

Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet" and Its Literary Influence on the Black Arts Movement

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Abstract—This paper explores Malcolm X's role as a rhetorician and his influence on the literature of Black Arts Movement. The paper's aim is to emphasize his exceptional oratory skills. Malcolm X's speeches, known for their persuasive nature, played a role in galvanizing African American communities and promoting the ideas of self-determination central to the literature of the Black Arts Movement. By focusing on one of his speeches, "The Ballot or the Bullet", this paper examines the rhetorical strategies that made Malcolm X an influential figure. It demonstrates how his oratory contributed to the emergence of the Black Arts Movement and how his ideas shaped its intellectual and cultural foundations. In sum, the paper argues that Malcolm X's rhetorical legacy is essential for understanding the development of the Black Arts Movement and its literature.

Index Terms—Malcolm X, literature, rhetoric, oratory, Black Arts Movement

I. INTRODUCTION

"I'm not here to argue or discuss anything that we differ about." This statement was given by Malcolm X at the beginning of one of his most important speeches, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1964, para. 3). These powerful words contain ideas that later became a recurring theme in the literature of the Black Arts Movement.

Born in 1925, Malcolm X, also known as el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, endured a life filled with hardship. At the age of 6, he lost his father to a violent car accident, and as a young man, he was discouraged at school when a teacher stated that his desire to become a lawyer was impossible because he was a "nigger" (Marable, 2011). These early adversities shaped his worldview, fueling his later commitment to racial justice. After a tumultuous youth involving crime and imprisonment, Malcolm X found purpose upon joining the Nation of Islam, where he quickly became renowned for his powerful oratory skills and incisive critiques of systemic racism. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, he emerged as one of America's most influential public figures, known particularly for his rhetoric advocating Black empowerment and self-determination, which positioned him as a leading voice in the Civil Rights Movement.

To understand Malcolm X as a rhetorician, it is important to first explain the meaning of this term. A rhetorician is best defined as someone who possesses the skill to speak in an effective manner and is able to persuade and convince others and change their perspectives. Malcolm X excelled in his public speaking skills, by which he established himself as an influential person in advocating against systematic injustice. Terrill (2004) states that "Oratory was Malcolm's medium. He has been eulogized as 'an eloquent orator and street-corner spell-binder' and '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" (p. 6). For example, during his brief cooperation with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X's rhetorical skill was a factor in attracting large numbers of followers for the religious group. In *A Revisionist's History*, Garrow (2011) acknowledges that Malcolm X's rhetorical skill was seen as highly valued in the Nation of Islam. He reports that "by 1955, membership had grown to some 6,000, in large part thanks to Malcolm's efforts. Over the next six years the ranks of the NOI reached upward of 50,000 as frustrated African Americans responded to Malcolm's angry but articulate condemnations of white racism and black passivity" (p. 92).

Malcolm X's rhetorical skill should be of interest to the Black Arts Movement and literary scholars, as his constant demands for Black people's self-determination and self-reliance influenced both the Black Arts and Black Power Movements. The Black Arts Movement, active primarily during the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, emphasized the creation of art that directly addressed Black experiences, identity, and cultural expression. It sought to empower African Americans through literature, poetry, theater, music, and visual arts, promoting a sense of pride, community, and political consciousness. As pointed out by the editors' introduction of "SOS Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader," Malcolm X and John Coltrane "... came to be seen as the twin pillars of the new outlook and attitude that gained full expression in the Black Arts Movement" (Bracey et al., 2014, p. 1). After the assassination of Malcolm X, Amiri Baraka, a prominent African American poet, playwright, and activist known for his influential role in Black cultural and political movements, moved to Harlem to establish the Black Arts Repertory, which set the stage for The Black Arts Movement (Britannica, 2024).

Among Malcolm X's most powerful weapons was his skill in crafting and delivering speeches. This earned him profound respect and popularity both inside and outside of the African American community despite the fact that, as reported by Juan Williams, some might perceive his rhetoric as promoting violence and hatred (Inskip, 2005).

Therefore, it is essential to understand and investigate his influence on the Black Arts Movement and its literature. To study him as rhetorician, one should examine his speeches and analyze them in terms of their persuasive power.

