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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Autobiography of Malcom X: A Modern Mythical Hero's Journey from Self-destruction to Global Outreach

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| ABSTRACT

The Autobiography of Malcolm X, with its influential rhetoric and powerful ideas, has continued to inspire generations since its publication. This research argues that part of the autobiography's enduring appeal stems from its mythical structure and the portrayal of heroism throughout Malcolm X's narrative and rhetoric. Specifically, this study explores how Malcolm's autobiography aligns with Joseph Campbell's monomyth, or "hero's journey." Campbell's model includes several stages that resonate with Malcolm's life story. This research examines how racism drives Malcolm to leave Michigan, initiating his journey in accordance with Campbell's "departure" from the ordinary world to the special world. It also explores how Malcolm's years as a ghetto hustler, his conversion to Islam, and his time as a Black Muslim correspond to Campbell's "initiation" stage. Lastly, the research addresses Malcolm's break from the Nation of Islam and his transformative pilgrimage, culminating in his global outreach and new convictions, which mirror Campbell's "return to the ordinary world." Additionally, this study incorporates critical race theory to examine how systemic racism and Malcolm's resistance to it shape his journey, adding depth to his heroic transformation. Reading The Autobiography of Malcolm X in light of Campbell's hero's journey allows readers to recognize the universal patterns in the lives of influential heroes and provides an additional explanation for Malcolm's timeless appeal.

| KEYWORDS

Monomyth, Hero's Journey, Selfhood and Identity, Pan-Africanism, Malcolm X's Influence, Critical Race Theory, Religious Conversion, Liberation

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Autobiographies are central to understanding individuals and cultures, as they offer insights into personal experiences that resonate with broader societal struggles. A prominent figure's life story often provides a window into shared experiences, and the voices that echo in certain autobiographies are grounded in real, urgent narratives. Indeed, an autobiography holds intrinsic rhetorical power because it is a first-person account. As Gillespie (2010) notes, autobiographies "have historically been used as a mode of truth-telling by people who have experienced a psychotic episode, a spiritual conversion, or slavery" (p. 1). *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* occupies a crucial place in the twenty-first century as a significant document that testifies to the suffering of Black Americans. Its influence is far-reaching, attracting critical attention from scholars across various disciplines.

Malcolm X stands as an iconic figure in American culture and history, using his own life experiences to expose the realities of racism in America. Published in 1965, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was met with both acclaim and controversy, and in 1999, *Time* magazine ranked it among the top ten nonfiction books of the twentieth century. Attallah Shabazz, Malcolm's daughter, stated that "my father's life story stands alongside such monumental works as *The Diary of Anne Frank* and others" (Haley, 1999,

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p. IX). She added, "A lover of language, my father believed very much in the power of words to influence and transform lives" (Haley, 1999, p. IX). Historians of African American history place Malcolm X alongside figures such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Malcolm wrote his autobiography in collaboration with journalist Alex Haley, who conducted a series of interviews with him between 1964 and 1965. These years marked a period of intense political climate and civil rights struggles in the United States. At the time, Malcolm X was considered one of the most controversial figures in America, described as "the only Negro in America who could either start a race riot—or stop one" (Haley, 1999, pp. 402–403).

Many scholars have interpreted Malcolm's autobiography as a narrative of personal transformation and religious conversion. Benson (1974) argues that the autobiography is structured around the contrasts between "open and closed, constriction and enlargement, confinement and action" (p. 12). These polarities allow Malcolm to transcend the challenges of his own life, set against a secular and racist society that often questioned his relevance and credibility. The role of Islam in Malcolm's journey is also central. Elmessiri (1969) contends that Islam provided Malcolm with "a visionary frame of reference that liberated him from the racist assumptions of his society," allowing him to reshape his reality rather than break from it (as cited in Bailey, 1969, p. 70). Mandel (1972) further suggests that Malcolm's autobiography serves to reframe his identity, challenging the portrayal of him as a fringe figure and positioning him as a leader of major stature and integrity (as cited in Bailey, 1972, p. 271). Bigsby (1980) asserts that Malcolm's autobiography is not only a chronicle of a charismatic leader's emergence but also a chart of an individual's path to selfhood, one that transcended his humble beginnings and the humiliations of his youth. While Malcolm's commitment to Muslim dogma is important, Bigsby argues that his true significance lay in his challenge to white power and his restoration of Black pride (p. 190). Gillespie (2010) further highlights the power of Malcolm's autobiography, noting that the vivid writing style "seduces the reader into conflating the autobiography with the actual life and identity of Malcolm X" (p. 1).

Malcolm X's autobiography traces his transformation from a troubled youth, born as Malcolm Little, into a ghetto hustler known as "Detroit Red," and later, to a global figure dedicated to racial justice and human rights. His story is one of profound personal and ideological change: from a life of crime and incarceration to his conversion to Islam, his break from the Nation of Islam, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his founding of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Each phase of his life mirrors key stages in Campbell's model of the hero's journey, which includes departure, initiation, and return.

Malcolm's narrative unfolds in four distinct parts. The first part (chapters 1–2) covers his early childhood and adolescence. The second part (chapters 3–10) focuses on his years as a ghetto hustler. The third part (chapters 11–15) details his time in prison and conversion to Islam. The final part (chapters 16–19) traces his life after breaking from the Nation of Islam, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his new mission for pan-African unity.

Marable (2012) cites a 1992 poll showing that "84 percent of African Americans between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four described him as 'a hero for Black Americans today'" (p. 8), indicating that Malcolm X is indeed viewed as a heroic figure by many, especially within the African American community. McLennan (1994) argues that the hero myth has survived through time, symbolizing the needs and desires of people during turbulent periods, and that Malcolm's life exemplifies this modern heroic narrative. According to Campbell's monomyth, the hero's journey follows a pattern of separation, initiation, and return, a cycle that involves leaving the familiar world, facing trials in an unfamiliar realm, and returning transformed, capable of offering wisdom or "boons" to others. Malcolm's life story, as recounted in his autobiography, provides a contemporary example of this universal mythic structure.

2. Literature Review

This section surveys significant scholarly works that have contributed to the research on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, focusing particularly on studies that examine the text through various critical lenses, including Joseph Campbell's monomyth, conversion theory, black identity, and American literary traditions. By providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of key sources, this review aims to illuminate the multiple dimensions of Malcolm X's autobiography and its cultural and literary significance.

