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Introduction

Towards an Understanding of the Political Theology of Malcolm X

EMIN POLJAREVIC & ANDERS ACKFELDT

> Malcolm X put a hex on my future someone catch me
> I'm falling victim to a revolutionary song.
>
> – Kendrick Lamar, "HiiiPoWer"

21 February 2020 marked the fifty-fifth year since the assassination of Malcolm X (1925–1965).[1] His lifework and activist legacy nevertheless still inspire a range of movements around the globe. His various names, photographs, video clips, and soundbites are often summoned and expressed in popular culture, radical politics, social and civil rights mobilization, religious narratives, and so on. For instance, during the completion of this special issue a true crime six-part docuseries, *Who Killed Malcolm X* premiered on Netflix. In the series, the filmmakers Phil Bertelsen and Rachel Dretzen follow the amateur historian and investigator Abdur-Rahman Muhammad as he points out considerable inconsistencies in the official story of the

1. The authors wish to thank the leadership and administrative staff at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul for their facilities and assistance in organizing the workshop. The necessary financial support for the meeting was provided by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University and the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Uppsala University. The workshop and this special issue would not have been possible without the critical and committed engagement of its esteemed participants, all of whom deserve our appreciation. Professor Aminah McCloud and Judge Anthony E. Simpkins have made valuable comments and contributions to the discussion that only improved the quality of the articles. Special thanks to Joel Kuhlin for inviting us to speak at the symposium "From Malcolm X to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz – The Legacy of an American Icon" at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University, in October 2018, during which the initial idea for this special issue evolved. We also wish to express our thanks to Mark LeVine and Anthony Paul Smith for valuable comments that have improved the quality of this article. In the end, the assistant editor-in-chief of *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*, Martin Nykvist, deserves our appreciation for his patience and hard work with organizing the entire special issue.

murder. Some of the results from Muhammad's investigation have increased the likelihood of reopening the investigation into the murder of Malcolm X.[2]

Across the Middle East, Malcolm X has long been celebrated for his forceful antagonism to the US government and the dominant white society more broadly. For example, in 1984 the Ayatollah Khomeini (1902–1989) government in its defiance of the US-led sanctions against Iran, issued a postage stamp depicting Malcom X in *ihram* clothing on his 1964 *hajj* to Mecca, with the words "Universal Day of Struggle against Race discrimination" printed both in Farsi and English. Such and other similar examples indicate how state and political leadership far beyond the US borders interpret Malcolm X's defiant struggle against the political system of the US. Much closer to the present day, in 2018, Malcolm X was invoked as a political anti-imperialist symbol in Turkey. The city council of Ankara voted in favour of renaming the street on which the new US embassy will be located: Malcolm X Caddesi (Malcolm X Street). The political message was clear in the midst of strained relations between Turkey and the US.[3]

The historic and ongoing importance and power of Malcolm X across the globe highlights some of the reasons that this special issue of *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* brings together scholars of history, religious and Islamic studies, philosophy of religion, sociology, and theology in an effort to offer a set of critical approaches to Malcolm X's political theology. The specific articles in this special issue emerged from discussions and exchanges conducted primarily during the workshop "The Political Theology of Malcolm X", at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 19–20 August 2019. The workshop grew out of our common research interests, studies, and analyses of the legacy of Malcom X's lifework and political theology.

The main question addressed in this special issue is: How can we explain the continued relevance of Malcolm X's lifework for a significant number of people, organizations, and even politicians far beyond the US context?[4] This

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2. The Manhattan District Attorney is apparently considering that option. See John Leland, "Who Really Killed Malcolm X? Fifty-Five Years Later, the Case May Be Reopened", *The New York Times* 2020-02-06, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/06/nyregion/malcolm-x-assassination-case-reopened.html, accessed 2020-02-18.

3. The strains consisted of several factors. Some of the most important issues were the Turkish government's criticism of the Trump administration's support of the Kurdish YPG militia in Syria – a group that Turkey labelled as a terrorist group. Another one was the Trump administration's unwillingness to extradite a controversial Muslim leader, Fethullah Gülen, to Turkey. The Turkish government considers Gülen as the mastermind behind the 2016 failed *coup d'état* attempt.

4. A range of scholarly attention has been given to Malcolm X since the early 1980s. A random search on JSTOR ("Malcolm X") gave more than 11,000 hits. An equivalent random search on Google Scholar gave more than 56,000 hits (as of 14 February 2020).

question becomes even more significant in the present global state of environmental crises, ambiguities of collective identities, and even existential uncertainties. These unsettling processes are both mainstreaming many formerly "radical" critiques of the Eurocentric (including "white nationalist") capitalist system and producing increased calls for radical solutions that directly take on some of the core racialized dynamics so fiercely highlighted by Malcolm X.

Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) describes some of the social and political tensions that cause collective anxieties as various parts of the condition of liquid modernity – an endemic state of global uncertainty. It is within this liquified form of social existence, where no one seems to be in total control of ecological, economic, social, and political events. People therefore doubt the sustainability of their livelihoods, environmental survival, stability of their collective identities, social statuses, and so on. The endemic nature of current collectively experienced anxieties, according to Bauman, eventually lead to the "crisis of humanity".[5]

Some of the symptoms of this crisis are sometimes described as "Urban Rage" – in social and political uprisings in cities across the globe. In cities like Algiers, Berlin, Cairo, Charleston, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Khartoum, London, Madrid, Stockholm, São Paulo, and so on, young people react, respond, and resist the detrimental economic circumstances, gentrification, xenophobia, political oppression, police brutality, and similar injustices.[6] It is perhaps symptomatic that urban anti-establishment and civil rights movements, regardless of their scope and place, such as the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, the Occupy Gezi movement in Turkey, the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, Zapatistas in Mexico, Landless People's Movement in South Africa, or Spanish indignados temporarily gain strength in social crises.[7] These few well-publicized instances of a collective sense of crisis suggest that a number of our societies are in a state of moral and ethical flux. In some of these societies, we find revitalizations and context-dependent interpretations of Malcolm X's revolutionary message and his radical activist authority.[8]

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5. Zygmunt Bauman, *A Chronicle of Crisis: 2011–2016*, London 2017.

6. Mustafa Dikec, *Urban Rage: The Revolt of the Excluded*, New Haven, CT 2017.

7. See Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements in Times of Austerity: Bringing Capitalism Back into Protest Analysis*, Cambridge 2015; Donatella della Porta, "Late Neoliberalism and Its Discontents: An Introduction", in Donatella della Porta et al., *Late Neoliberalism and Its Discontents in the Economic Crisis: Comparing Social Movements in the European Periphery*, Cham 2017, 1–38.

8. See Rita Kiki Edozie & Curtis Stokes (eds.), *Malcolm X's Michigan Worldview: An Exemplar for the Contemporary Black Studies*, East Lansing, MI 2015.

In order to address the relevance of Malcolm X in this global context, it is helpful to invoke parts of the conceptual toolbox that will help analyzing some of the complexities of the reclaiming processes of his lifework, namely political theology. Political theology, at the same time, represents a conceptual instrument that helps us deepen our understanding of how we ourselves understand our moment in history, full of growing social and political tensions, violent conflicts, and extremist politics.

Political theology is here understood to signify the vibrant relationship between a dominant sacred order in a particular political context and the populations that coexist within such an order.[9] The sacred in this case is not necessarily connected with a particular religious tradition or notions of God. Instead, the sacred here represents a broader notion that a population or a political community understand to be the bearing or "sanctified" idea(ology) of that particular community wherein individuals are subjects (several times over).[10] The bearing idea of the society is based on a common understanding of "who we are as a collective", or rather, what is considered to be an immutable set of ethical and moral principles that bind that particular community together. In a context of a modern nation state, this means that the organizing idea of a society or community is shaped by and through its relationship with the state – the political and sacred hegemon.[11] This implies that the state represents the sovereign structure, a "supernatural agent" as it were, and a part or a producer of "hegemonic systems".[12]

Political theology, in the words of Paul W. Kahn, "challenges the basic assumptions of our understanding of the meaning of modernity, the nature of individual identity, and the character of the relationship of the individual to

9. For instance, the idea of nationalism in France is based on the particular majoritarian notions of "frenchness" that is based on the ideology of secularism, including ideals such as liberty, fraternity, and equality. This understanding is contrary to some of the leading theorists of liberalism, who understand liberalism (which is invoked as a sacred ideological frame of states in Europe and North America) to be fundamentally egalitarian and protective of religious rights and other rights. See John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With "The Idea of Public Reasons Revisited"*, Cambridge, MA 1999, 9–30.

10. Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, New York 2014, 192–194.

11. See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Cambridge, MA 1988.

12. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London 1971. The idea here is that modern nation states are widely recognized as sovereign political powers that internally define or adapt to the hegemonic criteria for citizenship/membership (perhaps even salvation) of their respective populations. Beyond Antonio Gramsci, see Schmitt, *Political Theology*; Jan Assmann, *Herrschaft Und Heil: Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa*, Munich 2000; Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, Chicago 2005; Karen Barkey & Sunita Parikh, "Comparative Perspectives on the State", *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991), 523–549. It is also useful to think about international order as a pantheon of state-gods that continuously invoke and attempt to prove their worth for other states.

the state".[13] This means that interactions between social classes, ethnic and race groups, religious communities, political interest group, and so on, in a particular state more often than not result in a contingent set of ethical and moral principles recognized by wider populations. Here, identity matters as it signifies a person's relative position *vis-à-vis* the state's bearing idea. The interactive process between various groups within a society shapes the form of inter-state power distributions, which in turn determines the contents of the state's "sacred" content. For instance, those groups of people that get to hold the reins of power in a particular state also have a privilege through which they define the contents of the organizing idea of the state itself. Historically, this has meant that the dominant political elite holds the privilege to outline the principles of a hegemonic system.

This is particularly clear in the US, where the foundations of the political system are framed within the idea of white supremacy. It is also the case in a number of European societies that are steeped in the idea of nationhood, which is in turn based on the supremacy of one ethnic group, one language, one religion, and one culture over all others within a particular territory. Thus hegemony of one identity group (the socio-political, economic, and cultural power-bearing group) becomes the reason for dominating all others within that particular context. In other words, hegemony of one group becomes a dominating and colonial order for another. Consider this, the core idea of Black Nationalism and even Black Theology is the resistance to the domination of Whiteamerican hegemony. Here, Malcolm X came to embody that resistance by concluding that "American society [in and of itself] makes it next to impossible for humans to meet in America and not be conscious of their color differences. And we both agreed that if racism could be removed, America could offer a society where rich and poor could truly live like human beings."[14] He therefore challenged the basic assumption of the relationship between the state and the individual, between a Whiteamerican understanding of the sacred and that of all other minority groups, especially Blackamericans.

By threatening the "sacred" order of the state (i.e. White supremacy) Malcolm X was considered as an enemy of the state. He, much like other state enemies, is considered as a "heretic", extremist, and radical deserving the state-ordained sanctions and punishments. Thus, the supposed tension between the power-holding elites, those who hold the priority of interpretation of institutionally codified idea (for example the constitution) of the sacred, and everyone else who dares to openly challenge that same idea

13. Paul W. Kahn, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, New York 2011, 18.

14. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York 1984, 371.

constitutes an existential threat. Due to the existential dimension of the contentious relationship between the two sides, the discourses used to describe the hostile "other" are often expressed through theologically and eschatologically loaded terminology, such as damned, evil, devil, Armageddon, hell, and so on.[15] An important aspect of political theology relevant for the analyses of the impact of Malcolm X's lifework in this special issue is based on the postulations above, together with an assumption that humans are political and moral beings who interact, communicate, and change through contentious political engagement.

The race-based power-dynamics, both socially and politically, has produced a domination of a particular understanding of the idea of a (sanctified) state-membership or citizenship. A range of answers to questions, such as what it means to be an American, or successful, or desirable, or acceptable, have habitually been linked with the imagined, constructed, and maintained ideals of whiteness.[16] Malcolm X's indictment of the Whiteamerican domination over the black minorities clearly signals visceral opposition and resistance to the perceived domination and oppression. He states:

> "The white man doesn't want the blacks! He doesn't want the blacks that are a parasite upon him! He doesn't want this black man whose presence and condition in this country expose the white man to the world for what he is!" [...] "For the white man to ask the black man if he hates him is just like the rapist asking the raped, or the wolf asking the sheep, 'Do you hate me?' The white man is in no moral position to accuse anyone else of hate!"[17]

By attempting to delegitimize and radically oppose the Whiteamerican authority, Malcolm X also attempted to challenge whiteness' colonial-like domination in the US context. In effect, Blackness, especially its radical form, represented, and perhaps in various ways still represents, the anti-thesis of White supremacy.[18] Blackamerican civil rights and religious leaders and social movements have expressed their opposition to such a *status quo* by challenging the hegemonic understanding of what it means to be an American.[19]

15. See Emin Poljarevic, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X: Between Human Dignity and Returning the Gaze", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 11–27.

16. Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property", *Harvard Law Review* 106 (1993), 1707-1791.

17. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 241.

18. See Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*, Minneapolis, MN 2015.

19. The term "Blackamerican" is appropriated from Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection*, New York 2005, 70.

The scholarly work presented in this special issue suggests that few civil rights leaders in the US have expressed their opposition in more clear political theological terms than Malcolm X. For instance, one of the hallmarks of his radical activism was that he was consistently unconcerned with the Whiteamerican's sensibilities and entitlements. Instead, his message (but not his alone) for freedom, justice, and equality was an attempt to deconstruct and redefine the sanctified definition of what it means to be an American – beyond the categories determined by the hegemon. His challenge to the hegemonic whiteness made a journey from the streets of Harlem to the national stage, and by the end of his life, around the globe. For instance, upon his return from the religious pilgrimage and a brief tour of the Middle East and West Africa, Malcolm X explained his understanding of whiteness in a lengthy interview with a former white supremacist and later civil rights activist, Robert Penn Warren (1905–1989), on 2 June 1964:

> Well, white people whom I have met, who have accepted Islam, they don't regard themselves as white but as human beings. And by looking upon themselves as human beings, their whiteness to them isn't the yardstick of perfection or honor or anything else. And, therefore, this creates within them an attitude that is different from the attitude of the white that you meet here in America, because [...] it was in Mecca that I realized that white is actually an attitude more so than it's a color.[20]

Here, Malcolm X rephrases his earlier assessment and understanding of the institutionalized racism and oppression of Blackamericans in relation to the hegemony in the US.[21] Malcolm X's efforts to rearticulate the image of the enemy in the Blackamerican struggle for freedom, justice, and equality could also be interpreted as being a result of his international experiences and his continuous activist development.

This re-articulation of the image of the enemy should however not be confused with a redefinition, reformation, or redemption of the enemy. On the contrary, Malcolm X's political theology on this point relates to his early understanding of the sources of oppression, injustice, and inequality in the US. His rephrasing of the image of the enemy is consistent with his earlier positions – the hegemony of white supremacy is inhuman and unjust for Blackamericans and people of colour, and at the same time, it has been the essential feature of the US since its inception.[22] For Malcolm X, the "earth's

20. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches, Debates and Interviews (1960–1965)*, s.l. 2018, 216.

21. To be clear, a hegemonic power structure is hegemonic primarily for the White America and domination for everyone else.

22. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Talks to Young People: Speeches in the United States, Britain, and*

most explosive evil is racism", and those representing a racialized hegemonic structure (regardless of the intensities of melanin in their skin) are the enemy to his moral and sacred values.[23] This conceptualization of the enemy within Malcolm X's activism is connected to a long tradition of Black liberation theology, and therefore not unique.[24] What is on the other hand rather exceptional is the impact of his activist-life and radical discourse on the contemporary transnational Muslim mobilization against injustices, racism, and state repression. Such mobilization is particularly interesting to analyze in the backdrop of liquid modernity and collective uncertainty in a range of multicultural and multiethnic societies in Europe and North Africa.

