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"I'm a Hustler" (or Used to Be): Creating Alternative Black Masculinities in Post-Civil Rights Era African American Hustler Narratives

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"I'M A HUSTLER" (OR USED TO BE): CREATING ALTERNATIVE BLACK MASCULINITIES IN POST-CIVIL RIGHTS ERA AFRICAN AMERICAN HUSTLER NARRATIVES

By

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This project is dedicated to the ancestors who have guided me, to the writers who came before me and have greatly influenced me, and to every other black boy who isn't afraid to dream.

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ABSTRACT

This study concentrates on the misunderstood and maligned figure of the black hustler to re-assess the 1960s constructions of black masculinity as they inform the politics of race and class mobility in the United States during and after the Civil Rights period. Whereas critics such as David Dudley, Lawrence Goodheart, Patrick Daniel Moynihan, and Terri Hume Oliver, amongst others, have read the black street hustler in terms of psychopathology and criminality, I argue that Claude Brown, Malcolm X, and Iceberg Slim enlarge the urban and folkloric roots of the black hustler in order to critique the very foundations of American capitalism itself as well as to challenge the social norms of white middle-class masculinity by mimicking these concepts through hyperbolic performances, which negate both the supposed psychopathology and criminality associated with the black hustler. Although the hustler figure is nearly omnipresent in Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land,* Malcolm X's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and Iceberg Slim's *Pimp: The Story of My Life*, these selected works tend to be read as autobiographies that rely on conventions of social realism, black nationalism, and/or confessional narratives, focusing exclusively on the negative aspects of the black hustler. Instead, this study claims that the selected texts should be privileged as hustler narratives, drawing attention to the function of the hustler as participating in a wider American tradition of upward class mobility. In the process, the black hustler hyperbolically emulates, criticizes, and rejects or restructures such concepts of individual 'rags-to-riches' capitalism and/or middle class respectability in order to achieve his own status and define his own terms for the construction of alternative black masculinities.

Chapter One shows how Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* utilizes the presentation of the hustler to destabilize prevalent articulations of the North as Promised Land in migration narratives and rebuilds community through jazz musicianship and the male-centered community that it creates. Chapter Two posits the hustler in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as a developmental stage that articulates or reproduces itself on the streets, in prison, and within the Nation of Islam and leads Malcolm to an emerging Pan-Africanism through his reliance on, and

questioning of, unstable male-centered communities. Chapter Three discusses Iceberg Slim's presentation of the hustler in *Pimp: The Story of My Life* by highlighting the critical similarities between the pimp and the standard managerial capitalist and reveals how false contrition gains him entry into middle-class status. The Epilogue discusses the work of Nathan McCall and the "strained position of the middle class" as seen through the black male figure, which speaks to the ineffectiveness and lack of functionality that traditional capitalist advancement offers for poor urban settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Every male human born into this society with black skin is a target for physical or psychological murder or for the kind of sinister mental plague which turns out the kind of nigger robot who strives and hungers for the approval and favor of his enemies.

--Iceberg Slim, *The Naked Soul of Iceberg Slim: The Story of My Life*

In American popular culture, the black male has largely existed as a figure to be feared, though often emulated. American popular culture like America in general is rooted primarily in the ideals of industrial and market capitalism, which champion a tradition of rugged individualism and the ability to attain and/or accumulate material wealth. As a response, black males have often created and recreated ways to define themselves that function in opposition to the dominant national discourses from which they have been excluded. The authors that are discussed in this study, Claude Brown, Malcolm X, and Iceberg Slim (Robert Beck), have all worn the garb, used the language, and assumed the physical posturing that are the components of what I will refer to in this analysis as hustler masculinity (to be discussed shortly). In response to their exclusion from America and American middle-class culture, they have assumed this particular form of masculinity in order to resist being deracinated and marginalized socially, economically, and spiritually. Brown utilizes the modes of resistance that he learns as a hustler to find black masculinity in jazz musicianship and in the male-centered community that it fosters. Malcolm X's earlier assumption of hustler masculinity gives him the ability to recognize how the Nation of Islam is a re-articulation of hustling on a grander scale. He turns instead towards a black masculinity grounded in Orthodox Islam and an emerging Pan-Africanism that places him firmly in the world. Slim uses hustler masculinity to understand, criticize, and redefine capitalism so that it works for him and not against him.

Of the many approaches to black masculinity that have arisen out of the varied processes of definition and redefinition, black hustler masculinity,[1] as I am defining it in this project, is one that young black males utilize as an attempt to create a space that is their own; it is a space that Brown, Malcolm, and Slim assume early on in their lives. The phrase refers to individuals, typically males, who operate completely outside of the bounds of society's moral correctness and

include but are not limited to pimps, drug dealers, and fencers. They participate in and become successful in illicit economies, becoming members of an unacknowledged middle class.[2] The hustler is shunned by the black middle class, which emulates the white middle class, and is defined and identified as a criminal. Yet, like white middle-class masculinity, material wealth is a sign of success, and for this reason, physical appearance and style function as indicators of achievement and prosperity.

Although hustler masculinity is one that seems to rely on appearance, it is a sort of coping mechanism that is informed by what Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson term "cool pose."[3] Majors and Billson state that "cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control" (4). Cool pose is essentially a performance of masking and unmasking when necessary in order to attain power and authority.

Today, the black hustler has become a staple in American popular culture in ways that eclipse his presence in films in the early 1970s and has been appropriated to function in opposition to other presentations of masculinity. Rap artists Ice-T and 50 cent, the fast-talking, streetwise characters in movies and on television, and the numerous public appearances of ex-pimp-turned-preacher Archbishop Don "Magic" Juan at televised events are representative of the permeation of the hustler in American popular culture. Unlike black hustler masculinity, each of these incarnations of hustler masculinity fail to criticize capitalism specifically and American middle-class culture in general, which have necessitated the creation and assumption of this particular kind of masculinity in poor black urban areas. They are for the most part built upon images provided by the very media outlets that have hired them.

Hustler masculinity, or what Todd Boyd terms "hustler ethos,"[4] seeks to operate outside of the confines of the conventions of white middle-class masculinity, which is identified with the forms of oppression one's acquisition of hustler masculinity is attempting to escape through capitalism, from which they are implicitly excluded. It also relies on a system of masking and unmasking as it is described by the cool pose. In assuming hustler masculinity, black males fail to realize that their rejection of middle-class masculinity is not a complete rejection because, in building this hybrid form masculinity, they are relying on the definitions of white middle-class masculinity to inform their own. Their definition does not oppose American middle-class

masculinity in its presentation or in its practice but operates through a hyperbolic presentation of and understanding of capitalism and middle-class masculinity.[5] Essentially, in attempting to create a space for themselves, young black males perpetuate the oppressions that they are attempting to escape through the creation of this other space.

Young black men assume hustler masculinity to cope with the economic disparities that exist because of the limitation imposed by race and living in the urban ghetto. These barriers make it nearly impossible to succeed in a capitalist society. As Garth L. Mangum and Stephen F. Seninger state in *Coming of Age in the Ghetto: a Dilemma of Youth Unemployment* (1978), "The approach to the labor market significantly dichotomizes the respective positions of ghetto [urban poor] and middle-class youths. In this arena the black youth's deprivation--in regard to education, race, social class, lack of proper role models--severely handicaps him" (76). In turn, this translates into higher crime rates and imprisonment rates in poor black urban areas. Conveniently, as Loïc Wacquant states, "the formula 'Young + Black + Male' is now openly equated with 'probable cause' justifying the arrest, questioning, bodily search and detention of millions of African-American males every year" ("From Slavery to Mass Incarceration" 56). As a result of the mass movement of blacks from the South to the North between 1910 and the 1950s and the inability of black men to acclimate themselves completely to white capitalist concepts of masculinity, black men have assumed hustler masculinity and find themselves imprisoned at rates that have been rising since the second mass migration during the second World War, and they have been overwhelmingly overrepresented in prisons since the mid-1980s.[6]

The embracing of hustler masculinity is also a performance that positions white men as the enemy (Majors and Billson 27) and seeks to attain a sense of masculinity through the maintenance of a mask that exudes detachment, complacency, and control. Beyond the constant masking, hustler masculinity is also one that relies on a system of strict codes and a hierarchy of positions where the man who profits the most from the least amount work stands at the top very much like a mercenary or an entrepreneur.[7]

As hustler narratives, Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* (1965), Malcolm X's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), and Iceberg Slim's (Robert Beck) *Pimp: the Story of My Life* (1969) participate in a tradition of autobiography writing in African American literature. The African American autobiography is typically a vehicle in which African Americans have created and affirmed their identities.[8] As Valerie Smith states in *Self-Discovery*

and Authority in Afro-American Narrative (1987), "Afro-American writers affirm and legitimize their psychological autonomy by telling the stories of their own lives" (2). In *Black Autobiography in America* (1974), Stephen Butterfield validates Smith's assertion when he states that "the autobiographical form is one of the ways that black Americans have asserted their right to live and grow" (3). Although this study focuses entirely on the autobiographical form, it is not an attempt to disregard those hustler-like protagonists that inhabit fictional texts that could be considered hustler narratives such as Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945), Sam Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1969), the fiction of Iceberg Slim, the fiction of Donald Goines, and numerous other examples. Each of the autobiographies was published during the mid- to late 1960s and participates in the discourse on black masculinity that is occurring in the black community. The Civil Rights movement is transitioning to the Black Power movement, and outside entities are attempting to minimize the effects of this discourse. Brown, Malcolm X, and Slim's texts offer alternative voices that were either excluded or vilified as a result of the supposed baseness of the hustler, yet they offer important alternative styles of articulating black masculinities that deserve critical attention.

During the 1960s and the early 1970s, black masculinity was one of the topics of discourse in relation to the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. African Americans in general attempted to assert themselves and remove themselves from second-class citizenship in a country that they helped to build. Black men were more visible than women in America's male-oriented culture, and this visibility made them the subjects not only of their own discourses of identity but also of those initiated by external institutions that were typically oppressive or that essentialized black masculinity. Both the government and the film industry utilized black difference in order to exclude their own role in this racial exploitation.

In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan published the controversial and much-debated Labor Department report, "The Negro Family: the Case for National Action," which is better known as the "Moynihan Report." Although the title suggests that the focus of the report is on the African American family, Moynihan is clearly focused on the role of black men in the urban community and within the family in the urban community as an answer to achieving equality. Moynihan begins his report by detailing the efforts and successes of the Civil Rights movement, or what he terms the Negro American revolution, to appeal to the sensibilities of Americans in general by aligning it with the American Revolution. Moynihan does this to draw attention to the goal of the

movement: equality. He writes, "The principal challenge of the next phase of the Negro revolution is to make certain that equality of results will now follow" (49). The only way to do this is to assess the black community in general according to Moynihan. He concludes,

> *That being the case, it has be said that there is a considerable body of evidence to support the conclusion that Negro social structure, in particular the Negro family, battered and harassed by discrimination, injustice, and uprooting, is in the deepest trouble. While many young Negroes are moving ahead to unprecedented levels of achievement, many more are falling further and further behind.* [italics in the original] (50)

As Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey state in *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (1967),

> His [Moynihan's] concern was to have adopted at the highest level of the administration the view that family welfare provided a central point of reference in evaluating the effectiveness of programs to deal with disadvantaged groups. He sought to achieve a basic redefinition of the civil rights problem at the highest level of the administration as a preliminary to a broader redefinition by the government as a whole. (26)

Moynihan essentially argues that African Americans in urban settings are failing because the family structure has failed or has fallen apart. Moynihan states, "[T]he Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well" (75). For Moynihan, black men fail because black women hold and wield too much power economically, educationally, and domestically. This failure translates into failed families and a failed or below-average existence because the man is not the breadwinner as men are supposed to be in America. Moynihan utilizes a traditional family structure that informs socialization in the white middle-class household, which are built upon capitalism and patriarchy, to interpret the structure of the black family. He does not allow space for alternative family structures or masculinities that are just as stable if not more so than the models that he is using. According to Rainwater and Yancey,

> Moynihan sought to present a sharply focused argument leading to the conclusion that the government's economic and social welfare programs, existing and prospective ones,

should be systematically designed to encourage the stability of the Negro family. He
sought to show, first, that the Negro family was highly unstable (female-headed
households produced by marital breakup and illegitimacy). This instability resulted from
the systemic weakening of the position of the Negro male. Slavery, reconstruction,
urbanization, and unemployment had produced a problem as old as America and as new
as the April unemployment rate. This problem of unstable families in turn was a central
feature of the tangle of pathology of the urban ghetto, involving problems of delinquency,
crime, school dropouts, unemployment, and poverty. Finally, Moynihan wanted the
administration to understand that some evidence supported the conclusion that these
problems fed on themselves and that matters were rapidly getting worse. (27-8)

Many found fault with the report, disagreeing with the notion of black matriarchy in a
society where the black woman was the least valued of its subjects. Columnist James Farmer
states in his December 18, 1965, column "The Controversial Moynihan Report,"

On the surface, this would seem to be a fair-minded exercise in the Life Sciences but in
fact the Moynihan Report, which seems to have been given a good deal of currency by the
present administration, is another one of those academic efforts to get our eyes off the
prize [civil rights].

   By laying the primary blame for present-day inequalities on the pathological condition
of the Negro family and community, Moynihan has provided a massive academic cop-out
for the white conscience and clearly implied that Negroes in this nation will never secure
a substantial measure of freedom until we learn to behave ourselves and stop buying
Cadillacs instead of bread. (410)

Harvard psychologist William Ryan agrees and states,

[I]t ["Moynihan Report"] draws dangerously inexact conclusions from weak and
insufficient data; encourages (no doubt unintentionally) a new form of subtle racism that
might be termed 'Savage Discovery,' and seduces the reader into believing that it is not
racism and discrimination but the weaknesses and defects of the Negro himself that
account for the present status of inequality between Negro and white. (458)

Farmer and Ryan's views coincide with many others that were not given the platform to speak as
they had.

Although Moynihan relied on statistical information to make his argument, most of his information was aimed at attracting attention to the point that he was attempting to illustrate rather than to present the urban environment and racial relations with any critical accuracy. According to Moynihan, "The statistics in this paper refer to Negroes. However, certain data series are available only in terms of the white population. Where this is the case, the nonwhite data have been used as if they referred only to Negroes. This introduces me to some inaccuracies but it does not appear to produce any significant distortions" (Moynihan 50). There was also a preoccupation with what Philip Brian Harper states was the "perennial 'crisis' of black masculinity whose imagined solution is a proper affirmation of black male authority" (x). The report may seem to be an attempt to participate in the discourse occurring in the country as a part of the ensuing black political movement. Moynihan seems to be focusing on the supposed emasculation of black men within the family to relegate the issue of racial equality to a trivial position and replace it with class. As bell hooks declares in *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (2004), "[T]he discourse of emasculation shifted from white supremacy and accountability for black male oppression to blaming black women. … Significantly, Moynihan's report came just in time to reinforce the notion that it was important for black males to fight in imperialist wars" (12). The environment in which these ill-suited males are born is presented as the cause rather than as a reaction to the inability of black males to achieve white middle-class masculinity and as their refusal to participate in "wage slavery"[9] (hooks 21). They refuse to work as minimum-waged, unskilled laborers, who work hard for very little. The appearance of the report in 1965 begs for an explanation of why the necessity of the black man to assert himself within the household takes on importance while African Americans were demanding equal rights and job opportunities from the government. Moynihan's report seems to be an attempt to distract focus from civil rights and place blame on the victim, who in this case is the black male.

Unlike the government, representatives of the capitalist establishment had something altogether different in mind when black men and masculinity became the subject of American films. Traditionally in Hollywood cinema, black men have been presented in well-defined roles that lessened their humanity. Since the late 1960s when hustler masculinity appeared on the silver screen, the presentation of hustler masculinity has been dehumanizing. It was and is interpreted as the "big, baadddd niggers, over-sexed and savage, violent and frenzied" (Bogle 14). It is what Earl Ofari Hutchinson terms the "malevolent black male" in *The Assassination of*

the Black Male Image (1996). As Hutchinson states, "the image of the malevolent black male is based on a durable and time-resistant bedrock of myths, half-truths, and lies" (14). Although this may be a historical truth in regards to American mass media, especially news media, William L. Van Deburg states that it is the image or myth of the malevolent black male upon which the "bandits" of Blaxploitation films such as *Sweet, Sweetback's Baad Asssss Song*, *Shaft*, and *Superfly* were built. Accordingly, they were presented as men with "standards" and "specific behavioral guidelines" (Van Deburg 121). He also states that "they also were well advised to avoid marks who stuttered, were cross-eyed, or were returning from a funeral. None of the outlaw guilds knowingly accepted rapists, hypocrites, or warmongers into membership. All believed their own value system superior to that of white underworld counterparts" (Van Deburg 121). This is not to say that they were completely devoid of what Van Deburg terms villainy, but it does show that they were not as ruthless and inhumane as the presentations have made them seem. Van Deburg's analysis of Blaxploitation films is similar to Julius Hudson's description of actual hustlers. As Hudson writes, "Hustlers were quick to point out that their games do not represent crimes of violence against individuals. Rather they are tactful circumventions of the law, and in most cases success is facilitated by cooperation from police and judicial officials" (413). Regardless of how ruthless and inhumane the hustler may seem to be, there is an existing code of conduct that negates the idea that they are inhumane, ruthless, and not concerned for the individual. The individual just happens to be the entity that they have to violate in order to carve out spaces for themselves. As Hudson later states, "the hustlers conceived of their activities as one form of economic black power" (413), which aligns theoretically with the Hollywood presentation of the hustler in the 1970s. This is not to say that the conception of hustler masculinity does not conflict with its actual performance, which victimizes the community in which it functions by creating prostitutes and drug addicts and by stealing from individuals.

Hustler masculinity appeared in the character of the black buck in films. 1967 welcomed the return of the black buck to cinema as performed by Jim Brown (Bogle 221). As Donald Bogle states, the black buck, as perfected by D. W. Griffith in *Birth of a Nation* (1915), is "always big, baadddd niggers, oversexed savage, violent and frenzied as they lust for white flesh … psychopaths, one always panting and salivating, the other forever stiffening of his body as if the mere presence of a white woman in the same room could bring him to sexual climax" (14). The characters that Jim Brown played became reincarnations of the black buck, but unlike those

previous images, his "strength was always used to work with the dominant culture rather than against it" (Bogle 222). As for Brown, Bogle states that the audience was drawn in by his strength because he "was always a bold man, decisive, anxious for action, and completely confident of his own power" (221). Bogle states further,

> Males relished the situation in which he was cast and his skill getting out of them while keeping his cool. Young black children in the ghetto liked him because he was a black man who could shove back to whitey the violence whitey had originally dealt out. … The blackness of his skin and his sheer physicality took audiences back to the myth of the black man as a pure creature of astounding sexual prowess. (220-2)

The appearance of Brown on the silver screen was a sign of the times, times that shunned the presentation of black masculinity provided by Sidney Poitier, the death of nonviolent protest, and the birth of black power, which raised blackness upon a pedestal and "said that violence was as natural in America as apple pie" (219). For the black community, Brown's characters represented a newly articulated black masculinity, expressed a political transition that had taken place in the black community,[10] and introduced a characterization of black masculinity that would gain prominence in the following decade.