In "*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*: A Revolutionary Use of the Franklin Tradition" (1970), Carol Ohmann argues that Malcolm X's autobiography belongs not only to African American literature but also to the broader tradition of American literature, particularly success narratives. Ohmann draws comparisons between Benjamin Franklin's autobiography and Malcolm's, noting similarities in their conceptions of self, frameworks for understanding people and events, criteria for judgment, and narrative structure. She contends that both Franklin and Malcolm sought self-improvement and societal uplift, with their life stories mirroring American ideals of personal and collective advancement. Ohmann also examines the autobiographical structure of Malcolm's conversion, identifying it as a "paradigmatic curve" akin to other famous conversion narratives, such as those of Thomas Shepard, Jonathan Edwards, John Bunyan, and Saint Augustine. She highlights Malcolm's

dual secular and religious selves, which at times seem interchangeable, particularly during his conversion to the Nation of Islam. Ohmann concludes by noting a shift in Malcolm's narrative, which, following his departure from Michigan and conversion to Islam, aligns not only with Franklin's success story but also with early American literary traditions, drawing a comparison to Samuel Beckett's characters thwarted by external forces, yet ultimately finding redemption in prison (Ohmann, 1970).

In "*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*: A Mythic Paradigm" (1974), Nancy Clasby offers a nuanced reading of the autobiography through the lens of Frantz Fanon's theory of developing consciousness, as outlined in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Clasby argues that Malcolm X embodies Fanon's ideal of a new consciousness, tasked with abandoning his old personal history to forge a new identity filled with dignity and meaning. She emphasizes Elijah Muhammad's central role in shaping Malcolm's early worldview, despite Malcolm's eventual break from the Nation of Islam. Clasby also explores the influence of Malcolm on black writers like Eldridge Cleaver, noting that Malcolm's embodiment of a new myth allowed him to inspire the creation of a new black identity. She concludes that Malcolm's ability to anticipate his own death suggests his understanding of his life as part of a larger, mythic narrative (Clasby, 1974).

In *American Autobiography: The Prophetic Mode* (1979), Couser G. Thomas examines Malcolm X's autobiography as an example of the prophetic mode, a tradition he argues is essential for understanding the power of autobiography. Thomas contends that compelling autobiographies often embody a prophetic voice, and in Malcolm's case, his narrative functions not as the work of a strategist but as the testament of a "revolutionary of the spirit—a prophet." Throughout the autobiography, Malcolm positions himself as a prophet rather than simply an autobiographer. Thomas compares Malcolm's journey to those of Puritan figures like Thomas Shepard, whose narratives similarly chart the trajectory of a persecuted individual transformed by religious or political awakening. He also compares Malcolm's narrative to those of other American figures, such as Frederick Douglass, John Woolman, and Henry David Thoreau, noting shared themes of resistance to oppression and the quest for a personal philosophical synthesis amid social upheaval. Thomas argues that Malcolm's autobiography serves as a powerful document of collective liberation, representing not just his personal transformation but also the transformation of a people (Thomas, 1979).

In *Chapters of Experience: Studies in Modern American Autobiography* (1986), Gordon O. Taylor analyzes *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as a work of imagination, one that demands an aesthetic response. Taylor suggests that the autobiography reflects Malcolm's desire to not only recount his experiences but to articulate a sensibility shaped by historical forces, particularly race. He draws on W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness to frame Malcolm's narrative as an exploration of the tension between a fixed, racially determined identity and the possibilities for change through black resistance. Taylor also notes that Malcolm's break with the Nation of Islam signals a new struggle with double consciousness, as he seeks to reconcile his former identity with his evolving sense of self (Taylor, 1986).

In *The Conversion Experience in America: A Sourcebook on Religious Conversion* (1992), James Craig Holte examines *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as a complex conversion narrative. Holte argues that Malcolm's conversion is not a static event but an ongoing, dynamic process of transformation. He highlights the autobiographical shift in tone from the street language of Malcolm's early life to the more formal tone of a preacher after his conversion. Holte suggests that this tonal shift reflects Malcolm's awareness of his double audience—both black and white Americans—and his effort to "convince and convert" through his language. Holte also places Malcolm's conversion within the broader context of American literary traditions, drawing comparisons to Puritan and Quaker autobiographies, where conversion is framed as the key event in the subject's life. Like other scholars, Holte sees Malcolm's narrative as a success story, paralleling the development of self with the liberation of a colonized people (Holte, 1992).

In his 1997 article "The Semiotics of Salvation: Malcolm X and the Autobiographical Self," Bashir M. El-Beshti explores the "double focus" of Malcolm's autobiography, which reflects the split between the life being recounted and the voice of the autobiographer. El-Beshti argues that this "split personality" is most pronounced in Malcolm's narrative, where his Islamic faith serves as the "healing agent" that provides coherence to an otherwise fragmented life. El-Beshti suggests that Malcolm's belief in a preordained destiny, as determined by Allah, helps to structure his autobiography, turning his life into a series of moral crises and transformative events that ultimately lead to his salvation. El-Beshti concludes that Malcolm's autobiographical project is, at its core, an effort to record and interpret the signs of his destiny (El-Beshti, 1997).

Kenneth Mostern's *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics: Racialization in Twentieth-Century America* (1999) examines how Malcolm X represents black masculinity and how this theme informs the structure of his autobiography. Mostern argues that Malcolm's embodiment of black patriarchy is central to the narrative's resonance with a wide audience. He discusses the "multiple Malcolms" presented in the autobiography, each representing different aspects of black identity and politics. Mostern also notes that Malcolm's conversion to Islam is intertwined with his development of manhood,

contrasting his earlier life of hustling and deception with the dignity and truth he finds in Islam. He further links Malcolm's advocacy of violence to Frantz Fanon's theories, suggesting that the autobiography presents violence as an expression of black humanism and a step toward defining black masculinity (Mostern, 1999).

In his 2010 essay "Autobiography and Identity: Malcolm X as Author and Hero," Alex Gillespie focuses on the transformative nature of Malcolm's autobiography. Gillespie argues that the autobiography is not only a record of Malcolm's life but also a transformative act in itself. He suggests that Malcolm's ability to criticize black communities without alienating them stems from his self-presentation as someone who was once ignorant and now serves as a guide for others. Gillespie explores the tension between Malcolm's tough, militant persona and his more religious side, suggesting that his evolving identity is reflected in these contrasting aspects of his narrative (Gillespie, 2010).