To demonstrate Malcolm X's skill as a rhetorician, this article focuses on the craft of Malcolm X's speech "The Ballot or the Bullet." The speech is broken down using a close reading method to identify and analyze both the rhetorical techniques and the ideological elements within the speech that create a sense of audience appeal as well as effective persuasion. This approach aims to provide evidence as to why scholars should not ignore Malcolm X and his influence in discussions of the literary works of the Black Arts Movement.

II. DISCUSSION

Malcolm X's well-known speech "The Ballot or the Bullet," which was delivered in April 1964 in Cleveland, Ohio, is central to the discussion in this article. This particular speech was chosen for analysis because it was ranked 7th among the top 100 American speeches of the 20th century in a list compiled by researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Texas A & M University (Wisc, 1999).

From the onset of the speech, Malcolm X attempts to earn the audience's approval and assures them that he is not smarter than them. Members of the audience are addressed equally as "brothers and sisters" or "friends and enemies," with Malcolm X further stating, "I just can't believe everyone in here is a friend, and I don't want to leave anybody out" (1964, para. 1). By using such language, Malcolm X assures the audience that he will not exclude them and that he appreciates their presence. This helps the audience to feel important, which, in turn, makes them more willing to listen to what he has to say. Malcolm X's use of "friends and enemies" also emphasizes the idea that his kindness is not a reflection of weakness but rather a strength that allows him to address his enemies as equals.

Malcolm X then asks a question, which he answers with the topic of the speech: "The question tonight, as I understand it, is 'The Negro Revolt, and Where Do We Go From Here?' or 'What Next?' In my little humble way of understanding it, it points toward either the ballot or the bullet." The phrasing here does not impose a definitive answer on the listener. Instead, it offers a suggestion, positioning Malcolm's own ideas as less important than those of the listener. This ensures that Malcolm, as the speaker, is not situated in a position of power over the listener or in a way that makes him seem more intelligent or important than them.

It is important to note that "The Ballot or the Bullet" was delivered after Malcolm X split from the Nation of Islam. As such, Malcolm X assures the audience that he is still a Muslim and explains that one's religion is a personal choice, yet this does not mean he is any different than other leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, such as Adam Clayton Powell and Reverend G. M. Davis (1964, para. 2). He then provides the audience with a reason to listen to him: "I myself am a minister, not a Christian minister, but a Muslim minister; and I believe in action on all fronts by whatever means necessary" (Malcolm X, 1964, para. 2). Any religion advocates for its followers to have morals and principles. Therefore, by presenting himself as a minister and person of faith in this portion of the speech, Malcolm X presents himself as a person of moral authority.

A Black listener might question whether people from different religions fully understand the lived experiences of oppressed Black individuals, even if they advocate on their behalf. However, this difference does not slip Malcolm X's mind: "I'm not here to argue or discuss anything that we differ about, because it's time for us to submerge our differences and realize that it is best for us to first see that we have the same problem" (1964, para. 3). Malcolm X had long urged for Black people to unite and disregard their differences. In this portion of the speech, Malcolm X promotes unity while also seeking an emotional response from listeners by stating that he is as wounded as they are: "you're going to catch hell just like I am. We're all in the same boat and we all are going to catch the same hell from the same man" (1964, para. 3). Here, a clever metaphor is employed to present a strong reason to unite, as hell is often considered the most frightening place that a human could think of. The metaphor is also used to characterize the people against whom Malcolm X urges Black people to unite. When one hears of a person who might lure others into hell, the first thing that typically comes to mind is the devil. Malcolm X later declares that this person "just happens to be a white man," thereby drawing a mental comparison between white people and the devil (1964, para. 3).

In speaking of unity against the white man, Malcolm X reminds Black people that they have all endured the same pain: "All of us have suffered here, in this country, political oppression at the hands of the white man, economic exploitation at the hands of the white man, and social degradation at the hands of the white man" (1964, para. 3). To make his point effectively, he draws upon the audience's compassion by emphasizing their collective political, economic, and social suffering, underscoring the comprehensive and systematic nature of their oppression and fostering a sense of collective identity. Additionally, he repeats the association between "the white man" and suffering three times, clearly identifying and emphasizing a common antagonist. This repetition effectively strengthens his rhetorical appeal by creating a memorable contrast between oppressor and oppressed, uniting listeners against a clearly defined adversary.