In a way, Malcolm X's lifework has come to represent a form of Muslim civil rights activism, not necessarily rooted in the divisions between the religious "others", but rather as a collective symbol for shared experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and repression. Hamid Dabashi formulates a larger point by stating that,

> the significance of Malcolm X is that he rises from the heart of the metropolitan disenfranchised poor in the USA and moves out to reach one of the most massively manufactured civilizational other of "the West" in the Islamic world. [...] There is no other evolutionary figure who like Malcolm X so gracefully and courageously climbs over that dilapidated wall which mercenary Orientalists have constructed between the Western part of their own perturbed imagination and the rest of the world.[25]

The global resonance of the contents of Malcolm X's political theology in form of his anti-racist message, rhetorical fortitude, discourses of empowerment, and social mobilization, including his assassination, are partly analyzed in the articles included in this special issue.

The first two articles, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X: Between Human Dignity and Returning the Gaze" and "The World Is a Prison to Believers: Naming and Worlds in Malcolm X", engage with discursive and

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Africa, New York 1991.

23. Malcolm X, *The Diary of Malcolm X: El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, 1964*, Chicago 2013, 23.

24. James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY 2010.

25. Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire*, New York 2008, 23. Dabashi's claim is clearly a provocative one, as it is too general and sweeping in comparison to a wide range of revolutionary figures that might inspire popular revolts and protests in Muslim majority societies. Nevertheless, his normative claim is symptomatic of the elective affinity that many historians as well as scholars of religion and humanities more broadly might have with regard to Malcolm X's historical and contemporary significance.

historical analyses of Malcolm X's political theology, that is, the range of his conceptualizations of the cosmic struggle between good and evil.

The two following articles, "The Semiotics of Malcolm X from Harlem to Tahrir" and "Expressions of Political Theology in Art and Islam: Malcolm X-Inspired Transformations among Muslims in the US and the UK", address a number of cases where artistic expressions play a counter--hegemonic role. Artists challenge the *status quo* and the dominance of the state or social and political elites. Malcolm X is both explicitly and implicitly invoked as a moral authority and inspiration for artists' resistance to the hegemonic structures in their respective contexts.

The two succeeding articles, "A Travelling Model: The Mythicization and Mobilization of Malcolm X in the Malay World" and "Malcolm X and Mauthausen: Anti-Semitism, Racism, and the Reception of Malcolm X in the Austrian Muslim Youth", constitute two distinctive case studies where Malcolm X's legacy takes on new life in what is for some the unexpected contexts of Austria and the Malay speaking world.

At its core, this special issue of *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* tracks a part of the diffusion of Malcolm X's ideas from the context of the US across the globe and more than a half century after his assassination. ▲

The Political Theology of Malcolm X

Between Human Dignity and Returning the Gaze

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Introduction

At a time when social movements across the globe are seeking justice, political accountability, and, most of all, dignity, Malcolm X's (1925–1965) lifework is becoming known far beyond its original socio-political context.[1] While it is hard to measure his legacy, his short public life and civil rights activism clearly continue to resonate with disgruntled young people. One reason for this is his political theology, which envisions the possibility of another world, one in which human dignity is centred on the principles of freedom, justice, and equality – ideals that humans are morally and ethically obliged to obey. Political theology is therefore a relational framework that guides a population and ideals that are considered to be revered and sacred, all of which are embedded in a particular political order, and which in turn define the wider scope of social relations. This implies that social and political relations in a state are power-centred, but at the same time these relationships are justified, oftentimes subtly and tacitly, by invoking a particular set of ideas and intepretations of those ideas. When someone, like Malcolm

1. I wish to thank all of my conversation partners during the whole process of writing this article, as well as the Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre (CRS), for their support. Particular thanks go to Anders Ackfeldt for productive cooperation in organizing the workshop at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X", in August 2019, which was the crucial reason for writing the article. Two anonymous reviewers have made insightful suggestions on how to improve the text, which is appreciated. Jay Willoughby has offered valuable advice, as always. The usual disclaimers apply.

X, challenges some of these central ideas, or the dominant interpretation of the same, that person is oftentimes labeled a radical, extremist, rebel, traitor, or simply a threat.

Malcolm X's political theology, as this article shows, pivots around the value of human dignity. For him, human dignity is the sacred ethical and moral value that is worth pursuing and sacrificing for, something that is especially clear within the socio-political framework premised on White supremacy. Human dignity, Malcolm X argues in the last phase of his life, is a manifestation of the God-given and therefore inalienable right of all humans, not just Whites or Blacks, to be regarded as human. He argued that those who committed themselves to pursuing those principles are friends, morally committed and righteous, whereas those who opposed them, namely, the oppressors and the unjust, are enemies. His initial distinction between good and evil, based on racialist categories, later transformed into qualitative categories wherein race appropriated a more symbolic meaning. Nevertheless, the distinction between good and evil represents the pivotal and lasting center of gravity in all of his life phases. And thus his life, spent in the pursuit of dignity, strikes a chord with many contemporary Muslim rights activists.

Recovering Human Dignity

The 2010s saw a renewed scholarly and activist interest in Malcolm X's lifework and impact[2] for reasons having to do with the post-Cold War globalization processes, heightened levels of social polarization, xenophobia, and the rise of White supremacy across the North Atlantic region and elsewhere.[3] The volatile tensions between majority and minority populations startled many of the region's liberal regimes, some of which have attempted to deal with them by adopting increasingly illiberal and anti-Muslim

2. This renewed interest is similar to the scholarly attention given to Malcolm X during the 1990s. For recent trends, see Robert E. Terrill (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Malcolm X*, Cambridge 2010; Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, New York 2011; Stephen Tuck, *The Night Malcolm X Spoke at The Oxford Union: A Transatlantic Story of Antiracist Protest*, Berkeley, CA 2014; Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016. Many more scholarly volumes and articles could be mentioned, as well as numerous civil rights activists who invoke, discuss, and borrow words and ideas expressed by Malcolm X, but the format does not allow enough space for such discussions.

3. See Cas Mudde, "The Relationship between Immigration and Nativism in Europe and North America", Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC 2012; Aya Ramadan, "Bobigny 2017: quand la banlieue impose la dignité", Parti des Indigènes de la République, http://indigenes-republique.fr/bobigny-2017-quand-la-banlieue-impose-la-dignite/, accessed 2020-02-06; Förortens pantrar, https://pantrarna.wordpress.com/om-pantrarna/, accessed 2020-02-06.

policies.[4] These two phenomena are perhaps most visible as regards secularism, religious freedom, and Muslim minorities.

One issue that opponents of Islamic religious practices and Muslim identities often invoke is that of "Muslimness", which, broadly defined, contends that these threaten a particular White-majority state's national cohesion and secular order.[5] This perception is often framed by racializing those Muslims living as minority communities in such states. It could also mean that "the fact of being a migrant, or a migrant offspring – a condition indicated by given ethnic/racial or even religious characters – that can produce a differential treatment towards immigrant-origin individuals, on a both practical and symbolic level".[6]

One can, therefore, plausibly assume that such and similar socio-political conditions pressure Muslim minorities to formulate individual and collective strategies to cope with threats, prejudice, and the snowballing structural infringement on their religious freedom.[7] In contexts where such pressure is mounting, a part of these minorities seek modes through which their demands for dignity can be expressed. And this is why the story and representations of Malcolm X's lifework and messages continue to resonate across cultures.[8]

The Muslim part of African-American civil rights activism, primarily in the shape of the Nation of Islam (NOI), is considered to have been a radical part of the broader civil rights movement and a response to the structural violence of the US government.[9] Malcolm X is arguably a central figure in shaping this radical response, given the impact of his political theolo-

4. Kees Groenendijk, Elspeth Guild & Sergio Carrera, *Illiberal Liberal States: Immigration, Citizenship and Integration in the EU*, Farnham 2009.

