The Role of Malcolm X's Speeches in Solidifying his Autobiography

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Abstract

This paper demonstrates how a literary text can be approached through a linguistic framework to enhance one’s reading and interpretation of it. It aims at examining the power of The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley by analyzing the narrator’s description of his early speeches. I draw upon the appraisal framework, and I focus on Malcolm’s utilization of affect, judgment, and appreciation in a number of his speeches that he reported in the book. In those speeches, Malcolm adopts resources from the appraisal framework to align his audience with his position. His performance of affective stance to construct the entire problem of race in America contributed to the success of his book for more than 50 years since its publication.

Keywords

Appraisal; Black Power; Civil Rights; Malcolm X; Racism

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Malcolm was instrumental in building Cornell into one of the leading philosophy departments in America. He was President of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association from 1972-73. Malcolm authored ten books and a plethora of influential articles and reviews. Norman Malcolm was born in the tiny town of Selden in northwest Kansas (pop. 250) on June 11, 1911. In his early schooling, his exceptional intellect was soon recognized, and he was sent to Omaha, Nebraska, for high school. During his years at Cornell, he enjoyed sailing on Lake Cayuga and took his role as captain of the ship very seriously. A passenger might be forgiven for conjuring images of Captain Bligh. Malcolm was of a robust constitution (Serafini, 1993, 310-11). In his article “Inventing and Interpreting Malcolm X”, Michael Eric Dyson calls for a more objective assessment of Malcolm X’s persona than that which scholars have so far produced. In Dyson’s understanding, more balanced criticism of Malcolm X would provide a better perspective of both this leader’s strengths and weaknesses and thus complicate him as a multi-dimensional human being. Such an approach might also clarify the role of Alex Haley as a ghost writer of X’s autobiography – an issue not too many scholars have touched upon so far – and the extent to which the Malcolm X presented to us by The Autobiography is really Haley’s narrative creation.

5. One can divide the depictions of women in The Autobiography of Malcolm X into two areas. The Autobiography of Malcolm X is an autobiography by Malcolm X and Alex Haley that was first published in 1965. Summary. See a complete list of the characters in The Autobiography of Malcolm X and in-depth analyses of Malcolm as Malcolm Little, Malcolm as Detroit Red, Malcolm as Satan, Malcolm as Malcolm X, and Malcolm as El-Haj Malik El-Shabazz. Character List: Malcolm as Malcolm Little, Malcolm as Malcolm X, Malcolm as Detroit Red, Malcolm as Satan, Malcolm as Malcolm X.

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