Early in his speech, Malcolm X establishes that he is a Muslim minister, a position that is accompanied by an expectation that he will not promote hatred among humans. Therefore, he justifies his stance in regard to white people as follows: "Now in speaking like this, it doesn't mean that we're anti-white, but it does mean we're anti-exploitation, we're anti-degradation, we're anti-oppression. And if the white man doesn't want us to be anti-him, let him stop oppressing and exploiting and degrading us." For a second time, he emphasizes the suffering of Black people using the

prefix “anti,” which he first uses in the term “anti-white,” clarifying that his issue is not with the color of one’s skin but rather their actions. His further emphasis on suffering also establishes a relationship of cause and effect in which the reason he demonizes the white man is because of his oppression, exploitation, and degradation.

In returning to his message about unity, Malcolm X states, “Whether we are Christians or Muslims or nationalists or agnostics or atheists, we must first learn to forget our differences. If we have differences, let us differ in the closet; when we come out in front, let us not have anything to argue about until we get finished arguing with the man.” By listing various religious and non-religious identities, including those who are not religious at all, Malcolm X proposes an inclusive vision of unity. This inclusion shows that, for Malcolm, the priority is not belief but collective struggle. He stresses that unity must come before individual differences if Black people are to end their suffering. Furthermore, Malcolm’s use of the word “closet” is a powerful metaphor—it suggests that Black people must temporarily put aside their internal differences, as if hiding them in a private space, in order to face the external threat. It also evokes the idea of being confined or restricted within a space they do not fully control, reinforcing the idea that while they share the country with white people, they are not equal in power or position.

The urge for Black people to unite is central to Malcolm X’s ideology and therefore has a notable presence in his speeches. Its powerful impact also played a role in shaping the language used within the Black Arts Movement. For example, the same sense of urgency found in Malcolm X’s metaphor of “the closet” is illustrated in the poem “SOS” by Baraka (2016):

Calling black people
 Calling all black people, man woman child
 Wherever you are, calling you, urgent, come in
 Black People, come in, wherever you are, urgent, calling
 you, calling all black people
 calling all black people, come in, black people, come
 on in. (Baraka, p. 14)

In “SOS,” Baraka makes an urgent appeal to all Black people regardless of their differences, including those based on gender, age, and location. This emphasis on unity despite differences resonates with what Malcolm X promotes in his speech. Another striking similarity is the suggestion that Baraka makes with the use of the phrase “come in,” which implies that for Black people to unite, they should be in a particular place in which there should only be Black people. This parallels Malcolm X’s metaphor of the “closet,” where internal differences are kept private while unity is prioritized in public. Both metaphors suggest a shared space exclusive to Black people, reinforcing the need for solidarity in the face of external oppression.

Another instance in which the significance of unity is emphasized in the writing of the Black Arts Movement can be seen in Barbara Ann Teer’s essay “Needed: A New Image,” in which she discusses the image of Black people, which she believes is best displayed when artists are united (Smethurst et al., 2014, p. 82). Teer argues that a powerful and authentic representation of Black identity can only emerge when Black artists work together with a shared purpose. For her, unity among artists is not just about collaboration—it is a necessary condition for reshaping the public perception of Blackness and resisting the distorted images created by mainstream culture.

The idea that Black people should not be blamed for being “anti-white” because white people are the cause of Black suffering is common in Malcolm X’s speeches. This refusal to accept the white man can also be seen in Larry Neal’s essay “The Black Arts Movement,” in which he attempts to provide a definition of the “Black aesthetic”:

The motive behind the Black aesthetic is the destruction of the white thing, the destruction of white ideas, and white ways of looking at the world. The new aesthetic is mostly predicated on an Ethics which asks the question: whose vision of the world is finally more meaningful, ours or the white oppressors’? What is truth? Or more precisely, whose truth shall we express, that of the oppressed or of the oppressors? These are basic questions (Smethurst et al., 2014, p. 56).

Here, Neal suggests that the “Black aesthetic” can only be achieved through the elimination of “white ideas” because the white man is the cause of the unfair treatment of Black people. The ideological influence of Malcolm X is clearly present in Larry’s essay, as it replicates his notion of “anti-white”.