5. Aurelien Mondon & Aaron Winter, "Articulations of Islamophobia: From the Extreme to the Mainstream?", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (2017), 2153–2155.

6. Laura Zanfrini, *The Challenge of Migration in a Janus-Faced Europe*, Cham 2019, 93. Clearly, there are exceptions to this, nevertheless, Zanfrini means that "the migratory background as a variable deeply influenc[es] social life".

7. Pew Research Center, "How Religious Restrictions Have Risen Around the World", https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/15/a-closer-look-at-how-religious-restrictions-have-risen-around-the-world/, accessed 2020-02-06. The report shows that "Europe's average score measuring government limits on religious activity has doubled" in the recent decade.

8. See Emin Poljarevic, "Malik al-Shabazz's Practice of Self-Liberation", in Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016, 227–251; Farid Hafez, "Malcolm X and Mauthausen: Anti-Semitism, Racism, and the Reception of Malcolm X in the Austrian Muslim Youth", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 95–108; Khairudin Aljunied, "A Travelling Model: The Mythicization and Mobilization of Malcolm X in the Malay World", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 79–94.

9. See Terrill, *The Cambridge Companion*.

gy, which is based on personal experience, Blackamericans'[10] cultural and intellectual heritage, the NOI's religious activism, self-discipline, and mainstream Sunni teachings.[11] All of these point towards the struggle for both individual and collective dignity.

Although the core of his political theology is the good–evil or friend–enemy distinctions,[12] it is also very much about one's human dignity being recognized.[13] Malcolm X's personal struggle in this regard directly shaped his socio-critical method of "returning the gaze" to all Blackamericans' common enemy: the Whiteamerican power elites. His practice of communicating his grievances to inter/national audiences without much concern for the enemies' sensitivities directly challenged a major tenet of contemporaneous mainstream civil rights organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), established in 1909.[14] His daring to "return the gaze" is arguably one of the reasons why the broader civil rights movement viewed the NOI, Malcolm X, and later Black Power organizations as radical.[15]

A self-proclaimed committed Muslim, Malcolm X sought to socially, politically, and ideologically disassociate himself and all Blackamericans from the socio-political and economic power system that denied him human dignity.[16] His efforts to empower disempowered minorities by instilling a

10. The term "Blackamerican" is appropriated from Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection*, New York 2005, 70.

11. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York 1984, 10–12, 150, 266–270, 294–295, 370–374.

12. Although Carl Schmitt (1888–1985), who originates much of the terminology about political theology, is clearly addressing an entirely different political, social, and religious framework, engaging with his ideas, such as the concept of "the political", is nevertheless still useful. He claims that it "is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend–enemy grouping". Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago 1996, 29.

13. One can argue about how well Malcolm X was acquainted with the Qur'an's contents, but it is plausible to assume that this autodidact had read all of it. If so, Marmaduke Pickthall's (1875–1936), or Yusuf Ali's (1872–1953), translation would have been the standard version he read. One verse, among several others, addresses the issue of human dignity (through the idea of honouring) directly: [Pickthall] "Verily we have honoured the Children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment." [Ali] "We have honoured the sons Of Adam; provided them With transport on land and sea; Given them for sustenance things Good and pure; and conferred On them special favours, Above a great part Of Our Creation." (17:70). See also Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 337.

14. See Sondra Kathryn Wilson, *In Search of Democracy: The NAACP Writings of James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and Roy Wilkins*, Oxford 1999.

15. Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought*, Cambridge 2001, 49, 80.

16. Tuck, *The Night Malcolm X Spoke*, 150–152.

sense of collective dignity (among Blackamericans) is political theology in practice.

By raising awareness of the power differentials in his society and formulating an influential analysis of how hegemonic White supremacy works, he presented a model for self-liberation and the pursuit of dignity.[17] Such awareness did, indirectly, generate responses among the ethnic, racial, and religious minorities of the 1960s. This process seems to inspire a number of youth activists even today, some of whom are actively confronting state repression, policies of economic and cultural disempowerment, Islamophobia, and racism.[18]

The roots of this political theology are also embedded in the tradition of Black Nationalism, the origins of which lie in the late nineteenth century Blackamerican liberation struggle. It, therefore, mirrors the growth of nationalist sentiments that had been an integral part of mobilization ever since the slave rebellions earlier in the same century. The era of Jim Crow laws (1870s–1965) only accelerated the formation of a collective consciousness, which was further boosted in the 1910s and 1920s by the Great Migration from the South to the North.[19] Such collective experiences are instrumental in shaping an acute sense of dignity and empowerment, an important source of political theology.

Returning the Gaze

Another part of Malcolm X's political theology can be traced to the intellectual and religious history of Blackamerican liberation. Pan-Africanists such as Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832–1912), the early William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963), and Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) helped form his thinking.[20] Moreover, part of the post-Great Migration's religious mobilization was led by Noble Drew Ali's (1886–1929) Moorish Science Temple of America, Wallace Fard Muhammad's (1877–c. 1934) NOI, and

17. Poljarevic, "Malik al-Shabazz's Practice", 228–232.

18. See Farid Hafez, "From Harlem to the Hoamatlond: Hip-Hop, Malcolm X, and Muslim Activism in Austria", *Journal of Austrian-American History* 1 (2017), 159–180.

19. The contextual elements, among them this period's structural economic, social, cultural, and political changes, elements of which have contributed to racial tensions, including riots and uprisings in metropolitan areas in various northern states, must be considered. This is also true of the impact of some of the effects of the Blackamerican Cultural Revolution (i.e. the Harlem Renaissance) that he experienced in New York City during the 1940s. All of these realities shaped his worldview and his decision to initially disengage from activism and to reengage with it later on via the NOI.

20. It is particularly important to consider the Garveyite ethos presented to him by his parents, both of whom were activist members of the United Negro Improvement Association. See Essien U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: The Rise of the Black Muslims in the U.S.A.*, Suffolk 1966, 47–52.

other messianic leaders, such as Father Divine (1877–1965), all of whom provided radical theological arguments for recovering Blackamerican dignity. These men and many others attempted to instill a sense of black pride and racial independence in light of discrimination and oppression of black populations in the US and the Caribbean.

By the time of Malcolm X's activist zenith in the early 1960s, the religious and socio-political empowerment discourse had produced a polyphonic and politically cognizant activist culture comprising new expressions of a popular sense of dignity in being Muslim, Black, African, and also being superior to Whites.[21] These were also claims of self-determination, knowledge production, and social conditions, all of which directly threatened white power. In other words, the hostility between political and even religious rivals was displayed through culture-specific sets of discourses easily recognized by a particular group of people.

For instance, the early Black Nationalist discourses and parallel theological constructs that reframed some of those discourses proposed a particular definition of good and evil, friend and enemy, and the distinction between "us" and "them". Malcolm X, now an NOI Minister, formulated sharp theological distinctions between White- and Blackamericans[22] that mirrored much of the already prevalent images of the friend–enemy distinctions among the Blackamericans who comprised his audience.[23] What is more, their various ideological and even religious convictions concurred with his socio-political analyses and revolutionary rhetoric, if not with the NOI's theology.[24]

Malcolm X's quest for dignity, or an individual sense of autonomy among Blackamericans, significantly shaped his "returning the gaze". At the same time, this recognition implies that his early and later distinctions between friends and enemies are rooted in the Black Nationalists' historical attempts to use both political and theological narratives to empower Blackamericans. The primary political marker in these discourses was, and in some ways still is, based on the principle of an existential struggle between good and evil, friends and enemies, "us" and "them", and so on.[25] This timeless, transferable and resonant model is recognizable in places around the globe.[26]

21. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 62–67.

22. Claude Clegg, "Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad", in Robert E. Terrill (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Malcolm X*, Cambridge 2010, 11–25.

23. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Talks to Young People: Speeches in the United States., Britain, and Africa*, New York 1991.

24. Clegg, "Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad", 16–18.

25. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 29.

26. Aljunied, "A Travelling Model".

In the Black Nationalist discourse's empowerment narratives and the NOI's theology, "returning the gaze" held up an epistemic mirror to the political system that maintains White supremacy.[27] This gaze expressed the view of the White-majority society and its political establishment upon Blackamericans throughout much of the twentieth century. In several ways, this view is the extension of the Whiteamerican establishment's post-slavery sentiments and institutionalized domination of the Black minority.[28]

One important aspect of the domination framework is that it *de facto* legitimized the prevailing discrimination and exploitation of Blackamericans. For instance, socio-economic discrimination generated the unequal distribution of opportunities for education and healthcare, and exploitation meant underpaying the Blackamerican labour force.[29] Blackamericans logically interpreted all such processes as depriving them of their dignity and, by default, their sacred right to be recognized as fully human.

On 12 December 1962, Minister Malcolm X talked about returning the Whiteamerican gaze in his "Black Man's History" speech. He presented whites as devils, the epitome of evil and treachery, beyond redemption, and therefore inferior.[30] This and similar statements, as presented below, have been so modified, restated, and reformulated that the adjective "Whiteness" gradually came to signify a diabolic and evil attitude as opposed to a specific race of people.[31]

Discursive Elements of Malcolm X's Political Theology

The two most important primary source documents used for this article are Malcolm X's autobiography and his diary.[32] However, the discourse, as

27. Molefi Kete Asante, "Afrocentricity and Malcolm X", in Robert E. Terrill (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Malcolm X*, Cambridge 2010, 150–156.

28. Rhonda V. Magee Andrews, "The Third Reconstruction: An Alternative to Race Consciousness and Colorblindness in Post-Slavery America", *Alabama Law Review* 54 (2003), 494–497.

29. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Oxford 2007, 63–68, 114–117.

30. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches, Debates and Interviews (1960–1965)*, s.l. 2018, 65–67. See also Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 370–372. Malcolm X "returns the gaze" many times; however, very few are provided here due to space constraints. This particular statement reflects one of the classic NOI doctrine's main theological principles. See Edward E. Curtis IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, Chapel Hill, NC 2006, 18, 111.

31. For instance, during a 2 June 1964 interview with Robert Penn Warren, the post-NOI Malcolm X stated: "I [have] realized that white is actually an attitude more so than it's a color [of a person's skin]." Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 216.

32. This analysis is primarily based on critical discourse analysis, which, on a basic level, allows one to explain the function of discourse by investigating how language (written and spoken) shapes and is shaped by the sociopolitical context within which the communication takes place. See John E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*, Basingstoke 2007, 26–29.

well as political theology, must be embedded in the broader socio-political and historical context[33] of such transnational movements as Pan-Islamism, Pan-Arabism, and Pan-Africanism. During the last year of his life, Malcolm X molded his own ideas on mobilizing Blackamericans based on the insights gained from these movements.[34] Moreover, his Garveyite upbringing, his family's breakup, everyday racist antagonism, upheavals of adolescent life, prison, and redemption need to be understood according to the socio-political events of the early and mid-twentieth century.[35] Placing both *The Autobiography* and *The Diary* in their historical context clears up much of the confusion regarding the perceived ir/relevance of Malcolm X's political theology, distinctions between friends and enemies, and his understanding and pursuit of dignity.

Four distinctive and analytically separate discursive elements constitute his political theology of human dignity.[36] First, the centuries-old socio-political oppression and marginalization of Blackamericans shaped its collective consciousness. This means the modes of communications through which both individuals and groups interact with representatives of this country's hegemonic political system.[37] Second, the evolution and peak of Black Nationalism during the 1960s provided an ample political vocabulary through which dissent could, simultaneously, be articulated and appeal to the Blackamericans' collective consciousness.[38]

Third, the evolution of Black Theology had allowed for the development of distinct Black religious traditions and their specific features in the US.[39] One can argue that the historical legacy of Black Theology in

33. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 39–44.

34. Maytha Alhassen, "'Three Circles' Construction: Reading Black Atlantic Islam through Malcolm X's Words and Friendships", *Journal of Africana Religions* 3 (2015), 2–3.

35. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 1–190. His prison experiences are particularly interesting to analyze in future research. Incarceration and extreme forms of othering, isolation, and repression are some of the aspects that need to be taken into account when considering the form of radical activism, search for human dignity, and personal discipline in Malcolm X's later life.

36. Theology, much like politics today, is structurally tied up with the state institutions within which the knowledge of Divine things is usually produced by contemporary civil servants such as muftis, state-appointed imams, and state supported-fatwa councils. This does not mean that politics and theology deal with the same realms of knowledge, but only implies that both of them are produced and performed within the confines of largely secular nation states. Here then, religion, and its practical and theological contents, are subordinated to the state laws. This also means that the principle of sovereignty is only found within the secular power of the state, not as an integral part of the Divine – something that is usually addressed through theological reasoning.

37. Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, Cambridge 2001, 5–22.

38. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 31–45; Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma*, 183.

39. James H. Cone, "Black Theology in American Religion", *Journal of the American*

Malcolm X's thinking influenced his search for the authentic religious form of Blackamerican identity, which he eventually found in Islam. "Whiteness", therefore, came to represent "the enemy" through "his/her" racialist practices that were conditioned by white supremacy's socio-political domination. For instance, he described the press media as "vicious in their whiteness".[40] Fourth, Islam, initially in the form of the NOI's religious doctrine and later in the Sunni tradition, allowed him to make more cosmopolitan and transnational human rights claims.[41]

By merging and balancing these key elements in both local and global contexts, Malcolm X radically articulated and stimulated the imagination for popular resistance against injustice and systems of racial discrimination and oppression. The discursive creativity of his charismatic rhetorical performances, and the development of aesthetics based on his persona, has caused the core content of these key elements to resonate beyond his own specific context.[42]

These key elements are also sources of Malcolm X's political theology. For instance, the principles of freedom, justice, and equality, the primary markers of his call for dignity, can be found in each of these key elements.[43] This is equally significant in his redefinitions of friends and enemies, which he expressed differently in different contexts. Consider his discursive transformation in pre- and post-NOI periods, or his adoption of different rhetorical strategies when speaking to Whiteamerican and Blackamerican audiences or to the national and international media. Such variations provide each specific audience with relevant pieces of information and political theological content, all of which, in turn, reveal Malcolm X's taxonomy of friends and enemies.

From the Form to the Essence of Evil

After completing his *hajj* and a brief return to the US in April 1964, Malcolm X toured the Middle East, Africa, and Western Europe from 10 July to 17 November, a period that he meticulously recorded in his diary.

Academy of Religion 53 (1985), 755–757.

40. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 379.

41. Anna Hartnell, "Between Exodus and Egypt: Malcolm X, Islam, and the Natural Religion of the Oppressed", *European Journal of American Culture* 27 (2008), 207–211.

42. See Anders Ackfeldt, "The Semiotics of Malcolm X: From Harlem to Tahrir", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 47–60; Yolanda van Tilborgh, "Malcolm X-Inspired Transformations among Muslims in the U.S. and the U.K.", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 61–78.

43. These principles are infused with sacred values that can be found in many of his speeches both during and after his membership in the NOI. See, for instance, Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 195; Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 11, 93.