The film industry took interests in the black buck-like character when they realized that the presentation of the character in film would be profitable. In 1971, independent filmmaker, Melvin Van Peebles, gave America *Sweet Sweetback's Baad Asssss Song*, which he stated was a "victorious film, a film where niggers could walk out standing tall instead of avoiding each other's eyes, looking once and again like they'd had it" (Van Peebles qtd. in Guerrero 88). Referring to Van Peebles film and its reception by a large segment of the black community, Bogle states:

> During that time, in rejecting the black bourgeoisie, which had seemingly often aided and abetted White America through attempts at cultural assimilation, the new militant separatist black classes sometimes came to identify blackness with the trappings of the ghetto--the tenements as well as the talk, the mannerisms, and the sophistication of the streets-- all of which appeared to mark a life lived close to one's black roots. … With the glamorization of the ghetto, however, came also the elevation of the pimp/outlaw/rebel as folk hero. Van Peebles played up to this sensibility, and his film was the first to glorify the pimp. It failed, however, to explain the social conditions that made the pimp such an

important figure. (236)

Van Peebles' film redefined blackness, extracting it from the middle-class sensibilities that informed earlier film presentations. It gave the black urban underclass community a character to which they could relate because the characters' lives were affected by race and class in the same way that theirs were. The influence of this film and other similar films could be seen in these communities as dashikis and afros were replaced with the flashy, colorful, and extravagant garb and straightened hair of the street hustlers and pimps (Geurro 96-7). This suggests that the films had bearing on the lives of its urban black audience, who saw value in the examples of resistance the presentations of hustler masculinity provided as they watched these characters dupe "the man." The film industry understood this aspect of the films but was more interested in the money that could be made from similar films since it was nearing bankruptcy during that period (Bogle 238). The film industry went into overhaul producing numerous versions of similar films between 1971 and 1974 (Bogle 241). Essentially, it produced white-backed films such as *Superfly*, *Shaft*, and numerous others to take advantage of black dollars to save a failing industry,[11] exploiting the fact that many African Americans, particularly those in urban centers were going through a post-Civil-Rights transition that involved reconsidering modes for gaining political freedom and acknowledging and articulating identities that conveyed how they wanted to be acknowledged, respected, and economically freed.

The government and the film industry made use of hustler masculinity for their own gain, but Brown, Malcolm, and Slim utilized it to counter the intent of those entities' presentations and to guide readers toward an alternative black masculinity. Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*, Malcolm's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and Slim's *Pimp: the Story of My Life* stress a non-white, patriarchal form of masculinity that is inclusive and is the focus of this study. They illustrate how black men can create a form of masculinity that opposes middle-class masculinity, which they have been denied access to no matter how far they have extended themselves to reach it. According to Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), "The black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago the black man admitted the unarguable superiority of the white man, an all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence" (228). Although Fanon identifies the group that black men seek to emulate as white men, in America that group consists of both white men and middle-class men in general, which in a sense are one and the same, if one views the black middle class as simply

working towards being like whites. Allowing whiteness to trump black identities gives credit to the theory that blacks are inferior and forces black men to articulate black masculinity within the confines of white middle-class masculinity. Essentially, attempting to assert black masculinity through the confines set in place by the white middle class and capitalism would be detrimental because it subordinates the existence of an identity outside of those two entities and marks those who claim or are relegated to this marginal space as inferior.

The inability to live up to the model provided by white middle-class masculinity necessitated other methods of demonstrating and affirming black masculinity, hence the creation of the black hero and, more specifically for this study, the black hustler. The black hero in African American folklore was developed after emancipation. According to Lawrence W. Levine in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (1977), "The crucial change marking black folklore after emancipation was the development of a group of heroes who confronted power and authority directly, without guile and tricks, and who functioned on a secular level" (385-6). African American folklore no longer revolved around animal tricksters or other masked religious subversives. In this folk tradition, there are a variety of folk heroes. In most cases, they represented the hope of freedom and survival in a world that violated the sanity, bodies, and spirits of African Americans. As John W. Roberts states,

> Folk heroic creation occurs because groups, at critical moments in time, recognize in the actions of certain figures, which may already be known to them, qualities or behaviors that they have reason to believe would enhance culture-building (that is, their ability to protect the identity and values of the group in the face of a threat to them).
>
> (*From Trickster to Badman* 5)

The black folk hero was developed as an extension of the slave trickster who "played an important role in [the] tradition of resistance … [and] lived long after the institution that had helped to mold them was abolished--and they lived on for the same reasons: because they continued to mirror the plight and reflect the needs of Afro-Americans" (Levine *Black Culture* 389). The slave was a trickster figure that took on heroic qualities as tales of feats, real and exaggerated, were passed down from generation to generation. The heroic slave can be found in Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845). There are many scenes in the narrative in which Douglass utilizes trickery to attain things that he would not be able to

possess otherwise. The two-hour tussle with slave-breaker Edward Covey also stands out because it is a physical demonstration of resistance. Presenting this exaggerated physical scene allows Douglass to express his desire as a black man to define himself outside of the oppressive confines of white masculinity, to which Douglass and other blacks fall victim as slaves.

A more resistant black hero, the badman or black bandit, grew from the slave trickster. Roberts describes the badman as a combination of the trickster and conjurer in the African American folk tradition (*From Trickster* 200). The badman is essentially a black man who defies whites and blacks alike and victimizes both as well. Roberts also states that "in the badman folk heroic tradition, those individuals who served as a focus for folk heroic creation were not the professional criminals, but rather their victims who responded to victimization with violence" (206). The hustler as presented in the narratives by Brown, Malcolm X, and Iceberg Slim that are the focus of this study are informed by the tradition of the black badman folk hero. The badman is the epitome of black resistance, and it is upon this form of resistance that Brown, Malcolm X, and Iceberg Slim construct and reconstruct masculine identities of resistance and affirmation. The badman is relevant as a source of resistance within their autobiographies because the racial climate that existed when they were created had not changed. According to Van Deburg, "To a degree greater than many have realized, both the villianization of blacks and the valorization of black villains are to blame for our inability to alter the status quo in racial relationships" (217). The demonization of blackness by whites as inferior created the badman figure in folklore and in American society, and blacks took pride in these characters and individuals because they operate oblivious to racial limitations and physically fight the oppressor in ways that the average African American would not dare. It is from the badman that hustler masculinity is born. The hustler is a sort of contemporary badman, who does not operate inside or outside of his community as aimlessly as the badman. The hustler, like the badman, seeks to retrieve the masculinity that was stripped from him and does so by acting outside of the confines set by those entities that he views as the enemy.

Since the 1960s, black male identity has seemingly been a topic of interest for more than a few. Most of the academic work concerning the black male has been produced in the areas of sociology, criminal justice, psychology, and history such as Hazel Carby's *Race Men* (1998); Raymond A. Winbush's *The Warrior Method: A Program for Rearing Healthy Black Boys* (2001); Anthony J. Lemelle's *Black Male Deviance* (1995); and Na'im Akbar's *Vision for Black*

Men (1995). There are also numerous books and articles that deal with it in cultural criticism such as Marcellus Blount and George P. Cunningham's collection *Representing Black Men* (1996); Todd Boyd's *The New H.N.I.C. (Head Niggas in Charge): the Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip Hop* (2002); Michael Eric Dyson's studies of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Tupac Shakur, and gangsta rap culture; Ellis Cose's *The Envy of the World: on Being a Black Man in America* (2002); Henry Louis Gates' *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man* (1997); and Haki Madhubuti's *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?: the Afrikan American Family in Transition* (1990). What most of these studies and criticisms have failed to do, however, is to examine the "deviant," "malevolent," "endangered" black male in a way that does not focus on the alleged psychopathology and criminality of hustler masculinity. This study will reveal the dilemma of being a black male in America and will seek to articulate what the authors themselves reveal as lived solutions. This study does not foreground the study of black masculinity in African American literature in general because there are numerous books and articles on the subject that deal with the masculine identity in slave narratives, fiction, and some twentieth-century autobiographies as well. As W. Lawrence Hogue states,

> As a variety of critics and historians have emphasized, black masculinity has occupied a particularly problematic place in American literature and culture. The very essence of racism in the United States required the bestilization or animalization of the African American male, which led both American and African American authors … to treat African American men as pacific or passive, to define them according to the definitions and values of the middle-class American norm, or to depict them in some other romantic guise. But, many African American male writers found alternative ways to represent and to examine black masculinity--though their portrayals have often been misread or ignored. (10)

Like Hogue's study of male texts in *The African American Male, Writing, and Difference: A Polycentric Approach to African American Literature, Criticism, and History* (2003), this study looks at previously misread or ignored texts to show that there are alternative masculinities that are bountiful in texts such as Brown, Malcolm, and Slim's. The numerous readings and criticisms of Malcolm X in particular tend to be concerned with identity and attendant issues, such as duality, religion, black nationalism, the African American autobiography continuum, and the Oedipal complex among other things. These readings are not incorrect but have failed to treat

the hustler as a historical character and as a part of a continuing tradition of resistance that is an extension of the badman figure in black folklore. In each of the texts, hustler masculinity functions as a mode of resistance that influences the protagonist's transcendence into a more productive yet resistant black masculinity.

In Chapter One, "Claude Brown's Search for Identity in the Promised Land," the focus is on how Brown utilizes hustler masculinity as a coping mechanism. Hustler masculinity allows Brown to create a sense of community and identity by relying on the re-articulation of an African American folk hero, the badman, in a poor black urban milieu and later leads him to rely on a similar re-articulation of the badman's resistance to create and maintain an alternative black masculinity that relies on the communal properties of music. Migration is an important aspect of this chapter because it forces him to search for a fully realized masculinity, which his father does not possess. Brown represents the first generation of Southern blacks to be born, raised, and reared in the North. The narrative revises the slave narrative trope of northward movement and its association with benevolence by revealing the inadequacy of Southern socialization in the North and how it has been revised and reproduced to make sense of a new social space, which is foreign to his parents.

Chapter Two, "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz: Malcolm X's Recovery of a Masculine Identity through the Recourse of an Emergent Pan-Africanism," will reveal how a stunted masculinity, which is bred from the murder of his father and his inability to join white middle-class culture as a youth, forces him to reject notions of all middle-class culture and grasp for hustler masculinity. Malcolm passes through two distinct hustler phases, both of which influence his repositioning in his later adult life as an emerging Pan-Africanist and as an Orthodox Muslim. The first phase as a zoot suiter, a phrase used to describe a World War II black and Latino resistant youth culture, gives Malcolm early lessons in resistance through its apparent resistance of middle-class culture. The second phase as "Red" allows him to place himself in the world by defining his identity rather than allowing it to be defined for him. Malcolm does not realize the value of these two phases until he himself has been hustled by the Nation of Islam. Malcolm's journey towards black masculinity begins with his rejection of the Nation of Islam and his pilgrimage to Mecca, which gives him the foresight to see himself as a part of a larger Muslim world as he accepts Orthodox Islam. With this realization, Malcolm also understands that he is a part of a larger black world and part of a larger black political movement and places himself within it. Malcolm

re-articulates black masculinity as masculinity rooted in religion and politics.

Chapter Three, "'Ghetto Prince Is My Thing': Iceberg Slim's (Re)Creation of Robert Beck," shows how Iceberg Slim utilizes hustler masculinity to guide his transformation into a critical member of the middle class and a popular culture icon. Slim utilizes hustler masculinity as a tool to achieve white middle-class masculinity. Unlike either Brown or Malcolm, Slim is not searching for an alternative nor does he reject notions of white middle-class masculinity. Instead, Slim opts to use to hustler masculinity to place himself within the definition that he is inherently excluded from as a result of his race and class. Slim's understanding of hustler masculinity provides him with an understanding of white middle-class masculinity, which relies on many of the same markers that hustler masculinity relies on but in a less obvious, almost thrifty kind of way. It is this understanding that is fostered in Slim's hustler years as a pimp that allows him to ascend into middle-class masculinity without rejecting either hustler masculinity or middle-class masculinity. Slim makes them one and the same by restructuring the latter to accommodate the former. Slim transforms his experiences as a hustler into his new hustle as a writer. His hustler narrative allows him to profit from his criminality without returning to hustling and to play to the middle class's curiosity of the black ghetto and the pimp, while seeming to be contrite in the tradition of Christian conversion narratives and confessions. Slim does not offer an alternative masculinity but manipulates middle-class masculinity so that he is recognized within it.

The epilogue, "The (Re)Birth of an NWA: Nathan McCall Continuing a Tradition?," shows that although each of the texts in a way provides a manual on achieving multiple black masculinities in black economically-disadvantaged, urban neighborhoods, they seem to go unrecognized as Nathan McCall's *Makes Me Wanna Holler* (1994) makes evident. McCall's narrative should read as the culmination and application of the previous texts but instead becomes one that joins the hustler narrative genre, narrating the same narrative arc that moves from resisting traditional modes of black masculinity to assuming hustler masculinity to replacing hustler masculinity with an inclusive form of black masculinity that he defines. McCall's narrative in comparison to the others show that not much changed in terms of black masculine discourse between 1969 and 1994 and that this text along with numerous other texts, fiction and nonfiction, written from 1970 to the present lend themselves to further study of hustler masculinity.

Essentially, this critical work shows that America's disregard for black men has

necessitated the appearance of hustler masculinity, which gave birth to the hustler narrative. Like America's white men, these narratives give their authors the power and voice to assert themselves and to reveal to their black male audience methods they can use to do the same. As Fanon recounts,

> When it was I who had every reason to hate, to despise, I was rejected? When I should have been begged, implored, I was denied the slightest recognition? I resolved, since it was impossible for me to get away from an *inborn complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the other hesitated to recognize me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known. [italics in original] (115)

Each of the narrator/protagonists undergoes such a realization after they have each exploded to "shatter the hellish cycle" (Fanon 140).

CHAPTER ONE

CLAUDE BROWN'S *MANCHILD IN THE PROMISED LAND*:

DISCOVERING ONE OF THE BLACK MAN'S PROMISED LANDS

Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* is an autobiography detailing Brown's journey from boyhood to manhood. The narrative participates in an autobiographical tradition that extends back to early slave narratives, but unlike those early narratives, Brown's is not set in the South. It is set in the urban North, Harlem, and Brown writes against the established tropes of slave narratives. Harlem is not the Promised Land that descriptions of the North in slave narratives would have one believe.[12] Brown presents the polar opposite. Harlem is the Hell that the South is but lacks the distinct racial borders and the blatant racism that inform social relations, socioeconomic status, and the racial separation of communities in the South. Though these markers are not as overt in the North as they are in the South, they are still present. As a result, Brown and other males like him utilize the strategic aspects of hustler masculinity to maneuver through Harlem and to negotiate personal spaces. That is, hustler masculinity functions as a coping mechanism and as an answer to his inability to locate an applicable source of masculinity. Hustler masculinity highlights the inadequacies of American male culture and is inherently inadequate because it reflects the paradigms of American male culture. It forces him to define black masculinity for himself in a way that places him in the community as a black man of substance. Hustler masculinity shows Brown how to acquire a non-white, patriarchal black masculinity and moves him toward jazz musicianship because it initializes methods of resisting the borders of racism and classism and affirms male-centered communities.

As much as *Manchild* is an autobiography, it is also a migration narrative, which is an aspect of the autobiography that bears quite a bit of weight. A large part of Brown's transition from boyhood to manhood relies on his ability to negotiate personal space and identity in the North. This is somewhat in line with what Houston A. Baker, Jr. states in "The Environment as

Enemy in a Black Autobiography: Manchild in the Promised Land." Baker states, "An examination of the struggle presented in the work, therefore, will reveal not only how Brown's use of the environment as enemy constitutes a modification of a literary convention, but also will show what the work tells about the struggle of blacks in a recent epoch" (53-4). Although such a reading is relevant to this study, it fails to consider that the problem is not with the environment itself but with the fact that Brown does not have the tools to acclimate himself properly to the North. His parents are also migrants and therefore "ignorant." Reading the text as a modification of a naturalist text, as Baker does, though, only considers part of the text. It is because of the migration element, which is present throughout the early portion of the text, that I argue that a reading of the text as a migration narrative seems to be the most adequate.

In *Canaan Bound: The African American Great Migration Novel* (1997), Lawrence Rodgers defines the migration narrative as "one in which real--or, less frequently, a symbolic-- journey from south to north, occurring either in the novel or figuring prominently in the narrative's recent past, strongly informs the protagonist's psychological constitution and his or her responses to the external environment" (3). In the narrative, Brown has to deal with the fact that he is a native of Harlem and does not have a template of life to follow or a guide to assist him in maneuvering the terrain because his parents were transplants from the South. They traveled North for the alleged opportunities and to escape the weighty oppressiveness of the South as many others did. When they reached the North as part of the "5.5 million African Americans that migrated from the South to Northern cities between 1910 and 1950" (Bennett 344), they were confronted by a different set of problems that complicated the goal of attaining freedom. Brown's narrative is situated in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, making his parents very much a part of this group of Africans Americans who migrated North before and during World War II. As Rodgers note, "The urban initiate view[ed] his or her migration as a movement from low-caste status towards a wholeness manifested in a vision of the North as the biblically inspired promised land" (31). This idea is made most apparent in Brown's forward as he recounts the surprise of his parents and others like them who found something less than what they had expected to find. Brown writes:

> It seems that Cousin Willie, in his lying haste, had neglected to tell the folks down home about one of the most important aspects of the promised land; it was a slum ghetto. There was a tremendous difference in the way life was lived up North. There were too many

people full of hate and bitterness crowded into a dirty, stinky, uncared-for closet section of a great city.

  Before the soreness of the cotton fields had left Mama's back, her knees were getting sore from scrubbing 'Goldberg's' floor. Nevertheless, she was better off; she had gone from the fire to the frying pan. (7-8)

The implication here is that the area of the city into which the migrants were ushered created what Brown comes to know as his youth. Harlem becomes a delusion and an area of disillusion for the Southern migrants. Brown believes that the way of life that he is exposed to is the way of life to which he must succumb and thus, he comes to reject it. Brown's narrative details a single personal journey towards manhood that is representative of a collective narrative. His voice is one speaking for and to many who are also the children of migrants lost in the Promised Land.