Malcolm X also discusses America in his speech to inform Black people that the country does not welcome them as it does with whites. Before this, however, he acknowledges that “I’m not a politician, not even a student of politics; in fact, I’m not a student of much of anything. I’m not a Democrat. I’m not a Republican, and I don’t even consider myself an American.” Through this statement, Malcolm X reminds the audience that he is one of them—an ordinary Black man, not speaking from a position of political power or academic authority. By distancing himself from political labels and even from the identity of being “American,” he aligns himself with those in the audience who feel alienated by a system that continues to exclude and oppress them. This rejection of American identity is important because it challenges the idea that citizenship guarantees belonging or equality. It allows Malcolm to question the legitimacy of a system that offers symbolic inclusion without real benefits. This is further emphasized through the following analogy: “I’m not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn’t make you a diner, unless you eat some of what’s on that plate.” Here, he simplifies the relationship between a country and citizenship in an appealing way that even an uneducated person can understand, as words such as “table,”

“plate,” and “diner” are not technical terms. The analogy reinforces his point: being present in America does not mean being accepted or treated equally.

Malcolm X refers to the unjust treatment of Black people as something deeply rooted in the American system itself—what could be described as a distorted form of Americanism, where oppression rather than freedom becomes the defining experience for Black citizens. Although he does not see himself as an American, he asserts that he and 22 million other Black people are victims of this system. In this way, the Black audience is encouraged to perceive him not as an outsider but as a fellow victim of America's failed promises, making them more inclined to trust him. Malcolm X also questions the ideals of the United States when he says, “I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare,” informing his audience that the national ethos they grew up learning is not true. In reality, he asserts that the dream of equality and the right to vote does not truly exist for Black citizens. Here, Malcolm X employs an artistic technique by placing “American dream” and “American nightmare” in direct contrast. The parallel structure and similar phrasing create a powerful reversal that is easy to grasp and emotionally impactful. This shift strikes the audience by exposing the gap between the ideal and the lived experience, encouraging them to critically reassess their belief in the national narrative. Malcolm X's rejection of Americanisms entails a rejection of the dominant white ideology and culture that he believes created a system in which Black people are seen as a second-class citizen. This is persuasive to the Black listener, as it presents a clear cause of their troubles and therefore a simple solution: stop believing in a system that does not treat them equally.

The notion that Black people are victims of the American system also has a connection with the works of the Black Arts Movement. One example is Hoyt W. Fuller's essay “Towards a Black Aesthetic.” Fuller attempts to create a road forward for the Black aesthetic, yet he also identifies an obstacle to this goal that reflects the notions presented in Malcolm X's speech:

Black people are being called “violent” these days, as if violence is a new invention out of the ghetto. But violence against the black minority is in-built in the established American society. There is no need for the white majority to take to the streets to clobber the blacks, although there certainly is enough of that; brutalization is inherent in all the customs and practices which bestow privileges on the whites and relegate the blacks to the status of pariahs. (Smethurst et al., 2014, p. 151)

Fuller argues that violence does not originate from Black people, yet violence against Black people is ingrained within American society. Thus, he offers a critique of American society and the American system similar to that of Malcolm X. It should also be noted that Malcolm X delivered his speech six years before the publication of Fuller's essay. This timeline suggests that Fuller may have been influenced by Malcolm X's ideas, or at the very least, that Malcolm's framing of the “American nightmare” helped shape the discourse of the Black Arts Movement. When the ideas of Fuller and Malcolm X are compared, it becomes clear that they both elaborate on what Malcolm X calls the “American nightmare.” This nightmare is rooted in the assumption that Black people are violent and that violence originates from the ghetto. It is also rooted in a culture that gives white people a higher social status than Black people.