The Diary reveals, among other things, his thoughts on his evolving sense of cosmopolitan religiosity and belonging, as well as developing strategies for mobilizing Blackamericans for freedom, justice, and equality.[44] In this part of his life, Malcolm X acquired national and international experience by interacting with African and Arab populations, religious and political leaders, academic scholars, and public intellectuals. This had a profound effect on his friend–enemy distinction, as seen in his move away from the NOI's racialist theology and towards more power-oriented distinctions between "us" and "them". The "new" frame was shaped by his newly adopted mainstream Muslim identity.[45]

For example, his earlier designation of "white" and "whiteness" as representing evil, and defined as such theologically, was a racialist category and therefore an irredeemable condition. His later understanding of "whiteness" continued to rhetorically represent the domestic socio-political system as oppressive and unjust. Nevertheless, as a mainstream Muslim, he said that the oppressor, who symbolized Whiteamericans' opposition to human dignity by negating freedom, justice, and equality to Blackamericans and people of colour worldwide, could potentially be redeemed. In other words, Malcolm X unsurprisingly kept the racialist terminology rooted in Black Nationalism's long activist tradition,[46] while redefining its contents and meanings by infusing the theological contents of Sunni teachings. This undertaking, which broadened his analysis and conceptualization of the friend–enemy distinction, was not necessarily a shift in his moral and ethical footing.

For instance, one can reasonably assume that after his *hajj*, Malcolm X came to view racism as a hostile condition rooted in individuals and societies, rather than a predetermined biological circumstance. He framed racism as an intrinsically destructive ideology that had dominated the country's social relations from the very start.[47] Therefore, anyone who adopted it could be considered as an enemy of human dignity. A summary of his pilgrimage experiences demonstrates in part some of the reasons for this redefinition process and his recalibration of the friend–enemy distinction:

44. Malcolm X, *The Diary of Malcolm X: El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, 1964*, Chicago 2013, 168.

45. It is certainly possible to view his re-formation as a beginning of formation of an identifiable Muslim minority in the US context.

46. After the summer of 1964, Malcolm X toured Africa as an unofficial ambassador of the civil rights movement, gathering international support for the Blackamerican civil rights struggle by talking with African statesmen who were either ruling independent states or engaged in decolonial struggles. It is entirely possible to draw a conceptual line between earlier Blackamerican Pan-Africanists and his calls for revolution in the US.

47. See Reiland Rabaka, "Malcolm X and/as Critical Theory: Philosophy, Radical Politics, and the African American Search for Social Justice", *Journal of Black Studies* 33 (2002), 145–165.

> The brotherhood, people of all races, colors, from all over the world coming together as one, which proved to me the power of the One God. This also gave me an opening to preach to them a quick sermon on American racism & its evils [...] *For me the earth's most explosive evil is racism*, the inability of God's creatures to live as One, especially in the West. The Hajj makes one out of everyone, even the king, the rich, the priest loses his identity (rank) on the Hajj – everyone forgets self & turns to God & out of his submission to the One God comes a brotherhood in which all are equals.[48]

Here, racism is understood as symbolizing evil within the context of the human inability to live as "one". Malcolm X bears witness that this inability is temporarily overcome during the *hajj* season, when the "brotherhood" and "equality" among people of various races and cultures is possible, although temporary and locally limited. For example, *The Diary* presents multiple instances in which Malcolm X demonstrates that racism is the main source of injustice. One such instance occurred after pilgrims outside Mecca asked him about his *hajj* experience. He wrote in his diary, "this also gave me an opening to preach to them a quick sermon on American racism & its evils".[49]

He further notes that his post-NOI understanding of "whiteness" had changed from his earlier NOI notion:

> When they [whites] accepted Islam, it removed that [racism]. Well, white people whom I have met, who have accepted Islam, they don't regard themselves as white, but as human beings. And by looking upon themselves as human beings, their whiteness to them isn't the yardstick of perfection or honor or anything else. And, therefore, this creates within them an attitude that is different from the attitude of the white that you meet here in America, because then and it was in Mecca [*sic*] that I realized that white is actually an attitude more so than it's a color.[50]

The racial power dynamic in the US dictates that "whiteness" is a key part of the hegemony and thus "the attitude" of that hegemony's representatives. One's skin colour, therefore, is loaded with the potential to perpetu-

48. Malcolm X, *The Diary*, 23. My italics.
49. Malcolm X, *The Diary*, 23.
50. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 216.

ate the society's unequal power dynamics, as opposed to being an inherent evil characteristic of a specific person. This idea was further accentuated by Malcolm X's brief education in the general framework of mainstream Sunni teachings, which enabled him to update his ethical grounding.[51] One consequence of this process allowed him to broaden his definition of what it means to be a human, especially within the American context.[52]

During his travels, Malcolm X met with thirty-three African and Arab heads of state, as well as ministers, parliamentarians, Muslim religious leaders, and anticolonial activists. He sought to convince them that Blackamericans needed international support in their fight against "the U.S. government's injustices".[53] In addition, he tried to communicate to others that mobilizing for the Blackamericans' civil rights was both a moral struggle for the universal values of dignity and freedom and required the dismantling of his international listeners' conceptions of the US as being governed by a liberal regime.[54] He further attempted to connect the Blackamericans' civil rights struggle to the ideas of universal human rights, presumably on the grounds that this would resonate especially well with the leaders of both African states and of anticolonial movements.

Despite the limited results obtained, during his 11 October 1964 address to Kenya's Parliament Malcolm X persuaded its members to adopt a "resolution of support for our human rights struggle".[55] This meant that, due to the explicit support of a member state, Malcolm X and his Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) could file a human rights case against the US government through the relevant United Nations body. He proclaimed:

> If South Africa is guilty of violating the human rights of Africans here on the mother continent, then America is guilty of worse violations of the 22 million Africans on the American continent. And if South African racism is not a domestic issue, then American racism also is not a domestic issue. We beseech independent African states to help us bring our problem before the United Nations, on the grounds that the United States Government is morally incapable of protecting the lives and the property of [its] 22 million African-Americans. And on the

51. The Muslim World League (MWL) appointed Malcolm X as its representative in the US. As a representative of the MWL, the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, which is attached to Egypt's Awqaf Ministry, financed his five months of travel during 1964.

52. Malcolm X, *The Diary*, 99, 133.

53. Malcolm X, *The Diary*, 180. See also Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 370–372.

54. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 369–370.

55. Malcolm X, *The Diary*, 156. Another occasion occurred in Ghana, where he addressed "12 ambassadors of African, Asian & Arab nations". Malcolm X, *The Diary*, 62.

> grounds that our deteriorating plight is definitely becoming a threat to world peace.[56]

This analysis of the broad issue of racism in the US, and his explanation of how this issue is connected to morality and human rights (i.e. dignity), demonstrates an important shift in his theological focus from the form of evil to the essence of evil. The widening of Malcolm X's claims on freedom, justice, and equality – the dignity of Blackamericans – was manifested in the OAAU, a composite mirror image of other anticolonial social movements. International movements in the form of Pan-Islamism, Pan-Arabism, and Pan-Africanism have given rise to a number of socio-political organizations, among them the Organization of African Unity, established in 1963, and the Muslim World League, established in 1962, all of which attempted to unite regional non-white states to resist "Western" colonial and neo-colonial policies of domination.[57]

Radical Voice

Malcolm X's primary epithet for Blackamericans as the category of friends, and in opposition to "whiteness" as a notion of discrimination and oppression, was "black people".[58] For instance, in his "Harlem Freedom Rally" speech he stated:

> When we say "our" [Harlem Freedom Rally] we do not mean Muslim nor Christian, Catholic nor Protestant, Baptist nor Methodist, Democrat nor Republican, Mason nor Elk. By "our" Harlem Freedom, we mean the black people of Harlem, the black people of America, and the black people all over this earth.[59]

This maximalist definition uttered in 1960 demonstrates that Malcolm X was already widening the category of friends. At the time, this racial distinction was derived directly from the NOI's theology. This definition of the black man's essence also directly relates to the ideas of the "black man's" God-given ownership of the earth: "God will erase the American government and the entire race that it favors and represents, from this planet [...]

56. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 247.

57. Alhassen, "'Three Circles' Construction", 7–8.

58. At other times, he declared all "black people" in the Western Hemisphere to be Afro-Americans, which greatly expanded the term's original definition: the 22 million Blackamericans who were the NOI's primary constituency. See Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 221.

59. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 11.

and God will then give the whole earth back to the original owners, the black man!"[60] Here, "black man" is defined as a divine group, the category of "friend" embroiled in the cosmic struggle against a materially stronger enemy – *all* whites. The terminology and its contents are clearly embedded in the NOI's theological framework, based on the presumption of the races' cosmic struggle.[61] In a 1961 interview, Minister Malcolm X went out of his way to explain the ambition and role of the NOI: "[The NOI] primarily is a religious movement here in America that's designed to reform the black man or the so-called Negroes, reform us – reform us morally and enable us to stand on our own two feet and do something for ourselves."[62] Here, the "black man" is connected to the aspiration of collective improvement, especially moral and ethical reform.[63] Moral orderliness and ethical discipline are some of the recurring features of Malcolm X's conceptualization of both individual and collective strength within the category of "friend". His initial transformation from an incarcerated thug into a devoted follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975) had lifelong effects on his ideas of the necessary conditions for the Blackamericans' struggle for dignity.

In the same interview, Malcolm X connected this understanding of friend to the global context of anticolonial struggle:

> The world revolution that's taking place all over this earth, the black man would be fighting for what he knows is his by right, but the movement on the part of [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] and the others had done nothing but slow down the militancy that is inherent in the nature of the black man. All over this world people are standing up for freedom.[64]

"Militancy" and "militant" feature frequently in his discourse, for they indicate his perception of urgency in the struggle between good and evil. Here, the notion of "returning the gaze" is employed to empower Blackamericans in the most violent period of their country's civil rights struggle. The professed militancy represents an attempt to mobilize the increasingly frustrated Blackamericans against aggressive white supremacist policies. For example, meeting violence with violence is an attempt to "return the gaze".

60. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 14.

61. Clegg, "Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad".

62. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 23.

63. There is much to say about this aspect of the NOI's mobilization and grassroots initiatives, which often had the most decisive practical impact on potential recruits.

64. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 26.

During an *Open Mind* interview with James Farmer (1920–1999), Alan Morrison (1916–1968), and Wyatt Tee Walker (1928–2018), Malcolm X again stressed the collective dimension of Blackamerican identity as "us", while contrasting it with the morally corrupted and "criminal" "white man":

> I think that we can solve our problems better by looking at the condition of the black men in America as a collective thing, not individual, but collective. We're in this condition collectively; we're second-class citizens. Collectively, we're the last hired and the first fired. Okay, since we suffer collectively the one who benefits, the white man, benefits collectively. If a white individual were to murder a man he would be a murderer. Lynching is a murder. For the past four hundred years our people have been lynched physically but now it's done politically. We're lynched politically, we're lynched economically, we're lynched socially, we're lynched in every way that you can imagine. And we look upon the white man, the American white man, as a criminal.[65]

This collective dimension and description of structural violence seems to have pushed him to make even more radical claims disassociating himself, and presumably all Blackamericans, from the category of "Americans", in 1963:

> We don't think as Americans any more, but as a Black man. With the mind of a Black man, we look beyond America. And we look beyond the interests of the white man. The thinking of this new type of Negro is broad. It's more international. This integrationist always thinks in terms of an American. But you find the masses of Black people today think in terms of Black. And this Black thinking enables them to see beyond the confines of America. And they look all over the world. They look at the happenings in the international context.[66]

This is a different position from Malcolm X's post-NOI period, but only in part. This difference is not found in the distinction between good and evil or in his international focus or the radical tone of his discourse, but in his downplaying of separatist rhetoric. In *The Diary*, the distinction between friend and enemy is made almost exclusively on the basis of character, behaviours, and attitudes toward the Blackamerican struggle for full

65. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 40.
66. Malcolm X, *Collected Speeches*, 78.

citizenship and human rights.[67] This indicates that he understood the futility of driving the narrative of the Blackamericans' with a "mass return" to Africa or, for that matter, a separate polity within the US context.[68] This also reveals that his political theology had shifted from attaining dignity via separation to attaining dignity by confronting the enemy directly, on the basis of universal and Islamic moral and ethical ideals and through inter/national support.

Conclusion

The full extent of Malcolm X's transformation functions as an important source of inspiration for contemporary religiously and ethnically racialized youth activists in the North Atlantic region and beyond. His political theology, rooted in the struggle for dignity, comes out of a particularly salient critical method of "returning the gaze" to the perceived enemy. Social media, which has globalized the availability and visibility of his recorded and written speeches, images, and different appropriations, have popularized various bits and pieces of what can be considered to be his political theology.[69] New communication technologies have enabled the rapid popularization of his lifework and radical activism, all of which seem to resonate in a number of places where people experience heightened levels of repression, injustice, racism, and other forms of dehumanization.

Malcolm X's main activist mission, namely, to empower Blackamericans by his unrelenting insistence on their God-given human dignity, sought to bring about freedom, justice, and equality in a system preferring Whiteamericans. This activist tradition of liberation among Blackamerican leaders throughout the twentieth century certainly informed his political theology. However, what sets him apart is his cosmopolitanism and the clarity of his political theology's contents, including his friend–enemy distinction.

The issue is not just about more democracy and people's inclusion in the decision-making processes, but about the moral and ethical contents of such decisions, about upholding or undermining human dignity. This is the red thread running through the different phases of Malcolm X's life and activism, and the core content of his political theology.

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67. Malcolm X singlehandedly popularized the notion of an "internal enemy" within Blackamerican communities, namely, the distinction between the "house negro" (a heretic to the "cause"), or "that type Negro", an "Uncle Tom" as opposed to a "field negro", embodied by the masses, militant activists, and all those who were willing to sacrifice themselves in the struggle.

68. Alex Haley, "Epilogue", in Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York 1984, 459.

69. See Ackfeldt, "The Semiotics of Malcolm X"; van Tilborgh, "Malcolm X-Inspired Transformations".

It is therefore plausible to assume that his critical discursive method, his ability to transform with all that it entails, and his ultimate sacrifice, continue to engage marginalized people's collective consciousness in the North Atlantic region and beyond. These aspects of Malcolm X's political theology encapsulate a *telos* of many Muslim and other racialized youth organizations today, especially in debates pertaining to integration, citizenship rights, and even radicalization in a number of socio-political contexts. These assumptions need to be tested in future research. For instance, to what extent and how does Malcolm X's political theology of dignity and returning the gaze inspire contemporary urban and marginalized youth today? ▲

SUMMARY

This article makes a limited attempt to explain a part of the reason why Malcolm X's radical activism for freedom, justice, and equality presumably resonates with a large number of disempowered people around the world today. The analysis presented herein is based on a modified understanding of political theology that captures some of the appeal of Malcolm X's message and his pursuit of human dignity. Two components of his political theology stick out as arguably the most relevant for a number of contemporary civil rights movements in a wide range of places around the world. One is the distinction between friends and enemies based on people's support for or opposition to a collective pursuit of human dignity, oftentimes expressed as human rights, religious freedoms, economic justice, and so on. The other component is the returning-the-gaze argument, which points towards Malcolm X's ability to articulate an unapologetic and empowering indictment of the majority society and its overbearing political, cultural, and economic power structures. This argument represents a moral and ethical effort to gain human dignity in a socio-political context perceivably premised on repression and inequality. The underlying political theological argument is thus found in Malcolm X's empowerment discourse. This discourse is today oftentimes decontextualized, which adds to its resonance among the global Muslim youth who seek inspiration for mobilization against apparent injustices beyond the traditional voices, and in a variety of socio-political, linguistic, and cultural contexts.