Jeffrey Leak's 2010 essay "Malcolm X and Black Masculinity in Process" examines Malcolm's autobiography as a narrative of conversion, with a particular focus on the evolution of black masculinity. Leak argues that Malcolm's relationships with women—especially his mother and half-sister Ella—reflect his evolving concept of African American manhood. These portrayals, Leak suggests, indicate the ways in which Malcolm's changing views on masculinity complicate traditional gender roles within black communities (Leak, 2010).

The studies surveyed in this review underscore the central theme of transformation in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with a particular emphasis on his conversions, which serve as defining moments in the narrative. Scholars have situated Malcolm's autobiography within the broader tradition of American autobiography, drawing comparisons to works by Benjamin Franklin, Frederick Douglass, and others. The narrative's evolving tone and structure, as well as its exploration of identity, masculinity, and race, continue to be key areas of scholarly focus. These studies collectively highlight the complexity of Malcolm's life and the profound impact his autobiography has had on both African American literature and the broader American literary tradition.

Despite extensive scholarly attention, few studies have explored *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* through the lens of Joseph Campbell's monomyth, or the hero's journey. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), Campbell, a literary theorist and mythologist, outlined a universal template for heroic narratives. This research seeks to fill that gap by examining Malcolm X's life and autobiography within the framework of Campbell's monomyth, while also incorporating elements of critical race theory. The study aims to demonstrate how Malcolm's life journey aligns with the stages of the hero's journey, enhancing our understanding of his enduring appeal.

3. Methodology

This research adopts an analytical and descriptive methodology, drawing on Joseph Campbell's monomyth framework and critical race theory to examine *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. The study focuses on the ways Malcolm's life aligns with Campbell's hero's journey, exploring how the narrative constructs him as a heroic figure while addressing the complex intersections of race, identity, and transformation. By dividing the autobiography into four distinct phases that mirror the stages of the hero's journey, this research highlights the evolving image of Malcolm from "Malcolm Little" to "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz." Through a close reading of the text, the study identifies key moments of separation, initiation, and return, examining how these stages reflect both personal transformation and broader cultural struggles. Ultimately, the methodology seeks to connect Campbell's archetypal narrative with the modern realities of Malcolm's life, underscoring the enduring relevance of the hero myth in contemporary discourse.

4. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore how the life of Malcolm X, as told in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, follows the stages of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, and to reflect on the relevance of the hero myth in today's world. By focusing on Malcolm's transformation from "Malcolm Little" to "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz," I aim to examine how key events in his life—his confrontation with racism, his conversion to Islam, and his ultimate evolution—mirror the timeless elements of the hero's journey. This study also seeks to understand how the themes of race and religion shaped Malcolm's identity and fueled his heroic quest, showing the deep connection between his personal struggles and the larger societal issues of his time. Ultimately, I want to highlight how Malcolm's fight for justice and self-determination continues to resonate today, and how his journey speaks to the power of community and identity in forging a path toward heroism.

5. Discussion

Malcolm's Departure

The first stage of Malcolm's heroic journey as described in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is found in chapters one and two, which chronicle Malcolm's early childhood and adolescence. It aligns with the departure stage of Campbell's heroic quest archetype as it narrates how racism leads Malcolm to depart from his world and begin his journey. Early in Malcolm's narrative, we

learn that he is the lightest-skinned member of his family, and for that reason, he is at simultaneously his father's most and his mother's least favorite child. Shortly after Malcolm's birth, his father, Earl Little, moves the family to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, escaping the Ku Klux Klan's threats, and onwards to Lansing, Michigan. However, even there, Malcolm's father has trouble with another white racist group, named the Black Legion, a "local hate society" (Haley, 1965, p. 3). This group is later suspected of killing Malcolm's father when Malcolm is only six years old. Soon after his father is killed, Malcolm's mother, Louise Little, is committed to a state mental institution due to a nervous breakdown she has as a result of being crushed by the persecution of the social workers as well as the responsibility of looking after eight children in harsh conditions. Louise remains in the mental institution for twenty-five years. Consequently, Malcolm's family is tragically separated when he is very young. When he is thirteen years old, Malcolm is living with a white foster family, the Swerlins, in Lansing. They treat him well, and he sees them as good people. During that time, Malcolm recounts his experience of attending Mason Junior High School, where almost all the students are white. When he is in seventh grade, he is elected class president. Nevertheless, he experiences racial injustices both at home and school. This period is almost over when his half-sister, Ella, invites him to spend his summer in Boston. There, Malcolm rejoices over encountering a whole black community for the first time. When he returns to Lansing, he misses that community, particularly after his teacher's comment, which he sees as a "major turning point of [his] life" (Haley, 1965, p. 37). That encounter ends this section and encourages Malcolm to leave his ordinary world, thus beginning his heroic journey.

According to Campbell's monomyth, in the departure stage of the hero's journey, the hero lives in the ordinary world and receives a call to go on an adventure. This call varies in each hero's journey, and for the hero to depart from his ordinary world to the special world, he must traverse the threshold and its guardian. As the hero is led onward to his adventure, he meets the threshold guardian at the entrance to the "zone of magnified power" (Campbell, 2004, p. 64). Before passing the threshold, the hero is "bound in by the walls of childhood" (Campbell, 2004, p. 52). The threshold guardian often represents the limits of the hero's current life and the obstacles he has to overcome; by passing the threshold, the hero enters into new and exciting areas of growth. The threshold guardian is not necessarily a villain. He can be someone who helps or hinders the hero's journey while appearing to do the opposite. By passing the threshold, the hero does not conquer nor conciliate its power, but he rather "transit[s] into a sphere of rebirth," which "is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale" (Campbell, 2004, p. 74). Thus, the hero is swallowed into "The Belly of the Whale," the unknown, and "would appear to have died" (Campbell, 2004, p. 74).