During Malcolm X's time, many Black people believed that Democrats would care for their demands and support them in the government. For this reason, Democrats attracted a large number of Black voters. However, little to no political change was enacted in the interest of Black people. As Malcolm X asserts,

In this present administration they have in the House of Representatives 257 Democrats to only 177 Republicans. They control two-thirds of the House vote. Why can't they pass something that will help you and me? In the Senate, there are 67 senators who are of the Democratic Party. Only 33 of them are Republicans. Why, the Democrats have got the government sewed up, and you're the one who sewed it up for them. And what have they given you for it? Four years in office, and just now getting around to some civil-rights legislation. (1964, para. 12)

Here, Malcolm X does not outright state that Democrats are doing nothing for Black people; instead, he presents specific numbers and asks rhetorical questions to illustrate his point. He does not impose what he thinks of the Democrats on his audience. He only offers facts and numbers to explain his point logically and without the use of direct accusations. This is a highly persuasive technique, as it allows the audience to come to their own conclusions. Further support his point, Malcolm X again uses repetition with the phrase “sewed up” when he points out that the Democrats have taken control of the government thanks to Black voters. This repetition highlights the irony that while Black voters played a crucial role in securing Democratic power, they received very little in return. It reinforces the sense of betrayal and emphasizes how tightly the Democrats hold power—power that has not been used to serve Black interests.

To expand further on the idea that Black people are victims of the American system and being manipulated by the politicians for whom they vote, Malcolm X recites an anecdote from when he was in Washington, D.C.:

[I]n the back of the room where the Senate meets, there's a huge map of the United States, and on that map it shows the location of Negroes throughout the country. And it shows that the Southern section of the country, the states that are most heavily concentrated with Negroes, are the ones that have senators and congressmen standing up filibustering and doing all other kinds of trickery to keep the Negro from being able to vote. (1964, para. 17)

This anecdote gives Malcolm X's statements about politicians' credulity by positioning him as a witness to their actions and offering the map as tangible evidence of their efforts to keep Black people from voting. However, he also

assures the audience that this situation will not continue because “[T]he Negro awakens a little more and sees the vise that he's in, sees the bag that he's in, sees the real game that he's in, then the Negro's going to develop a new tactic.” Here, Malcolm X's repeated use of the preposition “in” implies that Black people are confined to something that they are not allowed to leave, further describing how Black people are situated in the American system.

Furthermore, Malcolm X affirms that Black people are on their way to escaping this place because they are working on “a new tactic.” The use of this phrase is a rhetorical skill employed by Malcolm X to denote fear—not fear among Black people, but fear among those in power. By suggesting that Black people are no longer passive and are instead organizing and planning strategically, Malcolm creates a sense of looming disruption for the status quo. As Epps (1993) argues, “In Malcolm X's semantic sphere, throughout his public career, there continually stand-out-words-slogans and word clues, denoting fear” (p. 66). Words like “awakens” or “concentrated with Negroes” imply the start of something serious, possibly revolutionary. This rhetorical move signals to the audience that real change is underway, and that those benefiting from the current system should be concerned.

This sense of awakening and coordinated action is echoed in a scene from Sonia Sanchez's play *The Bronx is Next* (1968), where residents of Harlem are seen taking their belongings outside. One of the residents, named Charles, says, “Keep 'em moving Roland. C'mon you mothafuckers. Keep moving. Git you slow asses out of here. We ain't got all night” (Sanchez, 1968, p. 78). Though the dialogue is informal and urgent, the characters' movements reflect a sense of collective purpose and intentionality. They are not just reacting—they are responding in an organized way, as if following a plan. This mirrors Malcolm X's idea of a “new tactic,” where the awakening of Black consciousness leads to calculated action. The scene captures the shift from inertia to momentum, underscoring how Malcolm's rhetoric influenced the tone and direction of works produced during the Black Arts Movement.

At this point in his speech, it may seem that Malcolm X is opposed to all politicians; however, he goes on to clarify that this is not the case:

I say again, I'm not anti-Democrat, I'm not anti-Republican, I'm not anti-anything. I'm just questioning their sincerity, and some of the strategy that they've been using on our people by promising them promises that they don't intend to keep ... That's why, in 1964, it's time now for you and me to become more politically mature and realize what the ballot is for; what we're supposed to get when we cast a ballot. (1964, para. 20)

Malcolm X reassures his audience that he just wants to determine if politicians are hypocrites because they have not fulfilled their promises. For a second time, he informs the audience that it is now time for them to take action, suggesting that Black people are “politically mature,” as they are now aware of the insincerity of politicians and have the ability to take action. Therefore, Malcolm X presents an idea of Black people going through two phases: in the first phase, Black people were victims of the hypocrisy of politicians, but in the second phase, they are aware of those who continue to strip them of their voting rights.