The previously quoted passage from the foreword suggests that migrants went North with the expectation of fulfilling wishful dreams of escaping from the South and being led to a land of opportunity and freedom. Brown states that they left the South singing joy-filled spirituals that echoed their desires and their hopes for freedom. He also writes, "One no longer had to wait to get to heaven to lay his burden down; burdens could be laid down in New York" (7). They had hoped to find the Promised Land without the forty-year march that the Israelites had to take. They were disillusioned and fell back into modes of living that were similar to those which they had left behind in the South. They were forced to live within borders that they did not realize had existed in the North until they had encountered a new environment. They became inhabitants of the tenements in the slums and were confined to them due to racism, socioeconomic status, and sheer ignorance of power and movement in the North.

The migrants' idealized understanding of the North eventually dissipated as they came to realize that the opportunities that they had left the South for were nearly non-existent, though many could argue that they had improved their lot. Their idealism had faded because according to Rodgers, "the migrant assume[d] a second-class citizenship in the North that resemble[d] more familiar race, caste, and class exclusion in the South" (31). The North began to resemble the South because the poverty and segregated neighborhoods that they thought they had left there followed them. As a result, the hope that once filled them was bled from their souls, and their children were left to cope with this absence, this emptiness. Brown describes the effects of this emptiness that consumed the migrants and their children as he describes the nature of his

narrative. In the foreword, he writes:

> I want to talk about the first Northern urban generation of Negroes. I want to talk about the experiences of a misplaced generation, of a misplaced people in an extremely complex, confused society. This is a story of their rebellions, and their dreams, their sorrows, their small and futile rebellions, and their endless battle to establish their own place in America's greatest metropolis--and in America itself. (7)

Brown chooses to emphasize the idea that the narrative is one of resistance by using the term "rebellions" twice in the same sentence that underscores the "endless battle" that confront them. The terms also function to suggest what Brown and others like him are rebelling against. The term also sandwiches "their dreams" and "their sorrows," suggesting that they are rebelling against the hopelessness this progression had created in their parents. Like the opening of the book, the closing of the forward leads the reader directly to the text and hints at the nature of it without giving specific details. Brown writes: "The children of these disillusioned colored pioneers inherited the total lot of their parents--the disappointments, the anger. To add to their misery, they had little hope of deliverance. For where does one run to when he's already in the promised land" (8)? Although Brown closes with a rhetorical question that begs to be answered, it works as a partial answer to the questions one is led to ask after reading the opening. Brown and others are rebelling against their parents and their hopelessness and complacency as well as the larger city itself and the limits it has placed upon them. And to answer the closing question, Brown offers his own narrative, taking the reader through the processes of self-awareness, self-discovery, and understanding one's place within a much wider community as he grows from black boy to black man within the context of Harlem.

The migrants have been forced to live within prescribed boundaries that not only influence their living situations but also their entire lives and strip them of their hope. In "*Who Set You Flowin'?": The African-American Migration Narrative* (1995), Farah Jasmine Griffin writes, "In the context of the migration narrative, urban spaces--kitchenettes, workplaces, street corners, prisons, and theaters--are some of the sites where migrants, white power holders, and the Northern black middle class vie for control" (102). Griffin states further, "Urban power separates and categorizes individuals. The ghetto dwellers are enclosed within neighborhoods and kitchenettes. They are not allowed beyond certain borders. Urban power sustains a discourse around race, sex, and desire which confines the black migrant … Finally urban power will also

resort to the use of force and repression when necessary" (102).[13] It is this "urban power," which has controlled Brown's parents, which will be explained in detail later. As a result, Brown attempts to resist by utilizing "the very structures and ideologies that repress them as a means of enabling [his] agency" (Griffin 102). Brown desires to transform the urban space so that he acquires the power to define himself and not become defined by essentialized definitions of black masculinity that are demeaning or emasculated. He chooses hustler masculinity as a method of resisting essentializing definitions of black masculinity and to avoid becoming victimized by the whites who control Harlem as his parents have become.

Much like Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Brown's text begins with a startling if not brutal scene that is focused in the urban space and on his negotiation within it. And like Wright's, it also sets the tone for the rest of the narrative. *Native Son* opens in a kitchenette on Chicago's Southside with a fatherless family (a mother, her daughter, and her two sons) proceeding through early morning rituals, which are interrupted by the entrance of the black rat and the chase and execution that ensues. After the rat has been killed, Wright writes, "The two brothers stood over the dead rat and spoke in tones of awed admiration" (6). They comment on the size of the rat and speculate on how he got so big. The scene comes to a close with the mother questioning Bigger's, the protagonist's, masculinity. This scene sets the tone of the novel in several ways. First the black rat is Bigger Thomas, whose own narrative mirrors the vignette with the black rat, and Bigger, like the rat, seeks to attain success in the same manner by attempting to get fat from what Wright probably viewed as garbage, the hoodlum lifestyle. Throughout the narrative, Bigger is also confined to the urban spaces that Griffin defines. The scene is also representative of how Bigger sees the world in which he lives. Bigger's permanence in the foundation of Chicago's Southside is signified by the blood stain that the dead rat leaves on the wooden floor of the kitchenette and the residues that are presumably left behind at the end of the novel as a naturalistic world of struggle and bestiality. Although *Manchild* does not start with a symbolic scene in which a rodent or similar animal is representative of the protagonist, its opening scene does set the tone for the rest of the narrative. It contains a hysterical woman and a chase in which the protagonist is involved. The difference in Brown's text is that he is chased and is nearly executed. This leads to a stay in the hospital, thoughts of dying, and admiration from his peers, but it is what happens during this scene that is most important. As Brown lies on the floor bleeding from his abdomen, he has a dream, which is one of a few. Brown writes:

As the screams began to die out--Mama's and the boy's--I began to think about the dilapidated old tenement building that I lived in, the one that still had the words "pussy" and "fuck you" on the walls where I had scribbled them years ago. …

…

This was the building where Mr. Lawson had killed a man for peeing in the hall. I remembered being afraid to go downstairs the morning after Mr. Lawson had busted that man's head open with a baseball bat. I could still see blood all over the hall. This was the building where somebody was always shooting out the windows in the hall. They were usually shooting at Johnny D., and they usually missed. This was the building that I loved more that anyplace else in the world. The thought that I would never see this building again scared the hell out of me. (12)

Like the scene in *Native Son*, this particular scene or dream that occurs at the beginning of the narrative is indicative of the tone of the narrative and how Brown places it within the context of Harlem. The tone that the opening scene sets is at once one of distress and yearning. Brown is fearful for his life in Harlem, but there is also something about Harlem that he cannot let go simply because he is a part of it. Brown is a permanent part of Harlem. He has bled on the streets and stood on the corners; he has operated within and negotiated his own space within the designated urban space, a space which "urban power" is seized from him.

Along with the idea that the dream represents Brown's place in Harlem, it also embodies his perception of the environment. Brown views himself and others like him as woven into the fabric or foundation of Harlem. Writing allows him to negotiate a space in the environment because it affixes him to something that is concrete and permanent. The idea is that the tenement has and will always be there and as long as it is there, he will always be there affixed to that particular space. Writing, as performed by ex-slaves and slaves, acted as verification of humanity, functioned as a subversive form of criticism of America and the institution of slavery, and gave the writer a voice and audience that did not exist prior to writing. Writing encompasses all of this for Brown especially because in his case it is an instance of defacement. Although he does not plainly state this, his dream contains an instance of writing and also the feeling that he cannot see himself outside of or without Harlem. For Brown, the tenement building in which he and his family live represents Harlem for him. It is the urban space in which he is trying to assert his urban power. By writing on the walls, he is establishing his voice as a native Harlemite and

uses profanities as method to gain attention so that his voice will be heard. The writing and the nature of the writing also reveal that he has been written into the landscape of Harlem but in a sacrilegious way. Brown is supposed to be the inheritor of good fortune because he is born in the North, the Promised Land, but he is not because the North is anything but the Promised Land. As a result, he was in somewhat of a damned situation where he has to wander the terrain to learn how to maneuver it. He is on a mission to be seen and heard as he presumes men are.

Brown's goal as a Harlemite in the late 1940s and early 1950s is to define himself so that his identity is completely disconnected from his migrant parents and the South. He desires to become a possessor of urban power rather than a victim of the "post-South" America for black migrants to the North that his parents have come to be. But he is not sure how to negotiate successfully such a transfer of power because both of his parents have unsuccessfully attempted to do the same. They were not unsuccessful because of the ineffectiveness of their methods but because of their ignorance of the urban space and their inability to negotiate their space within it. Brown must also define himself against the South because through his perception of his parents he believes that anything of a Southern nature would be ineffective in his mission to capture a sense of black masculinity that is not demeaning, belittling, or weak.

Both of Brown's parents attempt to negotiate personal space in Harlem, but they utilize different methods. Brown's mother relies on church as a site of resistance through which she could use to negotiate personal space, but it does not develop into such a site because Brown describes it as a hustle for the leader, a woman preacher named Mrs. Rogers. Brown writes:

> To me, a church was a church-apartment where somebody lined up a lot of kitchen chairs in a few rows, a preacher did a lot of shouting about the Lord, people jumped up and down until they got knocked down by the spirit, and Mrs. Rogers put bowls of money on a kitchen table and kept pointing to it and asking for more. It was a place where I had to stand up until I couldn't stand anymore and then had to sit down on hard wooden chairs. (27)

The black church is typically a site of resistance in which an urban Northerner could negotiate personal space and power because it is a community-centered institution that allows a congregation of like-minded individuals, in this case Southern migrants, an opportunity to create bonds that carry the same weight as those created in the South around church and community. But the church Brown is introduced to is devoid of any of these properties. In this instance,

Brown presents the black church as a kind of hustle. As Mary Pattillo-McCoy states in "Church as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community," "The church acts simultaneously as a school, a bank, a benevolent society, a political organization, a party hall, and a spiritual base. As one of the few institutions owned and operated by African Americans, the church is often the center of activity in black communities" (769). The black church is therefore an all-encompassing institution that creates a safe place for its members as the pillar of the community. In addition, Pattillo-McCoy states:

> The collective orientation of black Christian rhetoric and ritual is the key to understanding why these [the call-and-response style and the preacher and the congregation] are appropriate tools for conducting social action in the black community … Practices such as holding hands during prayer, participating through antiphonal calls of agreement or dissent, and singing, clapping, and swaying to music all enact the collective goals expressed in the content of social action. Repeating biblical excerpts that illustrate God's concrete interventions on behalf of the faithful and singing together the refrain "Jesus on the main line, tell him what you want," serve similar purposes in mustering activist fervor and optimistic determination. (770)

Patillo-McCoy's illustration reveals not only the function of rhetoric and ritual of the black Christian experience but also how the rhetoric and ritual are tools that can be utilized to build self-affirming communities that would assist in creating a congregation of people who were no longer simply victims of urban powers but individuals and a collective group that possessed the tools to negotiate their own personal space. The church house that Brown's mother attends possesses the rhetoric and ritual but does not possess the power to create a community because the preacher does not see beyond her pocket. It becomes an institution of familiarity. It resembles a black church in its processes but functions with one goal in mind, namely as a profitable enterprise that placated the ease and confusion that followed the migrants. Brown presents an institution that functions as an anesthetic and further accentuates the point by juxtaposing it with drunkenness.

Specifically, Brown aligns his mother's spiritual drunkenness with his father's literal drunkenness. Brown's father couples drinking with spirituals. Brown writes:

> Even though Dad didn't care for preachers and churches, he had a lot of religion in his own way. Most of the time, his religion didn't show. But on Saturday night, those who

didn't see it heard it. Sometimes Dad would get religious on Friday nights too. But
Saturday night was a must. Because it always took liquor to start Dad to singing spirituals
and talking about the Lord, I thought for years that this lordly feeling was something in a
bottle of whiskey. … You drink it and the next thing you know, you're doing things. To
me, it was like castor oil or black draught. You drink it and the next thing you know,
you're doing things. (27)

His drinking is relief or escape from the work week; it is reserved for the weekends just as
church is. Brown introduces this revelation by juxtaposing scenes of his father's alcoholism with
scenes of Mrs. Rogers. Just as the black church became a salve, the community building and
sustaining properties of the spiritual are drenched in alcohol and are just as ineffective as Mrs.
Rogers' version of the black church. As Charsee Charlotte Lawrence-McIntyre states in "The
Double Meaning of the Spirituals," "the music of Black Americans serve as a microcosm of the
black experience in America. … the word spirituals can be substituted by other survival
techniques of oppressed people" (399). Further, according to Langston Hughes, "The Spirituals
are group songs … are religious songs, born in camp meetings and remote plantation districts
…are escape songs, looking toward heaven, tomorrow, and God" (43). They are as John Lovell,
Jr. states "a folk group's answer to life" (638). Brown's father's use of the spirituals was devoid
of any of the redemptive qualities. They functioned as tools that assisted in father/son bonding
and his own answer to Northern urban life. Brown's father's consumption of alcohol extricates
the past work week and all of its difficulties from his memory just as castor oil would cleanse the
bowels. It allows him to live numb to the realities of Harlem just as the incarnation of the black
church that occurs in Mrs. Roger's apartment utilizes rhetoric to make the physical reality of
Harlem seem irrelevant since Heaven is the goal. Brown further exemplifies the role anesthetics
and blinders play in Harlem by describing the typical Sunday morning scene. He writes:

It was Sunday morning. Kids were coming from church with their mothers and fathers,
and some people were sick and vomiting on the street. Most of the people were dressed
up, and vomit was all over the street near the beer gardens. There was a lot of blood near
the beer gardens and all over the sidewalk on Eighth Avenue. This was real Sunday
morning--a lot of blood and vomit and people all dressed up going to church. Some of
them were all dressed up and sleeping on the sidewalk or sleeping on building stoops.
(51)

In the scene, urban reality is exposed, and like the juxtaposition of Brown's father and Mrs. Rogers, the black church and Saturday night's leftovers move in tandem, suggesting that, even beyond Mrs. Rogers and his father, they serve the same purpose of numbing inhabitants of Harlem from the reality of their lives and surroundings.

Brown's mother searched for the familiar black church of the South in the North, but Brown's father attempted to acclimate himself to the North by consuming the culture as it is informed by hustler masculinity. He becomes a small time street hustler using a game similar to three-card Monte using nutshells and a pea instead. Brown never states that his father was a hustler or that he even attempted to be one, but he infers the idea when his father slyly gives Brown advice just before he was to leave to go to a juvenile detention center. Brown writes:

> When I came back with the pea, Dad had set up the table and was sitting at it with threehalf nutshells in front of him. I gave him the pea, and Dad started switching the shells around the way Mr. Jimmy used to do. It looked like Dad was doing it real slow, and I was sure I knew where the pea was all the time. I never knew that Dad could do that trick, and even then I was sure he was doing it too slow.… Ten times I picked up the wrong shell. After I made that last wrong pick, Dad looked at me and just kept shaking his head for a little while. Then he said, "That's jis what you been doin' all your life, lookin' for a pea that ain't there. And I'm mighty 'fraid that's how you gon end your whole life, lookin' for that pea. (71)

There is no indication as to why Brown's father failed at hustling or chose not to, and the previous quote indicates that it was not just something that he had casually learned. He knew what he was doing and convinces Brown to the point that he compared his father to Mr. Jimmy, who "was the slickest cat on Eighth Ave … knew how to 'git by' in the streets so well that he had never had a job since he left Alabama twenty years before … [and] changed cars every year, dressed up with shining shoes every day of the week, always had plenty of money, always had a pretty woman with him, and kept his hair slick back" (68). Brown obviously idolized Mr. Jimmy as did all his friends and seemingly included his father in his ranks. His reading of his son is most telling about his own experience. He is essentially saying that he had resolved to hopelessness after realizing that he had been searching for something that is not there. To fill the void left by this hopelessness, Brown's father was abusive towards his children, and he drank.

Brown's reaction lies in his acquisition of hustler masculinity because it allows him to

recreate family and community and works against his parents' Southernness. It allows him to negotiate a personal space that gives him power to define himself rather than to be defined as his parents have allowed themselves to be. Their attempts to recreate community have failed them, and it becomes Brown's task to rectify some form of community for himself. According to Keith Clark in *Black Manhood in James Baldwin, Ernest Gaines, and August Wilson* (2002), Baldwin, Gaines, and August each create a protagonist, "who comes to realize the empowering effects of immersing oneself in his own community--a place with like minded, black native sons and daughters" and functions as an alternative to the "worlds where chaos and, predictably, self-erasure were natural outcomes" (15). Although Clark's argument is built upon the fictive worlds created by black male authors, it also applies to the environment described in Brown's narrative. Hustler masculinity functions as a connector that forms a group of males who have a shared experience. They rely on the goading and approval of each other to attain a personal space that is not informed by the limiting or degrading borders that define the spaces to which their parents and other adults have allowed themselves to be relegated. Baker suggests that the growth that Brown undergoes by assuming hustler masculinity and participating in the culture is vertical, suggesting that Brown is allowing the environment to define the parameters of his identity and that he is simply acting out against the environment.[14] Contrary to what Baker suggests, however, this early growth within hustler masculinity is horizontal. Essentially, hustler masculinity by definition is a form of black masculinity that extends itself beyond the borders to identify and acquire masculinity. This horizontal extension beyond the ghetto becomes the model for his later growth and redefinition of self within Harlem because of the aforementioned qualities that hustler masculinity encompasses.

In order to build their own communities, these young black males pass through rites of passage. By passing figuratively from boyhood to manhood as rite of passage suggests, these males create bonds that are used to build and sustain the male-centered community hustler masculinity enables. It creates such bonds because it establishes a set of linked lived experiences that allow them to relate to one another on a personal basis. In *The Ritual Process* (1969), Victor W. Turner defines rites of passage as the following:[15]

> All rites of passage or 'transitions' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying 'threshold' in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either

from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state'), or from both. During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a clearly defined and 'structural' type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions. (95)

Brown passes through the separation phase early realizing that neither of his parents have the ability to provide him with models of living that give him the power to define himself. They have not succeeded in building or joining reflective communities. They have allowed themselves to be isolated. As a result, Brown rejects both. He then passes through a period during which he is simply trying on the persona of hustler. He learns how to perform various scams, but it is not until he actually begins to dress like a man, when he begins to wear pants instead of short pants, that he begins to fall in line as a hustler. His hustler phase is guided by Johnny D., a young hustler whom Brown admirers.

