speeches* (pp. 106-142). New York: Pathfinder Press. (Originally delivered February 15, 1965).
- Reed, A. L., Jr. (1992). Du Bois's "Double Consciousness": Race and gender in Progressive Era American thought. *Studies in American political development*, 6, 93-139.
- Scott, R. L. (1967). On viewing rhetoric as epistemic. *Central States Speech Journal*, 18, 9-17.
- Scott, R. L. (1968). Justifying violence — The rhetoric of militant black power. *Central States Speech Journal* 19, 96-104. Singham, A.W. and Hune, S. (1986). *Non-alignment in an age of alignments*. Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill.
- Smith, A.L. (1969). *Rhetoric of Black Revolution*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Turner, V. (1974). *Dramas, fields, and metaphors: Symbolic action in human society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V. (1982). *From ritual lo theatre: The human seriousness of play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications.
- West, C. (1992). Malcolm X and Black rage. In J. Wood (Ed.), *Malcolm X: In our own image* (pp. 48-58). New York: Anchor Books.
- West, C. (1994). *Race matters*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Wood, J. (1992). Malcolm X and the new Blackness. In J. Wood (Ed.), *Malcolm X: In our own image*. New York: SL Martin's Press.