There are many elements in the first part of Malcolm's autobiography that correspond with the elements of Campbell's heroic departure. Malcolm's journey begins with his departure from his ordinary world, Lansing, where he is marginalized. Malcolm's "call to adventure" is symbolized in the accumulation of incidents of persecution. These incidents that he describes at the beginning of the autobiography extend to all aspects of his life, even threatening the life of his father and the stability of his family. However, until he embarks on his heroic journey, it appears that Malcolm suffers racial injustices silently. The frequent occurrence of injustices indicates that Malcolm is suffering from "everyday racism." Everyday racism is a concept coined by critical race theorist Philomena Essed (2001), who defines it as the "reproduction of racism through routine and familiar practices" (Essed & Goldberg, 2001, p. 190). According to Essed, "the content of everyday racism is not static," as "it changes with the changing relations and practices through which the system is reproduced as a racist system" (Essed & Goldberg, 2001, p. 190). Malcolm's suffering from everyday racism is evident in many instances. For instance, it is seen in how his parents treat him differently because he is the lightest-skinned member of his family. Indeed, the everyday racism that he experiences is manifested in the cruel irony of his parents' treatment of him as caused by the white standards that were deposited in their minds by racism a long time ago. His father favors him for "being lighter than the other children," and his "mother [gives him] more hell for the same reason" (Haley, 1965, p. 8). This is an example of colorism, which is rooted in the preference of lighter skin. In this case, colorism is interracial, for according to Lois Tyson (2006), it operates "when African Americans believe, for example, that light-skinned black people are more beautiful or more intelligent than darker-skinned black Americans" (p. 156).

Another crucial example that proves Malcolm suffers from everyday racism is in how he comes to perceive himself, which is inseparable from how others perceive him. Both his foster family and the children in school perceive Malcolm as less than human. For instance, Malcolm notices that in the Swerlins' house, he is only accepted as a "mascot." Evidently, the family is not bothered by his presence, using the word "nigger," "as though [he] wasn't there" (Haley, 1965, p. 27). Malcolm describes how they ignore his presence, comparing it to the way "people would talk freely in front of a pet canary" (Haley, 1965, p. 27). He faces a continuation of this treatment in school, as he recalls, "wherever I showed my face, the audiences in the gymnasiums 'niggered' and 'cooned' me to death. Or called me 'Rastus,'" adding that this "didn't bother my teammates or my coach at all" (Haley, 1965, p. 31). Malcolm reflects on this disregard of his humanity, stating, "it just never dawned upon them that I could understand, that I wasn't a pet, but a human being. They didn't give me credit for having the same sensitivity, intellect, and understanding that they would have been ready and willing to recognize in a white boy in my position" (Haley, 1965, p. 28).

This denial of Malcolm's humanity is inseparable from modernity conceiving of the differences among human beings as racial differences. Cornel West (2002) notes "the role of classical aesthetic" as well as "cultural norms in the emergence of the idea of white supremacy as an object of modern discourse" (p. 97). Additionally, David Theo Goldberg (1993) argues that the main

"principles of our moral tradition – virtue, sin, autonomy and equality, utility, and rights – are delimited in various ways by the concept of race" (p. 224). Similarly, West (2002) contends that "the notion that black people are human beings is a relatively new discovery in the modern West. The idea of black equality in beauty, culture, and intellectual capacity remains problematic and controversial" (p. 90). He adds that "the Afro-American encounter with the modern world has been shaped first and foremost by the doctrine of white supremacy, which is embodied in institutional practices and enacted in everyday folkways under varying circumstances and evolving conditions" (West, 2002, p. 90).

Based on such views, racist society stripped Malcolm of his masculinity, which is evident in the way he thinks of himself while he is in school. He recalls, "I was unique in my class, like a pink poodle" (Haley, 1965, p. 32). The fact that he likens himself to a "pink poodle" implies that students and teachers perceive him as a harmful creature rather than an ordinary boy. According to Harold Bloom (2008), Malcolm's use of the color pink symbolizes his feeling of "emasculation" as well as "his belief that white society strips black men of their manhood and autonomy" (p. 24). This, according to Michael Hatt (1992), refers to "a masculinity that is inseparable from normative white identity," something black men are always measured against. Hatt (1992) contends that it is "a process which might be described, at the risk of replacing characterization with caricature, as a gainsaying," in it, "if white is masculine, negro is emasculated; if white is control, negro is excess..." (p. 22).

Malcolm's endurance of everyday racism, which involves dehumanizing and emasculating him, prepares him for accepting the call to adventure. Campbell (2008) describes the call to adventure as the first stage of the mythological journey, contending that it denotes how "destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown" (p. 48). That zone, according to Campbell (2008), is filled with dangers and treasures and may be represented differently in each hero's journey (p. 48). Malcolm accepts the call to adventure after an encounter with his English teacher, Mr. Ostrowski, who asks him if he has been considering a career. Malcolm shares his dream of becoming a lawyer, only to be shocked by his teacher's response as he says, "one of life's first needs is for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me, now. We all here like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer that's no realistic goal for a nigger" (Haley, 1965, p. 38).

In a society where black people are considered inferior to white people, Malcolm is told that he is not smart enough to have such a career. Mr. Ostrowski's racist answer is an example of "racism denial." According to the critical race theorist Teun A. van Dijk (1992), racism denial is a strategy used when someone wants to speak negatively about minorities but does not want to seem racist. The strategy of denial is used in many cases to avoid negative responses from listeners and readers. Racism denial in Mr. Ostrowski's answer is in the form of a disclaimer, which appears in his words: "Don't misunderstand me." Dijk (1992) points out that forms of racism denial "are the routine moves in social face-keeping, so that ingroup members are able to come to terms with their own prejudices" (p. 193). In addition, "these denials of racism have important social and political functions, e.g., in the management of ethnic affairs and the delegitimating of resistance" (Dijk, 1992, p. 193). Dijk (1992) adds that strategies of denial "confirm their special role in the formulation and the reproduction of racism" (p. 182).