Hustler masculinity allows young black males to function in their communities amongst themselves as white middle-class men who function in the industries and markets that they constructed. Unlike the white men, these black boys do not rely on their own definitions but rely upon those that they attain from watching white men. Brown builds a community that reiterates this idea. He writes, "I had to stay straight with these cats I knew because I didn't have anybody else, and didn't have anyplace else to go, unless I hung out over in Brooklyn, and in Brooklyn it was the same thing" (122). For Brown the camaraderie that hustler masculinity has allowed him to create amongst him and his male friends functions as an answer to the inadequacies that he sees in his own family. These black boys replace his family because they have a shared belief about the environment in which they live and understand their place in that environment. It is through the assumption of hustler masculinity that they come together.

Of course, hustler masculinity proves to be inadequate for various reasons. Hustler masculinity is built upon a folk character-type that is in and of itself inadequate. What has been described as a hustler or as hustler masculinity, Brown terms "bad nigger" (122). According to

Brown, "the only thing in life a bad nigger was scared of was living too long. This just meant that if you were going to be respected in Harlem, you had to be a bad nigger; and if you were going to be a bad nigger, you had to be ready to die" (122). Brown's description of the bad nigger coincides with John W. Roberts' description of the folklore character-type in *From Trickster to Badman: the Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom* (1989). As Roberts defines them, bad niggers were

> individuals [who] characteristically adopted aggressive behaviors in the slave system and refused to accept either the masters' physical powers as a match for their own physical powers, or to accept the values of the black community as binding on them. They sought through open defiance, violence, and confrontation to improve their lot regardless of the consequences of their actions for their owner or the slave community's welfare. (176)

After slavery, they were conceptualized as heroes and "became 'men' and 'women' in the eyes of black people and provided a model of aggressive action for achieving the dreams of freedom through political action" (Roberts 177). It is evident in Brown's text that the bad nigger of slavery lived well beyond slavery. Brown first encounters the character-type in human form when he is sent to the South for a year. Brown states, "The best songs were sung at the funerals for the 'bad niggers.' I learned that a bad nigger was a nigger who 'didn't take no shit from nobody' and that even the 'crackers' didn't mess with him. Because a bad nigger raised so much hell in life, people couldn't just put him in the ground and forget him" (47). Here the reader learns that the actions and reactions of the "bad nigger" are without direction and that he is indiscriminately violent and confrontational. This makes the hustlers' ability to sustain any kind of male-centered or recuperative community impossible because, although they see themselves as similar, they are also solely concerned with the survival of self, even if it is at the expense of a comrade's life or well being.

Although the idea of the bad nigger seems to be far removed from Brown in terms of time and distance, the bad nigger is very much alive in the North in the form of the hustler. Johnny D. typifies this character-type and is in essence the evolution, or the transformation, of the character-type once he crosses the Mason/Dixon Line. He has multiple hustles and is held in high regards within the community, especially by the young black males, while also being feared and, to a certain extent, despised by the very community in which he operates. The violence and confrontational nature of the character-type is reapplied in the North and confined to the poor

black sections of the city. In the case of Brown's narrative, the reworking of the bad nigger is confined to Harlem and other similarly confined and controlled boroughs and neighborhoods.

Within these neighborhoods, young black boys take up apprenticeships with the hustlers that they admire and begin to transform themselves completely so that they are no longer hoodlums or delinquents but hustlers. The problem with the assumption of hustler masculinity is that the fraternal relationships and male-centered communities that it creates rely on notions of masculinity that champion individuality and competition, which make it difficult to maintain any real community, so like the hustler himself, the community in which he involves himself becomes a façade of sorts. It is also a way of life that relies on narcotics as an escape from the reality of both life as a hustler and the poverty that exists in the portion of the city that they are exploiting. Hustler masculinity, then, because it champions individuality and competition, lacks trust and the ability to sustain any real homosocial relationships, negating any semblance of an effective male-centered community. Brown, though he has been taught how to hustle effectively by Johnny D., comes to realize the harm that hustler masculinity has done to him and to the people around him. It is through the mass introduction of heroin in Harlem that the crude nature of hustler masculinity is exposed to him as he witnesses many that he grew up with succumb to an addiction that dictates their function within Harlem and amongst each other. They hustle to feed their habits, just as they once hustled to feed their identities and later their egos.

Although hustler masculinity is problematic, it also assists as a catalyst towards a more communal-oriented black masculinity. Regardless of the fact that it builds false masculinities and counterfeit male-centered communities, they are still communities, and as Clark states, "these male-centered communities become spaces that promulgate spirituality and psychically intimate connections between black men and constitute collective acts of resistance and regeneration" (5). Of course, these male-centered communities that are built around hustler masculinity fail to come to such an end. It is made clear to Brown as he attempts to exist in this environment adulterated by the heroin haze that hangs in Harlem that hustler masculinity is nothing more than a mask worn as a reaction that seeks to set the parameters of this definition of black masculinity. They use hustler masculinity as a weapon that proves to be ineffective because the risks and consequences outweigh the immediate benefits. The only other option available to Brown is running. Running does not refer to the running and hiding that occurs in the "Flight" section of Wright's *Native Son*. Here, running simply means moving oneself to another environment so that

the previous environment can be analyzed from the outside.

Brown's running equates to searching out of other options. It begins with returning to school and moving out of Harlem without actually releasing hustler masculinity or allowing Harlem to release its hold on him. He moves to Greenwich Village where he allows himself to explore and experience other options. As Clark states, "Space functions metaphorically, signifying a psychic and spiritual freeing of oneself from enshackling definitions of self, whether from inside or outside one's cultural milieu" (21). The space that this newly removed environment creates allows Brown to shed away the mask slowly so that he can begin a negotiation for power and masculinity within the confines the urban environment created. Outside of Harlem, Brown gives himself permission to search for an alternative mode of living. One of these options lies in his response to music, specifically jazz. Years before, while Brown is in a youth detention center, he is introduced to jazz. Jazz, like other forms of African American music, "inevitably reflects the social consciousness of the African-American musician during any time period" (Bakersville *The Impact* 2). According to John D. Bakersville in *The Impact of Black Nationalist Ideology on American Jazz Music of the 1960s and 1970s* (2003), "African-American musical endeavors are influenced by these various interrelated contexts [cultural, political, social, and economic position] because the musician draws from his/her life experiences for artistic inspiration" (2), and as LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) states in *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (1963), "The Negro music that developed in the forties had more than an accidental implication of social upheaval associated with it. To a certain extent, this music resulted from conscious attempts to remove it from the danger of mainstream dilution or even understanding" (188). Jones also states that the "musicians of the forties, however, understood the frustration of American society proposed for the Negro, *i.e.*, that the only assimilation that society provided was toward the disappearance of the most important things that the black man possessed, without even the political and economic reimbursement afforded that white American" (Jones *Blues People* 186). Charlie "Yardbird" Parker's *Charlie Parker with Strings* is the first recording with which Brown falls in love. He is particularly drawn to Parker's interpretation of Ira and George Gershwin's "Summertime" from the folk opera, *Porgy and Bess*. "Summertime" is important for Brown's own growth because it is an example of what he must do to achieve a form of masculinity that transcends white middle-class masculinity. Parker's "Summertime" is a Northern and urban interpretation of a song that was written as a Southern

song, and this is what Brown has to do. He has to learn to do what his parents have not been able to do. He has to create a way of living in the North in which he can maintain himself as his parents were presumably able to do in the South. Bebop is Brown's answer because as Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. states, "Bebop worked in a self-conscious way to dispel the stereotypical image of shuffling, smiling Negro entertainers, who provided danceable beat and recognizable melodies for segregated audiences. Bebop musicians seemed to symbolize a new order. Unwilling to accept the limits placed on black jazz musicians by the white-dominated music business, they took a stance that helped give their music a sharp and, to many, an uncomfortable edge" (*Race Music* 106). It is not until later as a young adult that he reintroduces himself to the music through his interest in piano.

Piano functions first as simply a hobby for Brown and is reflective of all of the other changes that have occurred in Brown's life, but it does not extend beyond that as long as he practices and learns outside of Harlem. Brown does not experience the communal aspects of composing music because he practices in a vacuum of sorts since his teacher is Jewish and is the only person that he is in contact with when he is playing. Jazz is a communal art that relies on the ability of performers to respond to each other as if they are having a conversation. It is not until he returns to Harlem and places himself in the company of other musicians, who are also at similar stages in their own life that he is able to realize this communal aspect of the art. Brown describes his new cohorts:

> They didn't want to be a part of street life. Some of them had just awakened to this fact. They were the same cats who had lived according to the code of the street. Now they were the only young people in the community who were doing anything worthwhile. They were married, they had good jobs, and they were always dressed presentably. They had to stand out, because most of the young people in the community were junkies. Anybody who wasn't a junkie stood out.
>
> They became a new class, the young elite of the Harlem community. (354)

Brown comments later, "I felt that this was a new Harlem" (355). This is the Harlem that Brown rejoins. And as a member of this new Harlem, Brown becomes an affirming member not only of the male-centered community as a musician but an affirming member of the wider Harlem community. As he states, "It was as though I had found my place and Harlem had found its place. We were suited for each other now" (360). He becomes a help rather than a hindrance to the

community. It also gives him the ability to see that the church is of value within the community. After meeting and conversing with Reverend James, he writes,

> Reverend James seemed to know a lot about street life that I never expected any minister to know. It's not something that you read in the papers or that sort of thing. He just knew people. He understood human nature, and he knew the kind of people who became involved in street life. When he talked about them, he talked about them as people, not as things, fallen souls, or that sort of nonsense. He seemed to be a person, somebody who knew what was really going on. As a matter of fact, as first I suspected him of being an ex-hustler or something like that; but after talking to him, I knew that this couldn't be the case. (381)

Reverend James revises Brown's feelings about preachers and the institutions inside of which they operate. Brown proves this by later enlisting the assistance of Reverend James to guide his brother Pimp away from the hustling and addiction in which he was once entrenched. Brown's ability to trust that Reverend James can assist in helping his brother is significant because it shows that Brown has resolved his personal feelings with religion and the church.

Although it takes an exit from and a re-entrance into Harlem for Brown to realize a self and community affirming black masculinity, they are inevitable. Through hustler masculinity, Brown learns and understands how America operates and how it correlates with hustler masculinity. It also teaches him that he will never be recognized as part of the wider American culture regardless of how much his lifestyle is reflective of it. He must renegotiate his space by changing the nature of the space altogether and by legally operating outside the confines placed on Harlem. For that reason, hustler masculinity is a catalyst because it places its subject into two worlds of convention and rejection simultaneously, providing the foundation for future existence within a reliable source of masculinity that is self-reflective, self-defining, and self-sustaining.

CHAPTER TWO

EL-HAJJ MALIK EL-SHABAZZ:
MALCOLM X'S RECOVERY OF A MASCULINE IDENTITY THROUGH RECOURSE OF
AN EMERGING PAN-AFRICANISM

Like the preceding narrative, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is a narrative search for identity from boyhood to manhood that relies heavily on the establishment of male-centered communities, self-determination, and self-definition that comprise a hustler masculinity used to achieve this end. Previous studies of Malcolm X's autobiography have failed to consider fully the impact that Malcolm's acquaintance with hustler masculinity had on his life and how it influenced his later worldview, which could be called an emerging Pan-Africanist worldview. Though many critics have analyzed Malcolm's narrative along with his speeches, many have failed to explain his life in its entirety. In "X Marks the Spot: A Critical Reading of Malcolm's Readers," Michael Eric Dyson writes:

> Much of writing about Malcolm has either lost its way in the murky waters of psychology dissolved from history or simply substituted--given racial politics in the United States--defensive praise for critical appraisal. At times, insights on Malcolm have been tarnished by insular ideological arguments that neither illuminate nor surprise. Malcolm X was too formidable a historic figure--the movements he led too variable and contradictory, the passion and intelligence too extraordinary and disconcerting--to be viewed through a narrow cultural prism. (262-3)

Simply put, most who come to Malcolm's autobiography come with their own preconceived notions and biases and do not allow the text, the speeches, or the man to speak. In most cases, many critics fail to recognize the significance and possible meaning of the last stage of his life when he becomes El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.[16] This study shows how hustler masculinity influenced Malcolm X's transformation into El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. Malcolm X' transition to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz can be described as a spiritual conversion and an ideological rebirth.

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Neither is possible without the methods of self-definition through resistance to racist notions of an essentialized black masculinity that Malcolm learns through hustler masculinity. This study argues that Malcolm's socialization into American poor urban culture through hustler masculinity materializes into his final spiritual conversion and his political rebirth as an emerging Pan-Africanist because it champions self-definition and self-determination and relies heavily on an appropriation of language.

Although there are numerous studies on Malcolm's narrative, most have not attempted to make sense of "hustler Malcolm." Previous studies of *The Autobiography* have chosen to read the narrative in ways that highlight the conversion aspect while negating or ignoring Malcolm's hustler phase as part of the continuum towards his conversion in a need to shape the trajectory of Malcolm's life without properly addressing the contradictions that form the whole of his life. This is problematic because such analyses fail to account for the period that bears a considerable amount of weight on the rest of his life. Dyson states, "I have identified at least four Malcolms who emerge in the intellectual investigations of his life and career: Malcolm as hero and saint, Malcolm as public moralist, Malcolm as victim and vehicle of psychohistorical forces, and Malcolm as revolutionary figure by his career trajectory from nationalist to alleged socialist" (263). He later states, "The writings make up an intellectual universe riddled with philosophical blindness and ideological constraints, filled with problematic interpretation, and sometimes brimming with brilliant insights" (263). Critics such as David Dudley, Lawrence B. Goodheart, Shirley K. Rose, Warner Bertoff, and John D. Groppe, amongst other scholars, read Malcolm's narrative within narrow frameworks that do not attempt to gauge the impact Malcolm's young adult years had on his last years. For instance, Dudley and Goodheart choose to utilize semi-psychological and psychological frameworks, respectively, to engage in the analysis of the narrative. In "Out from the Shadow: Malcolm X," Dudley utilizes conventions of the conversion narrative and Harold Bloom's interpretation of Freud's "Oedipal Complex" to guide his reading of the narrative. Dudley states, "First intended as a paean to Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm's 'savior,' *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* in its final form records Malcolm's fight for intellectual and emotional independence--his quest to think for himself and to *be* himself" [italics in the original] (167). Essentially Malcolm's mission in the creation of himself in the text is to create a self that is separate from Elijah Muhammad, who functions as his surrogate father. As a result the hustler phase of Malcolm's life is simply referred to and judged in purely moral and

criminal terms. On the other hand, in "The Odyssey of Malcolm X: An Eriksonian Interpretation," Goodheart contributes a similar reading but suggests that Malcolm only realizes a "meaningful black identity … partially" (48). Goodheart utilizes Erik H. Erikson's identity model as defined in "The Concept of Identity in Race Relations: Notes and Queries" to mark the different stages of Malcolm's identity development in his narrative, but like Dudley, he also labels Malcolm's young adult life as a hustler based on outside perception. He calls it a "'negative identity'" (Erikson qtd. 48).

Although both Dudley and Goodheart's readings are problematic, they are valuable because they provide lenses through which the text can be read, and they also engage the hustler phase of Malcolm's life more objectively. Dudley states, "It [*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*] exemplifies in a striking way a central theme in all autobiography, the creation of a free, autobiographical 'I' that is identified with, yet distinct from, the writer" (167). Dudley is suggesting that the author is recreating himself with a retrospective gaze that separates the two. This is important because it suggests that in the creation of the narrative, the author is editing his identity as he writes so that it logically progresses to a desired end. Goodheart focuses on the recreation of self in an attempt to gain the power of self-definition. Combining Dudley and Goodheart reveals how hustler masculinity is an attempt to define the self, one that pushes Malcolm towards what may have been his final definition of self as an emerging Pan-Africanist.

Beyond Dudley and Goodheart's theories, *The Autobiography* is and was intended to be an autobiography and conversion narrative and as a result is shaped within specific conventions. The creation of this autobiographical "I" involves more than posturing of self and re-conceptualization of oneself in light of the sum of one's combined experiences. It relies on the author's ability to narrate his/her life retrospectively through the filter of the author's ideological bend, generating a level of self-criticism and knowing that would otherwise be lacking. For Malcolm, this means looking back over his life from a Pan-Africanist perspective and marking his different identities with different names that in some instances are indicative of his position in the community in which he locates himself. Essentially, Malcolm (re)creates a version of himself that is in search of identity as it is defined within the Pan-African Movement. In "The Semiotics of Salvation: Malcolm X and the Autobiographical Self," Bashir M. El-Beshti argues against readings that separate El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz from the previous incarnations of Malcolm because it does not fit into the conventional definition autobiography as a genre, which reads like

a Bildüngsroman where the author is writing about himself retrospectively and commenting on his life with a mature voice. El-Beshti writes, quoting Betty Shabazz, "'a lot of people say that Malcolm changes after the trip (to Mecca), but they never look at the totality and see that the man's entire scope had been broadened. They look at every individual change and say that Malcolm had changed from one thing to another'" (Shabazz qtd. 363). Essentially, the changes were part of a continuum in which the previous identity greatly influences the succeeding identity. I would like to take it further and suggest that although Malcolm begins dictating his narrative to Alex Haley before his break with the Nation of Islam, he is already thinking within a framework that extends far beyond the Nation of Islam rhetoric. Comments that he makes in "Message to the Grass Roots" to the Detroit Council for Human Rights on November 10, 1963, several weeks before his silencing by the Nation of Islam, which led to his separation, reveal a Malcolm that is thinking in terms that are not exclusively nationalist. He is thinking beyond blackness and beyond the United States. He states:

> The white man knows what a revolution is. He knows that the black revolution is world-wide in scope and in nature. The black revolution is sweeping Asia, is sweeping Africa, is rearing its head in Latin America. The Cuban Revolution--that's a revolution. They overturned the system. Revolution is in Asia, revolution is in Africa, and the white man is screaming because he sees revolution in Latin America. (X, *Malcolm* 9)

Malcolm is referring to black man's struggle in the United States as part of a larger struggle that links non-Westerners as a cooperative group reacting against Western domination. Although Malcolm never labels what he is speaking of as Pan-Africanism and because he looks beyond Africa to other non-Western territories, I will term it such because it fits within the framework of Pan-Africanism and because Malcolm's last phase of life was too short to determine for sure where he was moving politically. In "The Pan-African Movement: the Search for Organization and Community," Charles F. Andrain states, "The Pan-African movement exemplifies the contemporary African search for organization and community. The Pan-Africanists stress the community of interests and experiences of Africans and thereby call attention to the political and social issues which transcend the various territorial nationalist movements" (5). Malcolm creates an identity that is in search of a community. Malcolm also makes language an important aspect of his journey. As he transforms himself numerous times, he must also master the relevant localized lexicon. Malcolm has to learn the language of the community into which he steps and

take command of it. It is through the command of language that Malcolm gains the power of self-definition, when the language is working for him. As Rose states, "those who represent the theme that learning to read and write has allowed them [Malcolm included] to participate in a particular social group demonstrate that participation in the act of writing" (4). Instead of learning to read and write, Malcolm learns the power of language and when a speaker has full control of it, he can define himself and define others as well.