The same concept can be observed in works of the Black Arts Movement. For example, in his essay “Poetry and Black Liberation: Freedom's Furious Passions,” Askia M. Touré states the following:

As a young, oppressed Generation, our poetry imagined a World where no one was privileged while millions were starving, or homeless, or preyed upon by drugs, or murderous, vicious killer-cops, invading armies, or arrogantly labeled “culturally deprived,” or “Third World,” or “savages” or “terrorists” merely for wanting Freedom and Self-Determination. As we began to mature and become more politically aware, we began to echo the voices of our greatest poets—our Prophets: young Dr. King, and the fiery Minister Malcolm X—both viciously assassinated by our Masters because they dared to dream, and work, for the liberation of African-Americans, and all of oppressed Humanity. (Bracey et al., p. 26)

Touré echoes the same notion of suffering as a result of the hypocrisy of politicians that Malcolm X questions in his speech. Touré also shifts to acknowledge that Black people are now “mature” and “politically aware.” This is one of many instances in which a concept from Malcolm X's speech can be seen among the works of the Black Arts Movement.

As Malcolm X continues to touch on various issues that are of concern to Black people, he warns them that white men from the North are not necessarily less racist than their Southern counterparts:

In the North, they do it a different way. They have a system that's known as gerrymandering, whatever that means. It means when Negroes become too heavily concentrated in a certain area, and begin to gain too much political power, the white man comes along and changes the district lines. You may say, “Why do you keep saying white man?” Because it's the white man who does it. I haven't ever seen any Negro changing any lines. They don't let him get near the line. It's the white man who does this. And usually, it's the white man who grins at you the most, and pats you on the back, and is supposed to be your friend. He may be friendly, but he's not your friend. (1964, para. 21)

Malcolm X does not immediately tell his audience that they should not expect the white man to be a friend; instead, he lets them form an opinion by first telling them about the actions of the white man. Later, he explains that even if the white man is behaving in a friendly way, this does not mean he is a friend. Presenting the actions of a person first and then commenting on the person's trustworthiness makes Malcolm X's ideas more convincing because it appeals to the audience's sense of logic and personal judgment. Rather than telling them what to think from the start, he builds his case step by step, using real-world examples that his listeners can relate to or verify. This method encourages critical

thinking and helps the audience feel that they are reaching the conclusion themselves, which strengthens their trust in what he is saying.

A similar idea can be found in the play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* by August Wilson (1982). The protagonist, Ma Rainey, is a singer who works for two white people, Sturdyvant, the studio owner, and her agent, Irvin. In the play, Ma Rainey's band consists of four members who are all Black, making the number of Black characters more than the number of white characters. Malcolm X states that if the number of Black people becomes too large in an area, this threatens the white man, and he therefore creates lines to divide the Black people and weaken their voice. This notion can be seen in the play, as Sturdyvant does not communicate directly with Ma Rainey or the band members; instead, he creates a figurative line by only talking to Irvin, who then talks to Ma Rainey. This resonates with the "gerrymandering" system that Malcolm X references in his speech. In addition, Sturdyvant's dispute with Levee, one of the band members, causes the band to divide when Levee stabs Toledo. Moreover, Irvin appears to be friendly when he bribes the policeman to solve Ma Rainey's problem, but this friendliness only exists because Ma Rainey is the source of his income.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Malcolm X's speech "The Ballot or the Bullet" contains powerful rhetorical techniques, personal humility, and an urgent call for unity among Black Americans. Throughout the speech, Malcolm X articulates his core message that the political system in America, dominated by the white majority, consistently oppresses Black people, who must either use their vote, "the ballot," or prepare for more radical means of resistance, "the bullet." His approach of addressing all Black people, regardless of their religious or ideological differences, emphasizes the need for collective action. Notions of unity and the rejection of American systems of oppression resonate with the ideas of the Black Arts Movement, influencing writers such as Amiri Baraka, Larry Neal, and Hoyt W. Fuller. Malcolm X's rhetorical skill, use of metaphors, and bold critiques of Americanism laid the groundwork for the expression of Black power and identity in the literature of the Black Arts Movement. His influence, as seen in works such as Baraka's "SOS" and Neal's "The Black Aesthetic," continues to inspire cultural movements today. His message remains relevant: the fight for justice, equality, and self-determination depends on unity and awareness of systemic exploitation.

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