Mr. Ostrowski continues on to suggest that Malcolm become a carpenter rather than a lawyer, implying that Malcolm can never aspire for a better career choice: "why don't you plan on carpentry? People like you as a person – you'd get all kinds of work" (Haley, 1965, p. 38). His words imply that black people should not attempt to surpass their potential while simultaneously disregarding them as equals by saying, "people like you." What affects Malcolm more throughout this incident is Mr. Ostrowski's encouragement to others in his class, who are not as qualified as Malcolm is. Malcolm explains, "They all reported that Mr. Ostrowski had encouraged what they had wanted. Yet nearly none of them had earned marks equal to mine" (Haley, 1965, p. 38). His words indicate that he is aware of his talents, especially his talent for rhetoric, which is his special weapon. However, Malcolm realizes that he cannot escape his identity nor the racial prejudices that preclude him from living in equality with the people around him. Therefore, Mr. Ostrowski represents the "threshold guardian" that causes Malcolm's journey to start because his answer alerts Malcolm to the impossibility of being accepted in this racist society. This is illustrated in his words as he states, "it was then that I began to change – inside" (Haley, 1965, p. 38). He marks that encounter as "the first major turning point of my life" (Haley, 1965, p. 37). His shattered dream also awakens him to the marginalization of black people that prevents him from pursuing further schooling since he is a marginal deprived of his humanity. As a result of the alienation he experiences in Michigan, he decides to move to Boston, where he passes over the threshold toward the special world.

In doing this, Malcolm departs from his ordinary world, a world in which he is aware of his limitations, to enter the world unknown to him. This decision is crucial because while there are many black people trying to integrate into the racist society, Malcolm decides to leave, preferring the unknown and the unexplored to pursuing further study as a marginal. According to Campbell (2008), the hero's "original departure into the land of trials represents only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination," for he will encounter unexpected trials, but "there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land" (p. 90). By departing from his ordinary world, Malcolm does not change its circumstances nor conquer his marginalized status. Rather, he disappears silently and

thus epitomizes being swallowed into "the Belly of the Whale" (Campbell, 2008, p. 74). According to Campbell (2008), the belly of the beast is a recurrent archetypal theme which epitomizes a sphere of rebirth attained through self-reflection. Campbell notes that "the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth… symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale" (p. 74). Thus, the hero, "instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died" (Campbell, 2008, p. 74). By leaving behind his marginal world, Malcolm enters the unknown, setting the stage for the transformative experiences that await him.

Malcolm's Initiation

The second and third parts of Malcolm's heroic journey extend from chapters three to fifteen. They chronicle his years as a ghetto hustler, his conversion to Islam, and his life as a black Muslim. These two parts of the autobiography align with the initiation stage of Campbell's heroic quest archetype, in which Malcolm's years in prison represent "the road of trials" that ends with his conversion epitomizing the "ultimate Boon."

After departing his ordinary world by moving to Boston to live with his half-sister Ella, Malcolm meets a new friend, Shorty, and a white girlfriend, Sophia. He later moves from Boston to Harlem, New York, and there he indulges in a number of self-destructive activities, including heavy drug use, gambling, drinking, and smoking. As a result, he loses his job as a shoeshine boy, which Shorty had helped him get. Then, Malcolm, Shorty, Sophia, and her sister form a small gang and start burglarizing houses. The gang breaks up after being caught by the watchmaker when Malcolm is trying to fix a stolen watch. This leads to Malcolm being sentenced to ten years in jail. In prison, he considers himself an atheist, but soon enough, Malcolm's family converts to Islam and tries to convince him to convert too. They also encourage him to reach out to the leader of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad. Upon writing to Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm realizes his weakness and that "the streets had erased everything [he'd] ever learned in school" (Haley, 1992, p. 157). He then begins learning to read and write, taking advantage of the prison's courses and library. Eventually, Malcolm converts to Islam, and as a result, quits using drugs and begins his self-education by reading voraciously, studying English as well as Latin, and joining the prison's debate team.

According to Campbell's monomyth, in the initiation stage of the hero's journey, the hero enters a special world that had previously been unknown to him. Campbell (2004) regards the initiation as the "favorite phase of the myth-adventure," which "has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals" (p. 81). In this stage, the hero "must survive a succession of trials" along "the road of trials" that test his commitment to the journey (Campbell, 2004, p. 81). This road also tests whether he will succeed, either alone or with the help of a supernatural aid. This supernatural aid may either be one whom the hero "met before his entrance into this region," or "it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage" (Campbell, 2004, p. 81). In every hero's journey, the supernatural aid stands as "the unsuspected assistance that comes to one who has undertaken his proper adventure" (Campbell, 2004, p. 28). It acts as "a protective figure," accompanying the hero, comforting him through his uncertainties and fears, and motivating him to complete his journey (Campbell, 2004, p. 57). By passing through the road of trials, the hero accomplishes the purpose of his journey. This is epitomized by achieving an ultimate transformation, described by Campbell as "the ultimate boon." The boon that is granted to the hero "is always scaled to his stature and to the nature of his dominant desire: the boon is simply a symbol of life energy stepped down to the requirements of a certain specific case" (Campbell, 2004, p. 163). Thus, it varies in different heroic quests.

There are many elements in the second and third parts of Malcolm's story that correspond to the elements of the initiation stage in Campbell's monomyth. In this stage, Malcolm experiences many trials. In both Boston and Harlem, he notices the different structures of repression and institutionalized racism. The ghetto is the worst of what racism has produced as it makes it nearly impossible for black people to survive their poor conditions. Thus, Malcolm describes America and the ghetto as uncivilized settings: "White America is the territory of the devil. Within the uncivilized space of white America, there is another uncivilized space, the ghetto. The ghetto is a wilderness within the wilderness: its violence, poverty, and crimes are the cynical and intended results of white barbarity" (Haley, 291). Malcolm also attests to how racism forces black people into crime, indicating that it is their only means for surviving the ghetto: "Almost everyone in Harlem needed some kind of hustle to survive, and needed to stay high in some way to forget what they had to do to survive" (Haley, 94). Despite the dire circumstances of the ghetto, there is a strong sense of community there. As Malcolm recalls, "many times since, I have thought about it, and what it really meant. In one sense, we were huddled in there, bonded together in seeking security and warmth and comfort from each other, and we didn't know it" (Haley, 93). Bloom (2008) contends that that feeling of community in the ghetto fueled Malcolm's opinions on black separatism (p. 30). Additionally, El-Beshti (2005) notes that the "underworld offered him a sense of community and racial pride" (p. 364). However, Clasby (2008) points out that Malcolm manages to survive the ghetto by "exploiting the community through robbery, dope-peddling, and pimping" (p. 22). Malcolm's own words confirm this: "When you become an animal, a vulture, in the ghetto, as I had become, you enter a world of animals and vultures. It becomes truly the survival of only the fittest" (Haley, 105). Malcolm also notices how life in the ghetto destroys the promising futures of black people. He states, "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" (Haley, 93). In

these circumstances, racism persisted in engendering a feeling of alienation in Malcolm's own consciousness. It has been found that targets of racism make use of a number of behavioral responses, including speaking up, remaining silent, ignoring racism, working harder to prove others wrong, praying, becoming violent, and suppressing memories (McNeilly et al., 1996). In Malcolm's case, he plunges into violent self-destructive habits. Clasby (2008) argues that "the violence of the colonial situation is directed inward, toward the destruction of the self" (p. 22). This can be seen when Malcolm conks (straightens) his hair, engaging in mimicry. He describes that experience, saying:

> This was my first really big step toward self-degradation: when I endured all of that pain, literally burning my flesh to have it look like a white man's hair. I had joined that multitude of Negro men and women in America who are brainwashed into believing that the black people are 'inferior' – and white people 'superior' – that they will even violate and mutilate their God-created bodies to try to look 'pretty' by white standards (Haley 56-7).

His mimicry reveals his ongoing conflict of trying to rid himself of his own roots and desperately trying to belong. Using mimicry, Malcolm unconsciously tries to overcome his assumption that he is inferior to white people, as society has led him to believe. Homi Bhabha (1994) defines mimicry as the process by which the oppressed is reproduced "as almost the same, but not quite" (p. 86). Conking his hair further indicates Malcolm's suffering from internalized racism. Tyson (2009) defines internalized racism as black people's "acceptance of the belief pressed upon them by racist America that they are inferior to whites, less worthy, less capable, less intelligent, or less attractive" (p. 212). He further points out that "victims of internalized racism often wish they were white or that they looked more white" (Tyson, 2009, p. 212).

> Another instance of Malcolm's anger that is directed inward is his excessive use of drugs. He recalls:
>
> Drugs helped me push the thought to the back of my mind. They were the center of my life. I had gotten to the stage where every day I used enough drugs – reefers, cocaine, or both – so that I felt above any worries, any strains. If any worries did manage to push their way through to the surface of my consciousness, I could float them back where they came from until tomorrow, and then until the next day (Haley, 150).

These lines indicate that he uses drugs as a way to escape his bitter reality, for they reduced his feeling of persecution, even if only for a brief time. According to Clasby (2008), by using drugs, Malcolm "had not permitted himself to see" his reality "but remained in an unconsciously cultivated dream state" (p. 22). Another example of Malcolm's violent self-destructive habits is his participation in burglaries in order to make money to obtain drugs. This is a striking contrast to what he had aspired to before leaving school – becoming a lawyer. In the narrative, he describes his view of burglary at that time:
Burglary, properly executed, though it had its dangers, offered the maximum chances of success with the minimum risk. If you did your job so that you never met any of your victims, it…lessened your chances of having to attack or perhaps kill someone (Haley, 144).
Ohmann (1977) argues that these words show that although oppressed, "Malcolm] model[s] himself in the very image of his oppressor. What his oppressor is, he aspires to be" (p. 148). Ohmann (1977) adds that in doing so, Malcolm "may unwittingly perpetuate the ethos he opposes, though he would himself no longer suffer the role of object" (p. 148). These acts of self-destruction cause Malcolm to be sentenced to ten years in prison.

Prison serves as another trial Malcolm encounters in the initiation stage. There, he achieves the ultimate boon by converting to Islam, and he notices the presence of the supernatural aid which is epitomized in God's divine guidance. Prison is a turning point in Malcolm's life because it is where he puts an end to his self-destructive habits by giving up drugs voluntarily, converting to Islam, and beginning self-education. There, he also develops an awareness of the hastiness of his life while he was indulging in self-destruction, and he confronts himself about the reality he has lived thus far. It further pushes him to make a decision about the direction of his journey. Ironically, prison is a liberating experience for Malcolm. Mostern (2001) argues that "the specific meaning of prison in this text is not that it is the place of his oppression, in that sense, all America is a prison already," rather it is the "place where a large number of black men are permitted to get together and exchange information and ideas" (p. 160). Unlike Malcolm's integrated school, with its "unstated purpose to reproduce the specific forms of social stratification" (Mastern, 2001, p. 160), Mostern (2001) points out that prison appears as an educational institution within the narrative that awakens in Malcolm his latent love for reading. Malcolm recalls, "I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive" (Haley, 182). Malcolm emphasizes the effectiveness of reading and foretells its impact on his future, acknowledging its role in awakening his desire to learn which had been obliterated during his days of engaging in self-destructive habits. According to Mostern (2001), although Malcolm's autobiography did not invent the prison narrative, it nonetheless centered "the prison experience, for the first time, as educational experience" (p. 161). Prison serves as an educational institution for many others in addition to Malcolm since the number of "black male autobiographers for whom prison is an educational institution is terrifyingly large" (Mastern, 2001, p. 159). Thus, Mostern (2001) adds, "It would be precisely wrong to assume that the state provides no educational institutions free

of charge to young black men, because to do so would be to ignore the most significant educational institution [in Malcolm's text]" (p. 160).