Although Malcolm's narrative is one of resistance and Malcolm's early life does not fit within the framework of resistance, it is important to understand Malcolm as "Homeboy," "Red," "Detroit Red," and "Satan." Malcolm as "Mascot" is the furthest away from an identity of resistance. It is an identity of assimilation or emulation. Malcolm is placed in the care of whites after his father is allegedly murdered and his family is dismantled by the state. His early life is marked by violence and disruption. His parents constantly argued, and a violent racist response to his father's Pan-Africanist preaching caused the disruption of his family.[17] As "Mascot," Malcolm is attempting to place himself within a community without being critical of his place in the community or the community's reluctance to accept him. He was their mascot, an oddity. Malcolm states, "I was unique in my class, like a pink poodle" (37). He also says, "As the 'nigger' of my class, I was in fact a novelty. I was in demand, I had top priority" (34). In the household of Mrs. Swerlin, Malcolm is repetitively called "nigger" and listens to her say things like "niggers are just that way" (32). None of this deters Malcolm from trying to become a part of the community of whites in which he lives. Most of them, as he demonstrates in the text, disrespect him and are only interested in him because he is the sole black amongst a community of whites. The turning point occurs when Malcolm realizes that white Lansing is not his only option. Malcolm states that in the summer of 1940 he went to Boston to visit his sister Ella. There, for the first time since the destruction of his family, Malcolm is in the presence of a black community. In Boston, he witnessed a variety of black people as he had never seen in Lansing. After returning to Lansing, Malcolm states, "I continued to think constantly about all that I had seen in Boston, and about the way I had felt there. I know now that it was the sense of being a real part of a mass of my own kind, for the first time" (42). Prior to his visit to Boston, Malcolm had essentially stripped himself of all those qualities that he associated with his father in an effort to gain entrance into the white community. His reaction to the disrespect of whites is opposite of how his father would react. At this point in his life, the goals of a Pan-Africanist are not viable to

Malcolm Little's or "Mascot's" ideal of living. Malcolm demonstrates how the inability to locate oneself in a self-reflective community can distort that individual's view of himself. Throughout the "Mascot" portion of the narrative, Malcolm communicates directly with integrationists, using his own story as a warning.

Malcolm's return to Lansing marks a change in his identity and a new understanding of his socialization in Lansing. Rose states:

> At this time, however, the actual acquisition of literacy skills is secondary to his socialization to the values of a literate society. Malcolm Little, the only black student in the class, was so popular among his classmates that he was asked to join numerous extracurricular organizations. But the acceptance he enjoyed was an acceptance based on his difference from his classmates, not on his equality with them. (5)

While in Lansing, Malcolm acquires the language but exchanges it for what he perceives is acceptance. Malcolm Little begins to use and transform the language he has learned. If Malcolm had not discovered the importance of community, he would probably still be in Lansing as a carpenter, as his English teacher Mr. Ostrowski had suggested, but he does not remain there. Malcolm allows himself to comprehend the meaning of the word "nigger" (43) and comments concerning the limits of black people's abilities. That comprehension forces Malcolm to realize that he would never be able to join the white community because he would never be more than their mascot and end up embracing a form of black masculinity that he would later see as degrading. Malcolm writes,

> It was then that I began to change--inside.
>
> I drew away from white people. I came to class, and I answered when called upon. It became a physical strain to sit in Mr. Ostrowski's class.
>
> Where "nigger" had slipped off my back before, wherever I heard it now, I stopped and looked at whoever said it. And they looked surprised that I did.
>
> I quit hearing so much "nigger" and "What's wrong?"--which was the way I wanted it. Nobody, including the teachers, could decide what had come over me. I knew I was being discussed. (44)

In response, Goodheart states, "The encounter with Ostrowski marked an identity crisis, a racist preemption of young Malcolm's self-perception. … Knowing that his efforts to aspire to white standards were futile, Malcolm fatalistically responded to Ostrowski's pronouncement. He fled"

(51). Although this may be one way of reading this episode, read in Pan-Africanist terms, Malcolm realized that there was no hope of achieving "a sense of community solidarity" (Andrain 6). Malcolm flees Lansing, not as a reaction, but in search of a community, and he heads for Boston because he knows that he will be able find a self-reflective community there.

Malcolm journeys towards self-definition when he runs from Lansing, Michigan, to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1941and become known as "Homeboy." Although this title may seem random, it is a reference to his status in Roxbury at his arrival. To paraphrase Malcolm, he looked the epitome of the rural Negro with ill-fitted clothing and kinky, poorly trimmed hair. This is how he introduces himself to urban life. Therefore, "Homeboy" is a reference to his ignorance of black urban life and the fact that he is not that far removed from his previous way of thinking. He is enthralled by the throngs of blacks in the city, a sight that was unavailable to him in Lansing. Although there are blacks in Lansing, after his family is dismantled, Malcolm is placed and socialized within a white community. He is also critical of the blacks is Lansing, whom he identifies Christians and the middle class, because they do not attempt to assist his family after his father's death. Malcolm has the opportunity to live amongst other blacks and also positively affirm his own identity, which he could not do in Lansing. Malcolm's flight to Boston is a rebirth and (re)socialization. As a result, Malcolm has returned to a symbolic infancy. He has to (re)learn all that he has accepted in terms of his blackness and how it relates to his position in society. His sister, Ella, whom he lives with, was aware of this aspect of Malcolm's relocation to the Roxbury section of Boston and advises him accordingly. Malcolm writes:

> About my second day there in Roxbury, Ella told me that she didn't want me to start hunting for a job right away, like most newcomer Negroes did. She said that she had told all those she'd brought North to take their time, to walk around, to travel the buses and the subway, and get the feel of Boston, before they tied themselves down working somewhere, because they would never again have time to really see and get to know anything about the city they were living in. (47-8)

This passage expresses several ideas that relate to Malcolm's later move towards hustler masculinity. Hustler masculinity is about avoiding work. One has others do his work for him. If Malcolm attains a job and begins to function in a way that resembles the individuals that live around Ella in Roxbury, he can be nothing more than an unskilled worker or menial laborer, whose sole purpose for working is to survive and to live within the delusion that he will receive a

piece of the American pie, that middle-class success can be his. Beyond being concerned with Malcolm exploring Boston, Ella also hints at the idea that work will soon become the focus of his life as it presumably is for many of the people who live in the section of Roxbury in which Ella resides. Malcolm himself comes to understand what she means in his own life but more so as he begins to examine and compare the lives of the blacks in the upper-class section of Roxbury. Malcolm states:

> What I thought I was seeing there in Roxbury were high-class, educated, important Negroes, living well, working in big jobs and positions. … These Negroes walked along the sidewalks looking haughty and dignified, on their way to work, to shop, to visit, to church. I know now, of course, that what I was really seeing was only a big-city version of those 'successful' Negro bootblacks and janitors back in Lansing. … They prided themselves on being incomparably more 'cultured,' 'cultivated,' 'dignified,' and better off than their black brethren down in the ghetto, which was no further away than you could throw a rock. Under the pitiful misapprehension that it would make them 'better,' these Hill Negroes were breaking their backs trying to imitate white people. (48)

Malcolm does not identify with this culture because for Malcolm this community remains entrapped in the idea that they can achieve white, middle-class success. These middle-class blacks in Roxbury, who call themselves the "'Four Hundred'" (48), were delusional to their actual positions in society because most of them had menial or unskilled jobs yet carried themselves and dressed as if they were upper class. They imitated the upwardly mobile white middle class as Malcolm had tried to do to no avail in Lansing. Malcolm's disdain for this black middle class culture forces him out of this section of Roxbury and to a more violent milieu that he views as authentic because he does not see black people attempting to emulate white people.

As "Homeboy" and tourist of Boston black communities, Malcolm is nothing more than a spectator. He has not joined a community. Malcolm does not begin to join a community until he meets Shorty, who introduces him to an alternative culture of resistance, zoot suiter culture. Malcolm begins his movement towards hustler masculinity. The transition from "Homeboy" to "Red" is slow. Unlike Brown, Malcolm is not a native of the area in which he is attempting to lay out a place for himself. Malcolm is the migrant, like Brown's parents, and must figure out how to negotiate a space in the black urban milieu without falling into the same trap as that of many Roxbury middle-class blacks. As a result, Malcolm "began going down into the ghetto section.

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That world of grocery stores, walk-up flats, cheap restaurants, poolrooms, bars, storefront churches, and pawnshops [that] seemed to hold a natural lure for [him]" (51). The lure for Malcolm is that this community is the opposite of what he saw and experienced in Lansing, and it in no way resembles black, middle-class Roxbury. It is during these excursions into the poor black parts of the city that Malcolm is introduced to physical manifestations of hustler masculinity. Malcolm writes, "I spent the first few months in town with my mouth hanging open. The sharp-dressed young 'cats' who hung on the corners and in the poolrooms, bars and restaurants, and who obviously didn't work anywhere, completely entranced me" (51). This is all he sees of hustler masculinity: the posturing. He is not exposed to it in its entirety until he starts the process of trying to emulate it. Beyond the image, Malcolm is also entranced by the language that is used in the community. Although Malcolm does not make it clear in this portion of the narrative, language and one's ability to control language and to manipulate language are important arcs in the narrative. Language moves him through the different phases of his life. Here language places him firmly in a community with which he chooses to identify. The urban space to which he is confined is not the urban space in which he lives. Malcolm's choice to remove himself from middle-class Roxbury and to acclimate himself to lower-class Roxbury is a decision to remove himself from an environment that gauges itself by the construction of whiteness and place himself in an environment that weighs itself against itself. Cornel West terms this "psychic conversion" in his criticism of Malcolm X (136). According to West, "Malcolm X's notion of psychic conversion holds that black people must no longer view themselves through white lenses. He claims that black people will never value themselves as long as they subscribe to a standard of valuation that devalues them" (137). One has to be able to look at one's self as the standard of valuation and not outside of one's self or one's cultural milieu.

Malcolm's discovery of Roxbury under-class culture and hustler masculinity initialize his movement towards hustler masculinity. It starts the re-establishment of himself as part of this community in which he feels comfortable. He sees the possibility of establishing himself in this community because it does not seem to consist of separate communities of blacks that separate themselves from each other like the upper-class blacks of Roxbury. According to Rose,

> The new identity which Malcolm assumed for himself when he left Michigan to live with
> his older half-sister, Ella, was that of a "Homeboy," the name given to him by his first

friend in Boston. The author notes that this marked his real introduction to and immersion

in black culture and the beginning of his street education, his socialization into a culture

that would allow his participation. (6)

Malcolm essentially saw himself as part of a wider black community that did not seem to be

exclusionary, and Roxbury's black middle-class community appeared to be exclusionary.

Malcolm states, "Not only was this [the lower class] part of Roxbury much more exciting, but I

felt more relaxed among Negroes who were being their natural selves and not putting on airs.

Even though I did live on the Hill, my instincts were never--and still aren't--to feel myself better

than any other Negro" (51). Lower class Roxbury represents Malcolm with a new language and

he is drawn to it. It was a language that did not exist on the "Hill."

Malcolm does not take to his (re)education alone. He has a guide. The guide formally

introduces Malcolm to underclass Roxbury and completes Malcolm's rebirth. Malcolm's guide is

Shorty, a musician gigging with other established musicians. He works or "slaves" in the pool

hall. He renames Malcolm "Homeboy" and gives him his first conk, which is a painful,

straightening process that make use of lye and potatoes to straighten curly and kinky hair. He also

gets him his first job as a shoeshine boy. The homosocial relationship that these two create

introduces Malcolm to the self-determination and self-definition can be gained within a male-

centered community and are related to the identity Malcolm garners when he begins to transform

his identity with the acquisition of hustler masculinity. This relationship only teeters the line of

becoming a male-centered community without crossing the line because Shorty takes on the

temporary role of father-figure and does not possess all the qualities of a hustler because he is not

fully a hustler. He participates in illicit economies as a small time marijuana dealer and dons the

garb and uses the language of hustler masculinity. He introduces Malcolm to zoot suit culture,[18]

which is a first step towards acquiring hustler masculinity.

Malcolm's formal introduction to hustler masculinity does not occur until after Malcolm

separates himself slightly from the mentorship of Shorty. This occurs when Malcolm meets

Freddy—the shoeshine boy he would be replacing--the first night that Malcolm works as a

shoeshine boy at the Roseland State Ballroom. He states that most of the dances that are held

there were for whites, but this does not limit his exposure to hustlers. He learns that he is to

function as a smalltime hustler at these dances by providing illicit drugs, condoms, and access to

prostitutes for those who so desired them. It is also here that he learns the mantra that will guide

him throughout the course of his life. He is also taught how to read people, how to read who is a cop. Freddie, the shoeshine boy who is teaching him the trade and hustle, says, "'The main thing you got to remember is that everything in the world is a hustle'" (58). Essentially, succeeding in this world is dependent on one's ability to read others, learn their language, and use their language to get from them what one desires. Language and the ability to read that language function as tools of power. Language gives those who understand it the ability to move in and about cultures and to negotiate their own space within these cultures as Malcolm does when he moves next to Harlem. This is the first thing he learns about hustler masculinity without being aware that he was learning a principle of hustler masculinity.

Although zoot suit culture may read as insignificant because it is a youth culture of resistance, understanding zoot suit culture is integral to comprehending Malcolm's hustler phases because it informs them. He evolves into a new stage of hustler masculinity. As Robin D. G. Kelley states, "Malcolm's narrative of his teenage years should also be read as a literary construction, a cliché that obscures more than it reveals. The story is tragically dehistoricized, torn from the sociopolitical context that rendered the zoot suit, the conk, the lindy hop, and the language of the 'hep cat' signifiers of a culture of opposition among black, mostly male youth" (162). Malcolm states, in reference to his conk (one of the markers of zoot suiters), "This was the first step toward self-degradation when I endured all this pain, literally burning my flesh to have it look like a white man's hair. I joined that multitude of Negro men and women in America who are brainwashed into believing that black people are 'inferior'" (64). For mature Malcolm, zoot suit culture can be equated with self-hatred and self-degradation. But according to Kelley, mature Malcolm is misreading his participation in zoot suit culture. Kelley states,

> For Malcolm, the zoot suit, the lindy hop, and the distinctive lingo of the hep cat
> simultaneously embodied these class, racial, and cultural tensions. This unique subculture
> enabled him to negotiate an identity that resisted the hegemonic culture and its attendant
> racism and patriotism, the rural folkways (for many, the 'parent culture') which still
> survived in most black urban households, and the class-conscious, integrationist attitudes
> of middle-class blacks. (165)

Zoot suit culture becomes a foundation for Malcolm's later identity as a hustler. Kelley describes the intricacies of the culture as such:

> While the suit itself was not meant as a direct political statement, the social context in

which it was created and worn rendered it so. The language and culture of zoot suiters represented a subversive refusal to be subservient. Young black males created a fast paced, improvisational language which sharply contrasted with the passive stereotype of the stuttering, tongue-tied Sambo; in a world where whites commonly addressed them as boy, zoot suiters made a fetish of calling each other 'man.' Moreover, within months of Malcolm's first zoot suit, the political and social context of war had added an explicit dimension to the implicit oppositional meaning of the suit; it had become an explicitly un-American style. (166)

Zoot suit culture, like hustler masculinity, resists essentialized, racist, stereotypical definitions of black masculinity. It was a negotiation of space and definition. And like hustler masculinity, it is also a culture built on exploitation of others and violence. According to Kelley, "The zoot suiters, many of whom participated in the looting and acts of random violence, were also victims of, or witnesses to, acts of outright police brutality" (167). Zoot suit culture functions as a direct link to hustler masculinity on account of its similarities with hustler masculinity and its subversiveness.

Although a zoot suiter in Roxbury would receive part of the education as a hustler would, it is not until Malcolm moves himself to Harlem and changes his name to Detroit Red and later Red that he understands that a hustler functions through more than image and language. Upon entering Harlem, Malcolm witnesses the presence of a different kind of black masculinity that is representative of the Harlem underclass but is also reminiscent of Roxbury's black middle class. Malcolm writes, "Every Negro I'd ever known had made a point of flashing whatever money he had. But these Harlem Negroes quietly laid a bill on the bar. They drank. They nonchalantly nodded to the bartenders, smooth as any of the customers, kept making change from the money at the bar" (85). Malcolm is witnessing a subversive form of resistance. Although they participate and control the illicit economies rejecting employment as menial labor, they are also strangely part of the middle-class that Malcolm had despised in Roxbury and Lansing. They are not putting on airs. They have learned to resist without rejecting the values of middle-class society as the zoot suiters had. If anything, they exaggerate those values.

Before joining the Harlem ranks, Malcolm learns that blatant rejection is not always a good way to resist. It happens on the train as one of the inebriated white passengers begins to taunt him. Rather than lash out at him, Malcolm tricks the man into stripping naked. Malcolm simply utilizes language skills, which allow him to negotiate his own space on the train. He

learns to use language the way a hustler uses language. Hustlers use language as a tool of power with which they persuade and trick as Malcolm does on the train. Like Brown, Malcolm was also warned about the hustler's world by individuals who had lived the life in their youth. Hustlers did not see old age and those who did became living examples of the short-lived lives of hustlers.

Beyond hustler masculinity encompassing an adept use of language and trickery, hustler masculinity also promotes the establishment of male-centered communities. Narrator Malcolm is aware of this. He states:

Many times since, I have thought about it [hustling], and what it really meant. In one sense, we are huddled in there, bonded together in seeking security and warmth and comfort from each other and we didn't know it. All of us--who might have probed space, or cured cancer, or built industries--were, instead, black victims of the white man's American social system. (104)

Hustler masculinity essentially has the ability to construct and sustain male-centered communities, which are important in one's journey towards self-definition. Community is also an aspect that Malcolm stresses in his later life, but it is on a much broader scale. It is transnational and transcontinental. Community as it is established in hustler masculinity is not stable as Malcolm comes to discover. Distrust exists between individuals, who are concerned solely with self-preservation and will go to any lengths to maintain their hustler masculinity. Hustler masculinity enjoins a community of young black men because these men typically do not last until old age and are removed completely from the community by way of prison and death. Malcolm does not recognize the distrust that exists within the community until he has to confront his mentor, West Indian Archie. Malcolm runs from the community to Roxbury. In Roxbury, his hustler masculinity earns him a prison sentence because he participates in a hustle in which the risks are exponentially increased. He organizes a burglary ring and is sent to prison when he is caught.

Remaining within the construction of hustler masculinity, which is a re-articulation of the African American folk character-type the badman, as we have seen, Malcolm chooses to treat prison as Hell, and he and the other inmates refer to him as "Satan." He is called Satan because he attacks Christianity whenever he has the opportunity. This is a continued rejection of middle-class respectability that is built upon Christian morality. Unlike his transformation from Homeboy to Detroit Red to Red, the transformation that occurs in prison shows Malcolm

returning to a transitional identity that function in much the same way that his Homeboy identity functioned. Malcolm discards his previous identities as a hustler and assumes the new one, rejecting the possibility that the previous identities could influence his understanding of this later identity. Like his transformation into a zoot suiter and later as a hustler, Malcolm's transformation into this new identity rests on his interest in language. While in prison serving time for several counts of burglary and going through heroin withdrawal, Bimbi, a prisoner and member of the Nation of Islam under the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, makes his presence known to Malcolm and begins to impress him with his demeanor and ability to communicate effectively in proper English. Malcolm states, "What fascinated me with him [Bimbi] most of all was that he was the first man I had ever seen command total respect … with words" (178). He feels this way about both Bimbi and Elijah Muhammad because neither of them use subversive, street language. They utilize and have a command of standard English. Malcolm starts his process of re-education. First he takes to learning the lexicon by devouring the dictionary page by page and then he re-appropriates history in an effort to claim an identity that is defined by Elijah Muhammad. Elijah Muhammad provides him with Yacub's History, which is a demonization of the entire white race and teaches black supremacy. This was appealing to Malcolm because as he states "that among all Negroes the black convict is the most preconditioned to hear the words, 'the white man is the devil'" (211). He later states,

> Here is a black man caged behind bars, probably for years, put there by the white man. Usually the convict comes from among those bottom-of-the-pile Negroes, the Negroes who through their entire lives have been kicked about, treated like children--Negroes who never have met one white man who didn't either take something from them or do something to them. (211)

Elijah Muhammad became that individual he wanted to emulate, so once again, Malcolm discards his name and takes the "X" to represent that idea that he does not know his real family name, the name that connects him to a particular tribe in West Africa, the name untainted by the violations of the white man. Although this may appear to be his own action, it is actually Elijah Muhammad providing him with an identity. In *Inside the Nation of Islam: A Historical and Personal Testimony by a Black Muslim* (2001), Vibert L. White, Jr. states, "During the tenure of Elijah Muhammad individuals who wished to become members of the group had to write a 'Savior's Letter,' which asked Fard Muhammad's (Allah) permission to join the Nation and to

receive a holy name.… Usually, after several years of dedicated service to the Nation, Elijah Muhammad created a special name for the person" (72). Malcolm's discarding of his name and portions of his knowledge is a rejection of his own history. Malcolm only retains that which is valuable as proof of Elijah Muhammad's teachings.

The Nation of Islam functions as a community that is stable when members remain in line. Malcolm remains inline for several years. Upon learning the lexicon, Malcolm becomes a fountainhead that spouts out the rhetoric of Elijah Muhammad. He lacks his own voice and is functioning as a puppet. When he does begin to express his own ideas, it becomes a problem with members and finally with Elijah Muhammad. As a result, his position within the community is thrown into chaos because he did not recognize that he was being hustled and did not remember that "all the world is a hustle." He focused on finding a self-reflective community, which he finds in the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam comes to function as a re-articulation of hustler masculinity by broadening its terms in regards to legality. Just as the hustler functions, the Nation of Islam operates outside of society's defined lines, has its own language, possesses its garb, and relies heavily on a posturing that exudes strength.

Malcolm's expulsion from the Nation of Islam sends his life into limbo. It is at this point that he reclaims his history and (re)gains the ability to read the Nation as a re-articulation of hustler masculinity, which has duped him by using language and a re-appropriation of history to lure him. Ultimately, this leads Malcolm on the hajj to Mecca to re-articulate his identity by rediscovering Islam and by undergoing a rebirth through the process of (re)naming himself. The pilgrimage also places Malcolm firmly in the world and begins his association with what could be called an emerging Pan-Africanism. Malcolm borrows directly from the brand that is associated with W. E. B. Du Bois. According to Tunde Adekele, "Malcolm saw Pan-Africanism as a means of injecting strength and vitality into a movement that was becoming increasingly localized and subverted within the United States. For Malcolm, unity between Africa and black America was needed for the mutual enlistment and redemption of both" ("Black Americans and Africa" 515). Within hustler masculinity and the Nation of Islam, Malcolm was in search of a stable self-affirming and self-reflective community. It may have been possible with Pan-Africanism. According to Clarence G. Contee in "The 'Statuts' of the Pan-African Association of 1921: A Document," Du Bois wanted to create a united front and recreate the African community by conjoining the African diaspora. Malcolm's objects were similar to Du Bois's, which were

… the study and realization of all that can be instrumental in improving the conditions of the Black Race all over the world.

In order to attain to this end, the Association proposes to increase the economic, political, intellectual and moral capacities of the race.

Politically, it shall strive to call the attention of the competent authorities of the various Powers entrusted with destiny of the Race, to the need of maintaining friendly relations with it, and of allowing and granting to it the same rights as those accorded to their other citizens or subjects.

From the economic standpoint, it aims to increase the productive faculties of the Race through a sound organization of its economic power, to teach the individuals of the Race the virtue of cooperation and association, and to lead them to concerted action in both the economic and the political struggle.

From the intellectual and moral standpoints, it being evident that the spiritual forces of a country influence its economic forces and form its most undoubted assets, the Association favors the spread of culture, the creation of an 'elite' in large numbers and the development of leaders with high ideals.[19] (412-3)

Malcolm's methods were also very similar.[20] Malcolm becomes the defiant man who defines himself and is the self-determined man that he wanted to be and become. This is how he envisioned manhood as an African American. He can finally define himself in what he presumes is a stable community of like-minded individuals whose frame of thinking is completely non-Western. Perhaps the ability to create a self identity that extended beyond Western boundaries was Malcolm's goal and not simply within African terms. Many of his later speeches and his association with other non-Western nations suggest that it was completely transnational.

The transformation from hustler to Pan-Africanist is a natural one for Malcolm. It is through hustler masculinity that Malcolm first places himself in a community. The instability of this community forces him to search elsewhere. He turns to Nation of Islam, which forces him to deny the existence of his previous identities. As Malcolm reclaims these previous identities, he regains the ability to see that the Nation is a re-articulation of the unstable community that exists within hustler masculinity. It is his ability to read as a hustler that allows him to break away and find a community that does not rely solely on rhetoric and revisionist history to rebuild and affirm his identity. Through his worlding as a non-westerner, Malcolm presents for emulation a

template for black resistance and survival in daily life.

CHAPTER THREE

"GHETTO PRINCE IS MY THING":
ICEBERG SLIM'S (RE)CREATION OF ROBERT BECK

Iceberg Slim's *Pimp: the Story of My Life* is very much a part of autobiographical tradition that includes Malcolm X's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*. Like these personal narratives, Slim's is also one of resistance that extends the African American autobiography tradition because it is neither explicitly political nor religious but a narrative that focuses on a black persona that has been largely ignored by critics due to his sensationalized criminality and alleged immorality. Although it is a narrative that focuses on the life of a pimp, as the blurb on the back of the 1987 edition of the Holloway House paperback states, Slim is "America's most read black author."[21] Not only is it widely read, but also it has greatly influenced many generations that have followed. Slim extended the limits of a genre of African American writing concentrating on black urban under-class communities. He made "the life" popular and spawned the birth of similar writers and Blaxploitation films that coincided with the production of his narrative. His influence extends itself into current popular culture as rappers Ice-T, Ice Cube, 50 cent, Scarface and others gave birth to and sustained the gangsta rap genre of music, wrapping themselves in the personas, names, mythologies, and culture that his narratives represent, and the general population has maintained a love/hate relationship with the characters that have come to mesmerize them. Slim does not simply reach his large and diverse audience through simple portraitures of the black urban environment and the people that exist there. Slim's narrative privileges street in order to play to middle class curiosity and to create the illusion that they are being given entrance into his previous lifestyle. Slim uses language to criticize capitalist-inspired masculinities and restructures them so that he can define himself within them.

Unlike Malcolm X and Claude Brown, Iceberg Slim does not attempt to create a separate definition of masculinity that disassociates itself from that which uses concepts of capitalism to define it; but he transforms the existing definition of masculinity into a form that is attainable within the confines of his environment. It is always a part of capitalism as Marlene Kim Connor describes white masculinity. According to Connor in *What Is Cool?: Understanding Black Manhood in America*, "America, a nation devoted to capitalism, defines manhood through achievement, money, possessions" (9). Slim's understanding of masculinity remains constant and never does he attempt to strip it of its Americanness. Indeed, he accentuates or exaggerates this aspect in the form of hustler masculinity onto what he grasps. This is not to say that during his life he does not come into contact with forms of black masculinity that stress the health of the spirit. He simply opts for the form that he grasps onto because he comes to view the other option as inadequate. He does not think it is possible to live holistically in a culture that stresses the importance of accumulating capital and material wealth. To live holistically would be a tool of resistance that would allow one in underclass urban America to live with hope, to love oneself, to love the community of folk in which one lives, and to create alternative parameters in which to define one's masculinity. The capitalist terrain of America seems to make this impossible in Slim's eyes, and the only way that he can respond to it in his mind is to steal his way into the American definition of masculinity. Becoming a pimp presents itself as the sole persona in the ghetto that is available to him, and he retains those qualities that are associated with the American definition of masculinity.

Slim is not an exception but one of many in the black under class who went to the city with hope but lost it. It is an issue that guides Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices* (1941) and an idea that Cornel West terms "nihilism" in *Race Matters* (1993). West, bell hooks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and James Baldwin, among others, cite a love ethic as the solution to this absence of hope or nihilism that has grown out of capitalism upon which American culture is built. According to West, "Self-love and love of others are both modes toward increasing self-valuation and encouraging political resistance in one's community" (29). To give himself value in a nation that does not value him and to resist the overall effects of being raised in an environment that is devoid of the proper tools to attain a respectable masculine identity, Slim chooses the life of the pimp because it is the only existence for black men within the black underclass that seems to allow black boys to become men in the way that middle class boys

become men.

The pimp persona encapsulates those qualities that define American masculinity as the accumulation of material wealth but hyperbolically. Although he has been demonized on moral and legal grounds, the black pimp is strangely American as Slim seems to highlight constantly in his own narrative. As Slim states in *The Naked Soul of Iceberg Slim: Robert Beck's Real Story* (1971), "In the cold-blooded academy of ghetto streets I was taught early that suffering is inevitable and necessary for an aspiring pimp, pickpocket or con man and even just a nigger compelled to become a four-way whore for the Establishment" (17-8). Essentially, the same conditions that create poverty in the United States give birth to the pimp and other similar characters. The necessity to evolve into such a persona is predicated upon the inability to attain and maintain a recognized masculine identity in the ghetto, the history of black folk in the United States as it relates to white folk, and an understanding of American paradigms and guiding principles. He is a figure who understands the intricacies of race and power and how they are implicitly connected in the urban space.

There are specific qualities that make one a pimp and extend beyond the façade that these individuals create as proof of their success in this particular hustle, trade, and profession. The pimp is the progenitor of *cool*. He symbolically stands as a symbol for survival, machismo, and success. He denies the notion that black men cannot function as men as it is defined by white American men. Rather than searching for other alternatives or relying solely on the idea of cool-- an idea that defines black men in need of "guidelines concerning maturity that incorporated the strange challenges of street life, of life without the tools of traditional American manhood, and of a life where life itself is the only thing you possess that's of any value" (Connor 20)--to define masculinity for himself, he embraces America's definition of success. The pimp wraps himself around the ideas that informs capitalism and transforms them so that they can also be applied to black masculinity in the urban space. This transformation becomes a negotiation of power, which as a black man he lacks economically and racially. He re-commodifies the black woman's body and reverses the master/slave dichotomy, building his empire by fashioning it after the American model and the slave system upon which it was built.[22] In Slim's words, "'a pimp is really a whore who has reversed the game on whores" (*Pimp* 15). Nikki Giovanni also articulates this idea in her review of Nathan Heard's *Howard Street* (1968).[23] Giovanni states:

It's so easy to condemn a prostitute for selling her body, but who doesn't? What is it but

prostitution when we sit somewhere for eight hours a day and make the proper responses to people and things that have no meaning for us? We are placing ourselves at the hands of the same whoremonger as she; only she has the whoremonger's disdain while we have his praise. And of the two, we are the most likely to contract his social diseases.

(Giovanni qtd. in Hogue 188)

The pimp avoids becoming a whore in the working man's world. He becomes an entrepreneur and chief executive officer like a successful businessman. In "Pimp Notes on Autonomy," Beth Coleman describes the pimp's businessman mentality as a "parody of propriety" (71), but this explanation seems a bit simplistic because the pimp represents all that is masculine. So, as Coleman states later, "The magic trick of pimping is to make something from nothing. He is a student of power, a classic trickster. The pimp sees an impossible situation, then finds a way to maximize it" (72).

Although pimping is a persona that has been used to attain masculinity, it is not a persona created by black men. According to Coleman, "America did not invent pimping, but it did invent the famous black pimp … In the Americas, due to the devilry of slave culture, he was made manifest" (73). The black pimp was created from circumstances that have persisted since the emancipation of the enslaved. Slim relays a similar idea in his narrative that is part of the education or mentorship that he receives from Sweet, a well-known, successful pimp in Chicago. According to Slim, Sweet says,

"… The truth is that book [pimp book] was written in the skulls of proud slick Niggers freed from slavery. They wasn't lazy. They was puking sick of picking white man's cotton and kissing his nasty ass. The slave days stuck in their skulls. They went to the cities. They got hip fast.

"The conning bastard white man hadn't freed the Niggers. The cities was like the plantations down South. Jeffing Uncle Toms still did all the white man's hard and filthy work.

"Those slick Nigger heroes bawled like crumb crushers. They saw the white man just like on the plantations still ramming it into the finest black broads.

…

"Those first Nigger pimps started hipping the dumb bitches to the gold mines between their legs. They hipped them to stick their mitts [hands] out for white man's scratch

[money]. The first Nigger pimps and sure-shot gamblers was the only Nigger big shots in the country." (*Pimp* 194-5)

Although the creation of the black pimp as rendered in Slim's narrative is not completely historical, there are moments within the dialogue that rely on an understanding or interpretation of history. That is not to say that Sweet's interpretation of history is inaccurate. His unadulterated narration of the creation of the black pimp coincides with Coleman's appropriation of history to account for the creation of the black pimp. Coleman states:

… For him to be the master is a local revolution unto itself, for him to trade in a localized zone of human labor is the twist of the screw to the point of giddiness. The irony is that if he does his job well, in order to become a free agent, he must reproduce a peculiarly limited mode of bondage. For, of course, the commodity of pimping is sex. It is a commodity rendered *lifestyle* by the pimp, formatted across much the same blueprint as the plantation system. One might say pimps are simply repeating a scene of mastery dear to the history of Western culture. (73)

Black men who became pimps essentially watched their white masters in slavery peddle black flesh. Black sex was transformed into a commodity through actual forms of pimping performed by masters and through the degradation of the enslaved as chattel whose copulation profited the master as he sold and bought their children. The pimp reverses this dichotomy of power and becomes the master. He peddles black flesh and white flesh, when he can attain it.

As a creation of America, the pimp does more than reverse the slave/master dichotomy or simply emulate the peculiar institution of slavery. Although they are not recognized, the pimp is a part of the middle class, and it is this class of folk that he is emulating. The material possessions that the pimp attain as markers of success hold the same value as those things that the middle class cherish. In a way, they replace those things. Slim writes of himself,

… Everybody was calling me "Iceberg," even "Sweet." Only I and several peddlers I copped from knew that my icy front was really backed by the freezing cocaine I snorted and banged everyday.

I pimped strictly by the book for the next three years. I traded in a "Hog" [Cadillac] each year. I never had less than five girls in the family.

I moved out of "Top's" building and let the family stay there. I took a suite in a swank midtown hotel. I had the privacy, the jewelry, and all the flash and glamour of a

successful pimp. (*Pimp* 224)

In this passage, Slim emphasizes the markers of success: material wealth, privacy, recognition, and family. He takes pride in attaining and maintaining the markers of success that are also the same markers in which the middle class man takes pride. The pimp manipulates the terms that the middle class man utilizes to define himself so that the ideals and material that define the pimp's life can fit within the terms of the discourse on middle-class masculinity. The pimp's definition of middle-class masculinity is born from his understanding of white men within the discourse on slavery concerning the master/slave dialectic. Their presence in the pimp's eyes has remained constant in that they rely on the labor of others to define themselves and to accumulate the wealth that they use as indicators of their identities. The pimp takes his cue from both the slave master and the businessman, who appears to be one and the same. The pimp exists on the same plane as middle-class men and entrepreneurs and CEOs.

The pimp fashioning his lifestyle and existence after that of middle class men and businessmen is a negotiation of power in which the pimp assumes the position of power. Instead of answering to these individuals as a janitor or the numerous other unskilled, low paying professions that a black man without professional education and training could attain at the time, Slim's assumption of the pimp persona is a masquerade of sorts. It is an attempt to attain and achieve those things of material value that function as markers of success and achieved masculinity and are difficult for black men to achieve due to a lack of resources and tools to accomplish the task. Pimping is concerned with attain, maintaining, and wielding power, which is associated with accumulation of material wealth. The pimp puts on the mask of the master and performs accordingly. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon states:

> If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:
>
> --primarily, economic;
>
> --subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidernalization—of this inferiority.
>
> (11)

Whiteness and economic power become synonymous for black men. Black men are in a constant struggle to attain the accoutrements of whiteness, which also determine the extent of one's humanity, ability to define one's identity, and the ability of one man to force his will upon another. They also seek to replace whiteness with an alternative to attaining a sense of masculinity. It is a struggle to define one's self identity and to attain, maintain, define, and

control the definition of others.