Malcolm's change in prison is triggered by the remark of his influential inmate, Bimbi. He recalls, "Out of the blue one day, Bimbi told me flatly, as was his way, that I had some brains, if I'd use them" (Haley, 1965, p. 157). What makes Bimbi's words powerful is the fact that he possesses Malcolm's special weapon, rhetoric. Malcolm comments, "Bimbi had always taken charge of any conversation he was in, and I had tried to emulate him" (Haley, 1965, p. 174). In addition to Bimbi, Elijah Muhammad is introduced to Malcolm as a messenger who preaches that Islam is the natural religion of the black man (Haley, 1965, p. 158). Moved by the alleged peculiarity of Islam for black people, Malcolm converts to Islam. His conversion represents the ultimate boon in his journey as it is through Islam that he finds dignity, community, and a weapon to fight against racism. According to Campbell (2004), the ultimate boon "is always scaled to [the hero's] stature and to the nature of his dominant desire: the boon is simply a symbol of life energy stepped down to the requirements of a certain specific case" (p. 163). In Malcolm's case, Islam fulfills his driving need for justice because it denounces all the injustices he has witnessed in his life. As his words indicate, "…black prisoners become Muslims so fast when Elijah Muhammad's teachings filter into their cages by way of other Muslim convicts. 'The white man is the devil' is a perfect echo of that black convict's lifelong experience" (Haley, 1965, p. 187). According to Ohmann (1993), "the faith of the Nation of Islam instantly gave coherence to the variegated experiences of his life. The Black Muslim faith gave him a cosmology to which he could consent, to which he had long since consented inwardly" (p. 137). Malcolm emphasizes the role of Islam in his life using the metaphor of being lifted up from the depths of the mud. He states, "Awareness came surging up in me – how deeply the religion of Islam had reached down into the mud to lift me up, to save me from being what I inevitably would have been: a dead criminal in a grave" (Haley, 1965, p. 293). He also likens Islam to wings that freed him, saying "I never would forget that any wings I wore had been put on by the religion of Islam" (Haley, 1965, p. 293). In addition to Islam representing the ultimate boon in Malcolm's heroic journey, the supernatural aid is realized in "Allah's divine guidance" (Haley, 1965, p. 171) to which he repeatedly attributes the blessing of finding Islam. For example, he states, "I was thankful to Allah that I had become a Muslim and escaped their fate" (Haley, 1965, p. 220), "I was chosen by Allah" (Haley, 1965, p. 448), and "I considered it another of Allah's signs, that wherever I turned, someone was there to help me, to guide me" (Haley, 1965, p. 329). Malcolm proves himself worthy of heroic status when he willingly gives up drugs for the benefit of his self-acknowledgement. According to Ohmann (1993), after his conversion, "Malcolm submitted himself to a regime stricter even than prison required" (p. 138). This also proves that he had indulged in self-destruction only in an effort to forget his marginalized position.

Malcolm's Return

The final stage of Malcolm's heroic journey in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* extends from chapters sixteen to nineteen. These chapters cover his excommunication from the Nation of Islam and his pilgrimage to Mecca. This final phase of Malcolm's life story aligns with the return stage of Campbell's heroic quest archetype. During this period, Malcolm is released from prison on parole and moves to Detroit to live with his brother, Wilfred. There, Malcolm becomes active in the Detroit temple of the Nation of Islam. While trying to learn more about the Nation of Islam, he works many different jobs. Later, he goes to Chicago in order to meet Elijah Muhammad and then quits his job to study under him, calling him his "savior." The two become close over time, developing a relationship similar to that of a father and son. Malcolm develops his rhetorical style as he starts speaking during temple meetings, and he states that his favorite subject "was Christianity and the horrors of slavery" (Haley, 1965, p. 204). He also tries to influence his old mob from his hustling days by using his street smarts and his mastery of slang. He explains, "Every day after work, I walked, 'fishing' for potential converts in the Detroit black ghetto" (Haley, 1965, p. 205). Within a short period of time, he becomes the Nation's first national minister, gaining fame all over the United States as a strong advocate for black rights. However, tension develops between Malcolm and Elijah because the former tries to engage in action against racial injustices while the latter chooses not to intervene in politics. Additionally, Malcolm's fame and influence cause fear and resentment among the Nation of Islam's leaders, just as Elijah had predicted earlier: "you will grow to be hated when you become well known. Because usually people get jealous of public figures" (Haley, 1965, p. 270). Not long after this, Malcolm is shocked by rumors of Elijah's adultery. At first, he refuses to believe the allegations, but when he learns that the rumors are true, he avoids speaking about the moral codes in temple meetings. He recalls, "I taught social doctrine to Muslims, and current events, and politics. I stayed wholly off the subject of morality [because] my faith had been shaken in a way that I can never fully describe. For I had discovered Muslims had been betrayed by Elijah Muhammad himself" (Haley, 1965, p. 301). Another important event that leads to Malcolm's break from the Nation is when one of his assistants reveals the Nation's order to kill him, which he knows Elijah is behind. This devastates Malcolm and he sees it as a betrayal from his most trusted man, stating, "I could conceive death. I couldn't conceive betrayal" (Haley, 1965, p. 312). After Malcolm leaves the Nation, he uses his popularity to establish an organization, Muslim Mosque, Inc., with the intention of calling for black political and economic independence. However, before his organization develops, he makes the pilgrimage to Mecca, financed by his half-sister. In Mecca, Malcolm learns about the differences between orthodox Islam and the brand preached by the Nation. He changes many of his convictions around race as he observes white people there who are not tainted by racism. He comes to believe that "the white man is not inherently evil, but America's racist society influences him to

act evilly" (Haley, 1965, p. 378). He then begins to examine the plight of African-Americans from an international viewpoint. After returning to America, he attempts to spread his new ideology, emphasizing the importance of unity among black people around the world as a way of resisting white supremacy. He concludes the narrative by informing his readers about the death threats he is receiving and expressing his hope that he has helped in destroying "the racist cancer that is malignant in the body of America" (Haley, 1965, p. 382).

In the return stage of the hero's journey, the hero must take the road back home to benefit his community with the wisdom or spiritual power he achieved on his journey. According to Campbell (2008), "when the hero-quest has been accomplished," the hero "still must return with his life-transmuting trophy," beginning "the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom," to "the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community" (p. 167). However, in order to return home with his "elixir," the hero must pass the return threshold. In order to pass the return threshold, the hero is tested, and it is in this test that he goes through his final resurrection, for it is a near-death experience. If the hero manages to pass, he will arrive home as a "master of the two worlds": one world is of the spiritual realm and the other is that of the common day.

There are many elements in the final part of Malcolm's autobiography that correspond to the elements of Campbell's heroic return. Malcolm's journey ends with his return, which is realized in his split from the Nation and his pilgrimage to Mecca. His split with the Nation represents the test element of the return threshold. Malcolm's test lies in his sudden loss of the community of the Nation, as well as his disappointment in the corruption of Elijah Muhammad, who was his role model. He describes how shocking these two events are for him:

> I was in a state of emotional shock. I was like someone who for twelve years had had an inseparable, beautiful marriage and then suddenly one morning at breakfast the marriage partner had thrust across the table some divorce papers. I felt as though something in nature had failed, like the sun, or the stars. It was that incredible a phenomenon to me – something too stupendous to conceive (Haley, 1999, p. 311).