The pimp, as Slim produces him, succeeds in attaining the powers of self-definition by transforming the language of masculinity. Slim uses street language over which he has control. It also gives the illusion that new definitions are being introduced when they are not. His use of language, which will be described in detail later, is a blatant attempt to breach the existing and ruling discourse on masculinity and to transform it so that he is included as part of the discourse. Although Slim may seem to be opposing this definition through re-articulation of his own identity, it is not as successful as it may seem because the struggle that it seems to produce is illusory. There is no real struggle if there is no true rejection of the definitions that are put forth. The lack of struggle that informs Slim's narrative is identical to that which Fanon presents as the Martinican lack of struggle against the French colonizer. Fanon writes:

> Historically, the Negro steeped in the inessentiality of servitude was set free by his master. He did not fight for his freedom.
>
> Out of slavery the Negro burst into the lists where his master stood. Like those servants who are allowed once every year to dance in the drawing room, the Negro is looking for a prop. The Negro has not become a master. When there are no longer slaves, there are no longer masters.
>
> The Negro is a slave who has been allowed to assume the attitude of a master.
>
> The white man is a master who has allowed his slave to eat at his table. (219)

As Fanon states of black Martinicans, blacks in the United States, especially the pimp, have simply replaced the master in the master/slave dialectic. The black women's genitalia become the source of their material wealth. Slim quotes his mentor Sweet, stating that upon the black man's release from enslavement, he realized that he was still enslaved. They are given permission under specific guidelines to pimp and are at the will of their masters, who, in the case of the pimp, are the criminal justice representatives that the pimp must pay off. So at no point does the pimp actually take overall control. His survival depends on his ability to maintain the relationship that depends on his ability to succeed economically as a hustler and to meet the monetary demands of those who allow him to hustle.

It is through manipulation that the pimp succeeds in becoming a hero rather than be vilified as he is by the criminal justice system, sociologists, and psychologists yet he operates within the urban space or attempts to define this space that is foreign to those who desire to vilify

him. This heroism that is afforded the black pimp lured Slim's readership and won the hearts and minds of young black males who desired to become pimps after reading Slim's narrative. The publication of *Pimp* in 1969 seemed to anticipate the birth, success, and popularity of Blaxploitation era films. In the films, the black criminal was the hero because he presumably reversed black/white relations as they are informed by the master/slave dichotomy and showed black men winning by "any means necessary." According to Ed Guerro in *Framing Blackness: the African American Image in Film* (1993), "Clearly, beyond the mid-1960s, lower-class blacks were increasingly dissatisfied with the exhausted black bourgeois paradigm of upward mobility through assimilation and started to identify the black experience with the defiant images and culture of the 'ghetto' and its hustling street life" (89). The production of black Hollywood films was a reflection of this disdain for black middle-class morale. The underrepresented blacks of the urban underclass were in search of something that seemed to speak directly to them. Although Guerro states that the films were the products of white studio heads, blacks were attracted to these films because "the cool, counter white, underworld perspective of the black gangster or outsider has enjoyed much attention in African American popular literature, most notably in the novels of Robert Beck (a.k.a. Ice Berg Slim), as well as the more polished literary works of Chester Himes, and Donald Goines, all of whose novels inspired many film scripts" (94). The films were essentially a reflection of the lives many underclass blacks understood as their own, and the narratives that influenced the production of these films were their own stories. *Pimp* unlike the first film of the blaxploitation genre was business-oriented from its inception but became the inspiration for later narratives such as the works of Donald Goines that were also produced solely for their economic value. As Slim corroborates in an open letter found in *Naked Soul*, "Brother, I live in the ghetto and have no desire to break its bonds, for I am after all a street nigger learning to write, who is incidentally being blessed with an increasing audience for his efforts. Materially, I dream at the moment of more space and less wobbly furniture. I experience and view the ghetto as a savagely familiar place of spiritual warmth rich in the writers treasure of pathos, conflict and struggle" (217). Clearly, Slim is a writer though he presents himself as a novice and of all the things that he could choose to say at the beginning of the letter he highlights the economic potential of his new career. Slim, like the characters in the film, presents himself as a man in the fashion and language that the community in which he is operating is most accustomed to hearing and seeing. He becomes a hero because he makes their lives relevant. But

as Slim also makes clear, "He [the pimp] is feared, hated, despised and walks a greased wire with the penitentiary on one side and his death on the other from other pimps, his victims, or their parents or relatives" (*Naked Soul* 60). He is a modern-day badman.

The pimp is not only a contradictory hero but he is also a protector of sorts. According to Slim in *The Naked Soul of Iceberg Slim*, "The practical reasons are that the whore needs the pimp to protect her, to advise her, and to keep her out of jail" (58). If this idea is broadened to include his overall role in the wider society, the pimp is also the protector of his community. Though this may sound perverse because he also exploits that community, his protection is like that of a businessman built upon exploitation of labor. The pimp's business is ghetto commerce. Ghetto commerce is essentially anything that holds any value in the urban environment and can also be proffered for the accumulation of material wealth. It also includes those elements that do not possess a monetary value but weigh in transactions. The products of ghetto commerce include but are not limited to women, drugs, stolen goods, and language. As the perceived sole controller of ghetto commerce, he guards his empire or space enclosing it within a language that is only understood by those who exist and live in the urban space. It becomes as confusing to those outside of the environment as the terms of business and commerce are to those who are not a part of that world.

Overall the pimp lifestyle is advantageous in the journey toward a livable masculinity. He attains a sense of masculinity through emulation and manipulation rather than searching for a new definition into which he can fit himself. Although it is not real control or power than comes with being a man in the capitalist and middle-class sense of the word, it affords him the opportunity to pretend that he does own such a sense of control and power. It also allows him to place the same accoutrements of middle-class masculinity in his environment. It is also a reversal of power relations in which the pimp seizes upon the opportunity to reclaim history as it is related to his masculinity and identity. But at what cost?

Although the pimp's life may come with the aforementioned trappings, they are gained at the cost of their sanity, the ability to trust others, and their freedom and lives. In both *Pimp* and *Naked Soul*, Slim regards hatred as a quality one needs to become a pimp. Throughout the narrative there is an explicit hatred for white people and for one's mother. Of Sweet, he writes, "'He sure hates white folks. He pimps awful tough on white whores. When he puts his foot in their asses he's really doing it to the white man" (*Pimp* 134). Slim also states, "I am convinced

that most pimps require the secretly buried fuel of Mother hatred to stoke their fiery vendetta of cruelty and merciless exploitation against whores primarily and ultimately women" (*Naked* 95). This hatred is preferably one for women, which stems from a hatred for his mother. The pimp is also alone, a fact that Slim repeats numerous times throughout the narrative. Slim simply writes, "A good pimp is always alone" (*Pimp* 197), indicating that there is no trust amongst pimps. This is because their trust has been broken early, and it was never restored. So as a result, they isolate and dissociate themselves from feeling anything. This becomes his downfall because he allows his distrust to control the way he lives, which is similar to a vagrant who remains within the walls of one city. The pimp also builds his identity upon the subjugation of another, the black woman. His emulation of middle-class culture and business culture becomes a perpetuation of slavery and harsh realities that were visited upon the bodies of black females. He has taken over the master's duties rather than reversed them.

Although the pimp rejects Christianity, he is very similar to the Christian in the black ghetto as presented in Brown's narrative. James Baldwin raises a similar point in *The Fire Next Time* (1963). Baldwin recollects, "My friend took me into the back room to meet his pastor--a woman…. My friend was about to introduce me and smiled and said, 'Whose little boy are you?' Now this, unbelievably, was precisely the phrase used by pimps and racketeers on the Avenue when they suggested, both humorously and intensely, that I 'hang out' with them" (28). He later states, "Perhaps we were, all of us--pimps, whores, racketeers, church members, and children-- bound together by the nature of our oppression, the specific and peculiar risks we had run" (41). The black Christian grasps onto religion as an answer to problems that urban existence presents. It does not offer any applicable answer, so it becomes an anesthetic to numb them to their environment. The pimp also searches out an anesthetic but calls it partying or fun. The constant reliance on chemicals to operate on a daily basis reveals that they have an unmet need that is similar to that of anesthetized Christians. Baldwin suggests that both are "gimmick[s]" (24). They are all in search of something to fill the spiritual void the environment has created within them. The pimp unconsciously surges toward his own demise.

Like the badman, he has a short life span. His pimping life results in death, imprisonment, or vagrancy and substance addiction. Although each represents the death of the pimp and not necessarily the person, the two former results are expected. The latter is somewhat expected due to how the pimp lives, yet it is the one consequence to which the pimps operates obliviously. As

Slim embarks on a career as a pimp, his first acquaintance is an ex-pimp, who is drug addicted and homeless, yet his previous existence as a pimp clouds his own ability to recognize his own low state. Remembering him, Slim writes:

> I thought, "Could this really be the same 'dandy?' What had happened to him?"
>
> I said, "Preston, I know you. I'm the kid who used to shine your 'Stacy's' back on Main Street. Remember me? I'm pimping myself now. You sure pimped up a storm when I was kid. What happened? Why are you steering for this craps joint?"
>
> He had a dreamy, far-away look in his dull brown eyes. He was probably remembering his long ago flashy pimp days. (*Pimp* 94)

Addiction and vagrancy fall on him as a result of how he lived life as a pimp constantly under the influence of some chemical substance and as a result of the distrust that exists between pimps. Slim becomes dependent on chemical anesthetics and is sent to prison, making the shortness of the hustler lifestyle a reality. Before falling victim to the lifestyle, Slim decides to quit pimping.

Beyond the power that the pimp wields through the manipulation and exploitation of others and the illusory power he attains through his association with and emulation of the white middle class, there is also a source of urban power that the pimp holds, which Slim makes use of as the protagonist of the narrative and as the narrator/author. In the text and the pimping world, language is a source of power and the most important source of power because it is through language that the pimp is able to manipulate others in the manner that he does. He uses language to expose himself and the culture while also using colorful language to act as the barrier to his identity and to the culture, allowing only what he wants exposed to be demystified. As Michel Foucault states in *Discipline & Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1977),

> We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. … it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the process and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge. (27-8)

Essentially, power and knowledge are inseparable and the individual or entity that is in power

controls the dispersal of knowledge. By privileging urban language, Slim controls the terms, parameters, and distribution of the urban underclass culture he is exposing. Of course, because he does control the language, he also controls what becomes public and what remains hidden in the urban environment.

Knowledge is distributed and withheld as a mechanism that can be used to control the subject. Slim does this with his use of language. In the narrative, he privileges urban vernacular rather than the language that is typically used by governing bodies and social scientists to describe and categorize the black inhabitants of the under-class urban landscape. They are usually painted in broad strokes of criminal psychopathology and sexual perversity. The state departments and others deny that there is an existing culture and deny that culture the right to speak for itself. As a result, the community is left out of the discourses that have been created and are left without a vocabulary that can be used to define themselves. Slim reverses this tendency and utilizes the language of the environment to allow the community to speak and to speak to the community, hence the vocabulary used to construct the text. With this language, Slim attains power and allows the community itself to attain a sense of power, control, and the ability to define itself. They hold power in and through the narrative because they have an existing relationship with the language and are in control of the language. As readers outside of the community and outside of the narrative attempt to participate in this new discourse, they realize that they are no longer in control because the language is foreign to them. They are forced to run to the glossary that Slim provides at the end of narrative with definitions of words and phrases such as "chili pimp (small-time one-whore pimp)," "lip (lawyer)," "mitt man (a hustler who uses religion and prophecy to con his victims, usually the victims are women)," and "mucky mucks (a sumptuous term applied to the rich and privileged by the poor)" (314-5); and this will help them to understand some of the language, but does not allow them to participate in the discourse on masculinity in the urban environment because Slim does not define all of the vernacular terms in the glossary. They become the observers that the community once was. Slim extends this manipulation beyond the text in his quest for black masculinity.

It also through the language that Slim criticizes and gives the community the ability to criticize and categorize the state and other entities. Although, in the glossary, Slim replaces the terms that he uses in the text with those that would be used by readers outside of the urban community, he does not unload any of the terms. This means that he does not explain in any way

how these particular terms may have come into being. For example, Slim uses the term *Hog* instead of Cadillac; he states, "Dawn was breaking as the big Hog scooted through the streets" (*Pimp* 11). It is interesting that the term for the American-made vehicle, which has traditionally been a signifier of one's success is referred to as a farm animal. In terms of the animal, *Hog* also connotes greed, girth, and filth. When the term is unloaded in this manner, one may assume rightfully that it is referring to the traits of the car, but the term extends further than that because it is more likely that it is a covert criticism of American capitalism in general. This is the case because throughout the narrative, Slim criticizes America for slavery, the environment in which he and numerous others have been forced to live and survive, and the rights that are denied to his community because of race and/or class. Throughout the narrative, there are terms that connote similar ideas and criticisms. He uses such terms to signify that he understands the workings of America and that his assumption of said attributions is not his approval of them but his understanding that to survive he must participate in the game and use the established rules of that game.

Although Iceberg Slim is writing as Robert Beck as a sign that he is no longer a pimp, I would argue that Robert Beck is still Iceberg Slim and has simply transformed the game rather than discarding it as he claims. In the preface to *Pimp*, Slim states:

> In this book I will take you the reader with me in the secret inner world of the pimp. I will lay bare my life and thoughts as a pimp. The account of my brutality and cunning as a pimp will fill many of you with revulsion, however if one intelligent valuable young man or woman can be saved from the destructive slime then the displeasure I have given will have been outweighed by that individual's use of his potential in a socially destructive manner. (17)

He later states, "Perhaps my remorse for my ghastly life will diminish to the degree that within this one book I have been allowed to purge myself. Perhaps one day I can win respect as a constructive human being" (17). Of course, beyond the preface, he states the facts as they are and also criticizes and even compares his middle-class existence in the epilogue to his life as a pimp. His production of the narrative and the publicity that follows its publication are indications that he is up to his old games. Through his use of language and a quasi-confessional tone, Slim succeeds in manipulating the reader and the general public into believing that he is an ex-pimp.

Slim's privileging of black ghetto language allows him to manipulate his audience into

believing that he has actually rejected all notions of pimping. His language allows him to criticize the entities that form the foundation of the pimp lifestyle and to grasp onto the qualities of the entities he criticizes without making anyone privy to what he is doing. Throughout the narrative, Slim indicates that he is manipulating the audience into believing one thing by going into explicit detail about different games or hustles, which would take nothing from the narrative if they were not present. Of the many games that he explains, the "Murphy" has the most bearing because the process he describes is the same one that is guiding his narrative. As Slim states in the beginning of the description, "Real 'Murphy' players use great finesse to separate a mark from his scratch. The most adept of them prefer that a trick 'hit on' them. It puts the 'Murphy' player in a position to force the sucker to 'qualify' himself and to trim the mark not only for all of his scratch, but for his jewelry as well" (*Pimp* 38). This is the nature of all of the games in which Slim involves himself. His use of language in the text and the text itself functions the same way. His choice of language forces his reader to come to him and attempt to learn but they will never be able to comprehend it completely. It is through the narrative that they come into contact with Slim. The narrative is the tool that he uses to take their "scratch," their money. His book is his new whore and the readers and media outlets that vowed for his appearance and interview are his "johns." He manipulated them into wanting to know about his past lifestyle, yet he is using that lifestyle to manipulate readers. He also gives the reader the ability to experience his former world vicariously without feeling guilty. It is also the interest of the public that allows Slim to cross the borders from the underclass to the middleclass and become a part of American mainstream culture.

Slim does not only utilize language of games to manipulate his reader or to get the "trick to hit on" him, he also draws sympathy by using a quasi-confessional tone. The tone is quasi-confessional because Slim is no way confessing in the traditional sense, but he does seem to be repenting by acknowledging his supposed sins. Slim paints his assumption of the pimp lifestyle as a descent into a Dante-like Hell and is guided through its depths by a young hustler. He also utilizes dreams that are focused on religion, sexuality, and his mother at the same time that he gives signs that he feels guilty for his actions. Last but not least, Slim's descriptions of the games are, in a sense, confessions, but he slyly negates this quality by comparing the games to the American capitalist tradition upon which they have been built.

Iceberg Slim is able to attain and maintain his masculinity as Robert Beck because as

Frantz Fanon states, "Man is only human to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him" (216). The key word here is that he is recognized. He is no longer a part of the unrecognized middle class. He is recognized within middle-class culture and is able to make a smooth transition because as a pimp, he understood what made middle-class men middle-class men. It was a way living that he emulated through his acquisition of the pimp persona and desired to achieve although there is a constant insistence that he does not allow himself to become a slave in the working man's world. His knowledge functions as the key to his successful, and as a result, he avoids becoming a slave. He essentially uses this knowledge as the basis for his own narrative, a narrative of pimping and capitalism.

Like Brown and Malcolm, Slim creates a new space in which he can be a man. It does not articulate itself as clearly as previously discussed because it does not seem as revolutionary or resistant as theirs. Slim has simply taken the ideals of masculinity that are used to gauge degrees of his pathology and dysfunction, and he emulates them. Then he uses these ideals to manipulate the middle class community that has denied him the ability to achieve a sense of strong masculinity. He also shows the black urban community how it can also achieve what he has achieved, yet his intensions are misinterpreted. The largest sign that they have been misinterpreted is that, since the publication of the book, black males have been more impressed by the pimps in the narrative rather than by the production and result of the narrative. His heirs are rappers, who seem to understand the function of his narrative, but are misinterpreted just the same.

EPILOGUE

The African American hustler is a purely American character that grew within the borders created by racism and classism and blossomed as black men transformed themselves into "pariahs" of capitalism in the ghetto. It began with lessons learned from masters on plantations and continued when they realized that, out in the American landscape, the master/slave dichotomy would continue to inform and guide inter- and intra-racial relationships below and above the Mason-Dixon Line. Nearly a century and a half after the emancipation of slavery, six decades after the end of World War II, four decades after the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Act of 1965, the black hustler is still relevant to today when politicians and others inside and outside of the black community argue about the validity of efforts to create equality in an allegedly democratic society. Adolescent black boys continue to try on the garb. Communities within hip-hop culture have created and recreated the black hustler masculinity on wax, in videos, and in Hollywood, taking lessons from Iceberg Slim, whose autobiography became their bible and business plan. Although many of these images have been created by studio heads and by record label executives, they hold the validity that Claude Brown, Malcolm X, and Iceberg Slim's participation in hustler culture held and existed for the same reasons. Many of their stories are just as literary and function as community texts. Although through music a majority of these stories are relayed and retold, the genre of the hustler narrative has not died and Nathan McCall's *Makes Me Wanna Holler: a Young Black Man in America* is one of its current exemplars.