His words illustrate the extent of how lost he becomes after he loses his affiliation with the Nation and his confidence in Elijah. His great shock indicates the intensity of his attachment and demonstrates how he had trusted Elijah more than he had trusted himself because he saw him as the one who rescued him from his hustling life and from prison. El-Beshti (2009) describes Malcolm's association with the Nation of Islam as "an important step towards rehabilitating the self from the 'psychological castration' inflicted upon it by white society" (p. 365). El-Beshti refers to Malcolm's characterization of the Nation as "having been a psychologically revitalizing movement" (Haley, 1999, p. 354). Mostern (2007) notes that the Nation allows Malcolm "to 'be a man' by becoming black" (p. 148). Therefore, El-Beshti (2009) argues that Malcolm's split from the Nation "leads to further metaphysical and psychological anxieties" (p. 365). Moreover, Taylor (2012) contends that by breaking from the Nation, Malcolm "experiences the return – it had never really left him – of the old double-consciousness" (p. 61). Although this test shakes Malcolm's beliefs, he does not abandon Islam but instead goes to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage.

Malcolm's pilgrimage marks the end of his journey, after which he arrives in America as a "master of the two worlds" (Campbell, 1949, p. 196), achieving a balance between who he was before his journey and who he is after the spiritual enlightenment he gains. The pilgrimage broadens his scope to integrate the plight of African-Americans into a global context. Furthermore, through this experience, the pains of the prejudice that had been implanted in his society of black inferiority in comparison to white people's perceived superiority are healed by the catharsis that Malcolm experiences as he witnesses the unity of all races in Mecca. He describes his experience saying:

> My pilgrimage broadened my scope. It blessed me with a new insight. In two weeks in the Holy Land, I saw what I never had seen in thirty-nine years here in America. I saw all races, all colors, – blue-eyed blonds to black-skinned Africans – in true brotherhood! In unity! Living as one! Worshiping as one! No segregationists – no liberals; they would not have known how to interpret the meaning of those words (Haley, 1999, p. 369).

These lines reveal Malcolm's astonishment as he witnesses the unity between all races. Many scholars consider his pilgrimage as his second conversion. According to Thomas, it "seems to have afforded him a rare but necessary moment of respite, tranquility, integration, and growth, and this conversion, more than his first one, was a truly liberating experience" (Thomas, 172). Furthermore, Ohmann notes that while Malcolm's "Autobiography as a whole presents a man in hurried, even frenzied motion," the narration of his pilgrimage, especially the "one night when he lay on the ground at Muzdalifa among other pilgrims," presents him as being at rest (Ohmann, 147). That spiritual experience awakens in him a new conviction that embraces Pan-Africanism, believing that the best solution is to unite black people with a universal consciousness to demand their rights. He returns to America excited about putting his newly formed ideas into action by spreading them among the people.

According to Campbell's monomyth, if the hero returns safely from his journey with the wisdom he gains from it, he must share it with his community in order to advance it. Campbell notes that the hero "has yet to re-enter with his boon the long-forgotten atmosphere where men who are fractions imagine themselves to be complete. He has yet to confront society with his ego-shattering, life-redeeming elixir" (Campbell, 186). However, the hero's community is not necessarily always ready to receive the wisdom he has gained from his adventure. Campbell explains that the hero, "may meet with such a blank misunderstanding and disregard from those whom he has come to help" (Campbell, 29). This is true in Malcolm's case as he receives many death threats for trying to spread his ideologies. He knows he may be murdered, and so he ends his autobiography in "a prophetic mode" (El-Beshti, 366):

> I know that societies often have killed the people who have helped to change those societies. And if I can die having brought any light, having exposed any meaningful truth that will help to destroy the racist cancer that is malignant in the body of America – then, all of the credit is due to Allah. Only the mistakes have been mine (Haley, 382).

Malcolm was assassinated on February 21, 1965.

6. Conclusion

This study, grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Joseph Campbell's monomyth and critical race theory, has analyzed *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* to explore how key aspects of Malcolm X's life align with the stages of the hero's journey. By applying Campbell's monomyth to pivotal moments in Malcolm's fight for freedom and justice, this research demonstrates how his narrative mirrors many stages of the hero's quest, while also offering a profound reflection on the reconciliation of double consciousness.

The study highlights how Malcolm's journey is not only a personal quest for identity and meaning but also an effort to correct the historical omission of African Americans from mainstream narratives. Through his life, the research examines the complexities of racial issues, including institutionalized racism, internalized racism, and intra-racial tensions, and discusses how these dimensions shaped Malcolm's transformation.

The impact of religion on Malcolm's life is also a critical theme explored in this research. His conversion to Islam, and his subsequent break from the Nation of Islam, represent key moments of personal and ideological change, enabling Malcolm to transcend the oppression he faced and reach a broader understanding of the global struggle for justice. His relationship with the Nation of Islam community, initially an important source of support and identity, eventually gave way to a more expansive view of solidarity, which he realized through his pilgrimage to Mecca.

Furthermore, this research examined the continuing relevance of the hero myth in the modern age by tracing the trajectory of Malcolm's heroic journey from his troubled youth to his emergence as a global figure of empowerment. The study divides Malcolm's autobiography into four parts, each corresponding to one of the three stages of Campbell's monomyth: *departure*, *initiation*, and *return*.

In the first stage, the early chapters of Malcolm's life—his childhood and adolescence—align with the *departure* stage, as he is thrust into a world of racism and inequality, which compels him to leave his old world behind and begin his journey. The second and third parts, covering Malcolm's time as a ghetto hustler and his conversion to Islam, align with the *initiation* stage, during which he undergoes a series of trials that culminate in his conversion, the ultimate boon of his journey. The final section of his narrative, detailing his break from the Nation of Islam and his pilgrimage to Mecca, reflects the *return* stage. Here, Malcolm's return to the ordinary world, equipped with the wisdom of his global experiences, underscores the transformative nature of his journey.

Ultimately, by interpreting *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* through the lens of Campbell's hero's journey, this research not only highlights the universal structure of Malcolm's transformation but also reinforces the enduring relevance of the hero myth in contemporary struggles for justice and identity. Malcolm X's story is a testament to the power of personal and ideological evolution, and reading his life through this framework offers new insights into the timeless nature of heroic narratives.

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