In many ways, McCall's narrative is an extension of Iceberg Slim's narrative because it continues the search for an alternative vision of African American masculinity. His narrative is a post-Civil Rights and post-Black Power movement hustler narrative, which like that of Brown, Malcolm, and Slim, is a community text in which McCall's voice functions as that of a community of voices responding to the futility of the bygone movements and speaking for the black boys who have to become men in an environment where they lack the opportunities and tools necessary to achieve a sense of masculinity in a capitalist-centered society. The whole of McCall's experience, the theme of his narrative, is fully communicated in the initial chapter. McCall enters the narrative in the height of violence that shows him and his cohorts attacking a

group of white boys who were bicycling through his neighborhood. McCall shows himself continually struggling against the power that white men hold, and, throughout the narrative, this struggle is physical and psychological. Like Brown's text, McCall's shows a kind of disdain for his father. McCall writes:

> I saw striking similarities in most of my friends' father, who were also heavy drinkers. The fellas and I called them "oilers" because they drank that firewater to loosen their tension. … They looked downtrodden and were so burdened and preoccupied with white folks that they seldom talked much with their children. …
>
> I never heard my friends say they wanted to be like their father when they grew up. Why would we want that when we knew that our fathers were catching hell? That would be like saying we wanted to catch hell, too. If anything, we wanted to be the *opposite* of our fathers. We didn't want to work for the white man and end up like them. [italics in the original] (87)

Here McCall is acknowledging the role race plays in his stepfather's daily life, and like Brown's father, McCall's stepfather uses alcohol to placate the effects of racism. McCall later writes, "There's nothing more dangerous and destructive in a household than a frustrated, oppressed black man" (87). McCall's texts harkens back to those of Brown and Malcolm X because it becomes a kind of community manual, but it is more akin to Slim' because it shows how he utilizes the concepts and rules of the hustler environment to become a part of American middle-class culture from which he has been excluded. As he states, "The main reason we hustled and stole so hard was to pick up money to buy clothes" (94). Clothes function as a marker of material wealth, whether real or imagined. McCall's narrative and inherent struggle are important because like Slim's text, which informs the films that follow its publication, they are the same stories and struggles that a new generation of young black men reiterated in films and music that were produced before, after, and during the publication of the narrative. They are all the product of the generation gap that has existed between the Civil Rights generation and the post-Civil Rights generation. In *The New H.N.I.C.: the Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip Hop*, Todd Boyd sums it up as such:

> Civil Rights often imposed a certain unspoken code of moral behavior, which suggested that one should 'act right' so as not to offend the tastes of dominant White society and so as to speed up one's entrance in the mainstream, while recognizing that only certain

Blacks and a certain Black style would be accepted into the corridors of Whiteness. …
Hip hop could care less what White people have to say. As a matter of fact, hip hop, more
accurately wants to provoke White people and 'bourgie ass niggas' to say something,
while laughing all the way to the bank. This ultimate disregard for approval of the
mainstream is quite liberating, indeed. (10-1)

Like hip hop, Claude Brown, Malcolm X, and Iceberg Slim were writing against this alleged
moral corrected, yet their voices fell short of reaching the ears that needed to hear their stories
and underlying messages. As a result, the hustler continued to be relatively important as a symbol
of one's masculinity; young black men watched doors slam in their faces as the promises of the
Civil Rights movement went unmet. Economic advancement came to replace the necessity to
define oneself, to assert oneself, and to place oneself in the world, in the capitalist centered-
world.

In Chapter One, I have shown how in *Manchild in the Promised Land*, which presents
hustler masculinity as a tool of acclimation for a black boy of migrant parents, that although
hustler masculinity functions as an identity of resistance, it becomes inadequate. It depends on
escapism to function within the underworld and an endless necessity to allow the body to be
confined and/or nearly harmed to maintain ones relevance within the criminalized underworld. I
revealed how Brown (re)places himself within his community as participant in cultural institution
of resistance, completely transforming white middle-class ideals of masculinity into something
holistic, reaffirming, and non-exploitative. In Chapter Two, I have shown how in *The
Autobiography of Malcolm X*, in which he passes through phases of acceptance and resistance,
the pattern of resistance that was created by his assumption of the hustler masculinity that
informed his understanding of resistance throughout the course of his adult life. I also show how
Malcolm couples the hustler masculinity with Orthodox Islam and Pan-Africanism to place
himself within the world and a wider black resistance struggle. In Chapter Three, I have
demonstrated how in *Pimp: the Story of My Life* the hustler persona, as it is articulated in the
figure of the pimp, is not a confrontational mode of resistance as it is articulated in the previous
texts but effects resistance by emulating the white middle class to inform the story of his life. I
have also shown how Slim's participation in pimp culture enables his transition to middle-class
culture and middle-class masculinity. The narrative has been misinterpreted because many
readers fail to realize that he has only transformed his pimping as narrative so that it is acceptable

and acknowledged within in middle-class culture. As a result, *Pimp* signifies a transformation in thinking within the black community that discards its mechanisms of resistance and replaces them with the tenets of capitalism. McCall's narrative relays the experience of black boys attempting to resist without the proper guidance or examples. The hustler masculinity becomes more important in the lives of America's black under class because, as in the previous texts, it offers a model of resistance and masculinity although it is inadequate. Like Malcolm and Brown, McCall makes takes similar steps through religion and nationalism only to define his place in the world through journalism. He writes,

> More and more, I found that I enjoyed writing. I narrowed my career choices down to English literature and journalism. I tried to find out all I could about journalism; what it is that journalists do, how much they earn, etc. I recalled how two journalists at *The Washington Post* had used their reporting skills to kick a corrupt president square in the ass, and that seemed like the kind of thing I'd like to learn. (219)

Writing may seem like an insignificant detail or even one that translates into nothing more than a trade, but news writing is integral to McCall's transformation. Journalism gives McCall the ability to define himself because he is given the power to define and refine the society in which he must live and function. Iceberg Slim and the numerous rappers who choose to turn the narratives of their community into profitable albums are also journalists. They are like the West African griots who pass down family, community, and civilization history from generation, yet they lack the hindsight and ability to comprehend the past that the griot possesses.[24] As a result, all relevant events that occurred in the past are lost on the following generations because all that they can see is the immediacy of the past generation's failure and assume that previous efforts were also failures because they did not change anything visibly. History is always relevant to paraphrase the adage. An understanding of black masculinity in America has grown in importance since the publication of each of the narratives that have been the focus of this study. Beyond the fact that, since the early 1990s, books and articles have been published, television programs, nightly news segments, and Hollywood films produced, and the chasm that has existed between black men and black women has grown, the statistic that the black boy/black man has become since that late 1960s. Patrick Moynihan had sought to correct the pathologies of black men paternalistically with his Labor Department report about the plight of the black family, and paternalism has now been transformed into a sort of destruction as shown by the persistence of

such unsavory characters as the pimp and drug dealer. The State has assisted in creating the underground economies in which hustlers operate. Black men have been denied opportunities to participate in the legal economy, and the opportunities that were once available to them were exported to other countries for lower wage laborers. These are changes that have persisted since the 1970s and since the death of visible black political movements.

Brown, Malcolm X, and Slim's narrative all offer alternatives to what can be called America's planned attack on black men. They articulate options available to black men who desire to express their masculinity without oppressing another and to avoid becoming victims of a capitalist system that continues to exploit them or threatens their spirits. Of course, these are not the only books that articulate such ideas. There are a number of others, autobiographical and fictional, that rely on alternative ideologies to articulate black masculinities. Hustler narratives have been largely ignored because they reject the ideas of capitalism and ignore notions of upward mobility. And even when they are studied, they are not read as hustler narratives. Many similar texts were written when these particular texts were written and are being written today. Books highlighting the problem are also being written, but, unlike the personal narratives or fictions, they do not offer answers or alternatives. James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, Huey P. Newton's *Revolutionary Suicide* (1973), John Edgar Wideman's *Brothers and Keepers* (1984), John A. Williams's *The Man Who Cried I Am* (1968) and a few other texts could also open the gamut of alternative black masculinity beyond that which is represented by those that evolve out of hustler masculinity.

The inclusion of these texts within the American literary canon as well as in the study of economics, history, criminal justice, and folk culture would assist in enlightening the academy about the hustler that has been demonized and is now glorified and honored with celebrity. They also offer examples of alternative black masculinities that bell hooks suggests are missing from the discourse on black masculinity.

[1] I am not the first to use the phrase, hustler masculinity. Douglass Edward Taylor uses the phrase in his dissertation, *Hustlers, Nationalists, and Revolutionaries: African American Prison Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s* (2002). Although Taylor appears to be the first to use the phrase, he defines it within slightly different parameters in his discussion of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Taylor states, "Hustler masculinity is based on an ability to secure wealth by means of power, violence, cunning, and lawlessness. Performatively, it manifests itself as cool pose, a 'ritualized from of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances' that signify 'pride, strength, and control'" (Majors and Billson 4). Hustler masculinity is also performed through what I refer to in Chapter II as 'showdowns,' agonistic confrontations in which two men square off against one another before the gaze of a third party in order to determine which one of them is the 'better men." (4-5) Understanding that there are obvious elements of violence within hustler masculinity, this study re-focuses attention on the self-affirming aspects of hustler masculinity such as the male-centered community that it tends to create and the mode of resistance it initializes.

[2] The hustler in many cases is a part of what I call the unacknowledged middle class. Although the career of a hustler is lacking in morals and values, the hustler economically resembles that middle class and, through dress and demeanor, presents an image of middle class respectability.

[3] Marlene Kim Conner also defines cool in *What Is Cool?: Understanding Black Manhood in America* (1995). Cool is defined in the varied terms that are set forth by both Majors and Billson and bell hooks, but unlike them, Conner provides definitions of cool, which is essentially a stylized black masculinity, in different black communities.

[4] Todd Boyd utilizes the term *hustler ethos* in books of cultural criticism to refer to the attitude or persona that numerous black men have assumed in the post-Civil Rights era, specifically entertainers and athletes, as a sort of response to what he defines as the futility of the Civil Rights movement.

[5] Middle-class masculinity refers to the economic power and opportunities that men are afforded in a capitalist society who are identified as middle class.

[6] Marc Mauer in *Race to Incarcerate* (1999) and Jerome G. Miller in *Search and Destroy: African American Males in the Criminal* (1996) both write at length about young black men and the growth of black prison culture which has occurred as a result of the migrations to the cities and racial profiling of crime. They both evaluate the rates in terms of race, environment, recidivism, and types of crimes for which black men are most likely to be imprisoned.

[7] Julius Hudson describes this hierarchy and the rules in "The Hustling Ethic," which appears in *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America* (1972), edited by Thomas Kochman. He describes a system that bestows the most honor upon the individual who gains the most from doing the least amount of work, so the pimp sits atop the pyramid. He also describes the acts of violence that are committed as never against an individual specifically but against institutions. According to Hudson, hustlers are typically involved in more than one racket.

[8] Beyond the sources listed there are a number of other studies that are focused on the study of African American autobiography. The list includes but is not limited to Margo V. Perkins's *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (2000), which is focuses its attention on the autobiographies of Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, and Elaine Brown as representative of black women's autobiographies that are focused on the black power movement and are thematically concerned with activism, and David L. Dudley's *My Father's Shadow: Intergenerational Conflict in African American Men's Autobiography* (1991), which focuses on several autobiographies by black men spanning slave narratives to Civil Rights movement narratives and utilizes Freudian theory as explained by Harold Bloom to trace the motivations of the authors.

[9] Wage slavery refers to the numerous menial jobs blacks could attain that did not pay enough for one to take care of himself much less his family. David Roediger's *The Wage of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (1991) argues that the definition of whiteness depended on the alterity of slaves, blacks, to define their post-Revolution independence though they were dependent upon wage labor.

[10] It was a transition from Civil Rights to Black Power, which was more aggressive and self-motivated than the preceding movement according to the architects and members of the latter movement.

[11] As Donald Bogle states, "*Shaft* also appeared in 1971. This little picture, which its studio, MGM, thought might make a little money, instead made a mint--some $12 million within a year in North America alone--single handedly saved MGM from financial ruin" (238).

[12] In the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Douglass uses the trope of northern movement. With each step he takes northward, society becomes more benevolent in general and whites specifically. Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* on the other hand complicates this trope in her narrative, positing that her sex renders her quasi-free in the North. Harriet E. Wilson does the same in *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859). In "*Hear My Voice, Ye Careless Daughters,*" Hazel Carby refers to the narrative as an "allegory of a slave narrative, a 'slave' narrative set in the 'free' North" (62). For Wilson, benevolence does not improve until she begins to move southward and comes in contact with reflective, gendered communities.

[13] Griffin provides further attributions of *urban power*. As she puts it, "This power also seeks to educate migrants and to create in them a desire for those things available in the dominant society. Education is the task of a segment within black middle class who quell dissatisfaction and help transform the migrant into efficient workers and citizens" (102).

[14] With regard to the movements that occur throughout the text, Baker writes, "The expansion has been simply vertical as the protagonist has become more deeply involved in the life of crime. Now, at the age of seventeen, the first horizontal expansion of the book occurs as the narrator moves to Greenwich Village. In effect, the movement is equal to a movement from the colony to the mainland; the narrator starts on the road to development outside the ghetto. The horizontal expansion is not only defined in terms of the physical move, but also in terms of the narrator's point of view toward life" (57).

[15] Turner's study is based on Arnold van Gennep's theory on rites of passage and is focused on ritual in Central Africa with a majority of the fieldwork done in the Ndemdu of northwestern Zambia. He is concerned with ritual processes in tribes and villages. Although he does not focus on ritual in urban areas, he does state that "The Ndembu belong to a great congeries of West and Central African cultures" (4). Studies such as Newbell Puckett's *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (1926), Carter G. Woodson and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The African Background Outlined* (1936), Guy Johnson's *Drum and Shadow* (1940) Richard Price's *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective* (1976), Peter Wood's *Black Majority* (1974), Winifred Vass's *The Bantu Speaking Heritage of the United States* (1979), Margaret Washington's *"A Peculiar People": Slave Religion and Community-Culture among the Gullahs* (1988), and the collection *Africanisms in American Culture* (1991), edited by Joseph E. Holloway, argue that aspects of West and Central African culture were retained in aspects of African American culture and gives credence to the concept of applying the ideas expressed in Turner's study to this particular study.

[16] Beyond being the folly of critics and reviewers, the presentation of Malcolm X is also problematic in film. In Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, Lee does not seem to consider the possible importance of Malcolm's later life. Although his film is based on the book, he does not extend the representation of Malcolm transition to Sunni Islam or his transforming political and racial views to broaden the understanding of Malcolm.

[17] Malcolm writes:

> I can remember hearing of "Adam driven out of the garden into the caves of Europe," "Africa for the Africans," "Ethiopians, Awake!" And my father would talk about how it would not be much longer before Africa would be completely run by Negroes--"by black men," was the phrase used. "No one knows when the hour of Africa's redemption cometh. It is in the wind. It is coming. One day, like a storm, it will be here."
> I remember seeing the big, shiny photographs of Marcus Garvey that were passed from hand to hand…. the meetings always closed with my father saying, several times, and the people chanting after him, "Up, you mighty race, you can accomplish what you will!" (9)

[18] A zoot suit consists of a long suit coat, "baggy punjab pants tapered to the ankles, … matching hat, gold watch chain, and monogrammed belt." (Kelley 165) Zoot suit culture is a culture of resistance that consisted of young black males and Latino males during World War II. Kelley's study of zoot suiters is specifically focused on Malcolm and his autobiography there are other sources that describe the culture in detail, relay its relation to World War II, and include the experiences of the Latino zoot suiters. See Stuart Cosgrove's "The Zoot-Suit and Style Wars" in

Looking for America: The Visual Production of Nation and People (2005), Ardis Cameron editor; Eduardo Obregón Pagán *Murder at the Sleepy: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime* (2003); Mauricio Mazón's *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (1984); and Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit and Other Plays* (1992).

[19] Clarence G. Contee laid out the objectives of the Pan-African Congress of 1921 in "The 'Statuts' of the Pan-African Association on 1921: A Document."

[20] The methods of the Pan-African Congress of 1921 were as follows:

The Pan-African Association is an organ of research and action uniting without in the least impairing their autonomy Societies and persons belonging to, connected or associated with the Black Race, so as to unite their efforts and coordinate their labors within the limits set by these rules.

It collects information and receives propositions which it studies with the object of employing them to practical ends.

It works by common and united action in the common interest without interfering in the political affairs of any state.

To this end it makes investigations where needful, encourages the creation of local branches, promotes new organizations which tend to facilitate the progress of the Race and concludes such arrangements as may be favorable to the cause.

It appeals to public opinion and may seek the aid of the press and of all societies of a nature kindred of itself.

Finally, it counts on that international fellowship and sympathy which prevails among all members of the Negro Race. (Contee "The 'Statuts'" 413)

[21] In "Prison, Perversion, and Pimps: The White Temptress in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and Iceberg Slim's *Pimp*," Terri Hume Oliver states, "At the time of his death, Iceberg Slim was the best selling African American writer of all time, having sold six million copies of his seven books" (148). His books are still popular. A search on Amazon.com turns up numerous high-rated reviews of his works.

[22] Throughout *Pimp*, the black female body is presented as a commodity as it was in slavery. It is inscribed with the terms of commerce. This is derived from the master/slave relationship, and it is not a unique idea. Gayl Jones expresses a similar idea in her novel, *Corregidora*. She inscribes her female protagonist, a blues singer, with the same terms of commerce, making female genitalia a source of production because it is inscribed with the historical commodification of the black female body and the rape, incest, and the instance of retribution on the slave woman's part that occurred on the Corregidora plantation.

[23] W. Lawrence Hogue devotes a chapter of *The African American Male, Writing, and Difference: a Polycentric Approach to African American Literature, Criticism, and History*. Based on his reading, it is a fictional text that focuses on the lives of individuals who live in the ghetto. They are not upwardly mobile, Christian, or middle class nor are they guided in their daily lives by the paradigms and values that guide lives of black individuals who represent these groups to which they do not belong.

[24] I make the connection between the griot and the rapper but it is a connection that Jeff Chang makes in "Who Will Be Our Leaders?" Chang writes:

> Many compared rappers to griots—the mythmakers, genealogists, praise singers, oral historians and social critics of Senegambian society. One would expect the griots to be valued members of their societies, wrote Robert Palmer in *Deep Blues*, but in fact they are both admired, for they often attain considerable reputations and amass wealth, and despised, for they are thought to consort with evil spirits, and their praise songs, when not properly rewarded, can become venomous songs of insult. By definition, griots were not leaders, much less messiahs. They were a separate caste, outcasts.

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