The World Is a Prison to Believers

Naming and Worlds in Malcolm X

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Starting with "Failure"

Malcolm X's (1925–1965) political and theological mode of analysis is carried out through his work as rhetor. However, it is not uncommon to charge his oratory as ultimately one of "failure".[1] The revolutionary oratory of Malcolm X, especially during the Nation of Islam (NOI) years, is not uncommonly described as a (rhetorical and symbolic) failure: "The limits of [Malcolm X's] revolutionary rhetoric are all too clear today. X did not change the racist underpinnings of America's economic structure, nor did he have a very direct impact on altering America's political system."[2] Further, Condit and Lucaites write about the speeches of 1964–1965 in the following manner:

> Malcolm X's failure was not for lack of trying creative solutions to the problems facing Black America […] different possibilities, each a

1. This paper uses failure as a productive conceptualization of the rhetoric of Malcolm X. In short, "failure" attempts to articulate Malcolm X's rhetoric as actualizing a refusal of the White world.

2. Celeste Michelle Condit & John Louis Lucaites, "Malcolm X and the Limits of the Rhetoric of Revolutionary Dissent", *Journal of Black Studies* 23 (1993), 308.

> dead end, dominated his thinking in his last year […] Malcolm X was eloquent and relentless in his analysis of the problems facing Black America, but he never spoke of a solution.[3]

Formulating failure in this manner demarcates a difference between the pre- and post-1964 oratory (that is, after the *hajj* experience of April 1964) and the stated goals of each period. According to this view, the less revolutionary Malcolm X became, the more internationalist and so the better. Yet, his legacy is that of failure, in one sense or another. Malcolm X never lived to carry out the reform of his rhetoric and never lived to see the potential fruits of such labour:

> A rhetor must […] finally abjure a true revolution, which calls for an unfettered and absolute rejection of all that is, in favor of a torturous path through the constructive vision of what might be. This was the path that Malcolm X chose, and it is a path that those who today recall his appeals to "the ballot or the bullet" and to "all means necessary" as rallying cries for contemporary political action would do well to reconsider.[4]

Malcolm X's oratory above follows a trajectory from an immature articulation of apocalyptic revolution ("and absolute rejection of all that is") to a more constructive stance towards questions of race and political action ("a torturous path through the constructive vision of what might be"). Malcolm X's rhetorical style is described as generally counter-cultural, in contrast to Martin Luther King Jr.'s (1929–1968) "culturetypal",[5] and as too revolutionary.[6] The most intense revolutionary oratory is naturally located in the pre-1964 speeches, and the NOI period generally. Condit and Lucaites therefore conceptualize the ouvre of Malcolm X to be either rhetorical failure or failed rhetoric.[7]

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3. Condit & Lucaites, "Revolutionary Dissent", 305.

4. Condit & Lucaites, "Revolutionary Dissent", 309.

5. Celeste Michelle Condit & John Louis Lucaites, "Reconstructing 'Equality': Culturetypal and Counter-Cultural Rhetorics in the Martyred Black Vision", *Communication Monographs* 57 (1990), 6, 13.

6. "Malcolm X's rhetoric was initially too hostile to achieve any serious consideration as a viable avenue of change for most audiences, and it only received careful inspection and consideration in the wake of growing discontent with the perceived ineffectiveness of King's rhetoric." Condit & Lucaites, "Reconstructing 'Equality'", 19.

7. For a study of the resonance of Malcolm X's rhetoric within a wider social semiotic field, see Anders Ackfeldt, "The Semiotics of Malcolm X from Harlem to Tahrir", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 47–60.

In this context, Malcolm X is bound to a notion of unproductive failure, evaluated through the later speeches and post-*hajj* identity. This might in part be due to the rhetoric of the post-1964 speeches themselves, where he reflects on the earlier period as restricted by Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975), for example, in terms of developing ideas. The "emancipated Malcolm X" of the 1964–1965 period is taken to be an improvement to the revolutionary, earlier period, and when Malcolm X becomes Malik, the new name displays a newfound hope in mankind through the *ummah* and a universal conception of Sunni Islam.[8]

Failure has at times been described in religious terms, and located specifically with Malcolm X's NOI period, as heretical and even false consciousness.[9] There are those who would identify Malcolm with failure in relation to a trajectory of "spiritual evolution".[10] Malcolm X, on these readings, is a religious failure. The characterization of this failure differs based upon the author's own particular stance and theological investment on where Malcolm X *ought* to stand in relation to them. Reading Malcolm X as a religious failure generally accords with the progress narrative that locates the NOI as a necessary, but in the end, insufficient step for Black Americans to come to Islam. This progress narrative sees Elijah Muhammad's son and successor, Imam Warith Deen Mohammad (1933–2008), reject many of his father's teachings in order to redirect the movement to Sunni Islam, thereby reforming the heterodox, if not heretical, NOI.[11]

Our wager is that these readings of Malcolm X as failure – be it symbolic-political or religious – miss a more fundamental problem raised by his thought. This problem haunted Malcolm X, failure or not, but also haunts any attempt at a positive political programme that would address anti-Blackness and any religious project that would seek to construct or gather together universal humanity without anti-Blackness. This is the problem of world. Note that these evaluations of Malcolm X's assumed failures come from the perspective of a rhetoric that operates within, and with relation to, a contemporary cultural world as well as from the perspective

8. For a more detailed history of Malcolm X's weaving together of Black Nationalism and Islam, see Emin Poljarevic, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X: Between Human Dignity and Returning the Gaze", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 11–27.

9. Amiri Yasin Al-Hadid, "Al-Qur'an and Sunnah: From Malcolm X to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz", in Lewis V. Baldwin & Amiri Yasin Al-Hadid (eds.), *Between Cross and Crescent: Christian and Muslim Perspectives on Malcolm and Martin*, Orlando, FL 2002, 50.

10. Emin Poljarevic, "Malik al-Shabazz's Practice of Self-Liberation", in Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016, 227.

11. See Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection*, New York 2005, 60–62.

of a “constructive” agenda. We are told that Malcolm X is not constructive enough, and his words simply were not sufficient and/or lacked a political programme (in contrast to Martin Luther King Jr. for instance) or lacked knowledge of the correct religious path.

Malcolm X’s pre-1964 rhetoric, we hold, articulate refusal. Specifically, refusing the world of the White. If Malcolm X or his project “failed”, it is because the world he articulates as a problem makes thinking something other than failure an impossible task. For, as a famous *Hadith* reminds us: “The world is a prison for a believer and Paradise for a non-believer.”[12]

Given Names and Taken Names

The problem of world was approached first by Malcolm through his experience of being named. This arises from a fundamental operation brought into relief by the analytical field of political theology. While this term does not refer to a specific discipline, it does refer to a constellation of concepts and tools for understanding the *dispositif* of the contemporary order. Sovereignty, and the machinations that prop it up, is a central political-theological concept in the strand of political theology that arises out of and in response to Carl Schmitt’s (1888–1985) original reactionary and conservative analyses. For Schmitt, the sovereign and sovereignty, which stands at the heart of Western governmentality, are only conceivable through analogy with God.[13] The act of naming and the legitimacy of such naming is one such analogical power of the sovereign, regardless of whether that power produces contradictions or untenable tensions as it does in liberal states.

Yet, contra Schmitt, there are also counter traditions to such analogical political theologies. Instead of moving from God to ruler through analogy, such counter-political theologies are singular and vectorial. That is, they do not constitute a distinction between God above and the sovereign here below that are then united through the concept of sovereignty, which emerges at the same time from their distinction.[14] The counter-political theology to such an analogical shell game begins by turning attention to violence and suffering. For, underlying the trappings of sovereignty are acts of terrible and mundane violence.

12. Sahih Muslim Book 55, Hadith 1.

13. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Chicago 2005, 10.

14. This structure has been analyzed at greater length and named by Smith as “weaponized apophaticism”. See Anthony Paul Smith, “Against Tradition to Liberate Tradition: Weaponized Apophaticism and Gnostic Refusal”, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 19:2 (2014), 131–144.

A singular violence is concealed by the rules that structure whether we will be able to recognize that violence or not. All suffering is singular, but some experiences of suffering are integral to the functioning of the same structure that produces suffering. The logic of exclusion – the goal of the sovereign act of naming – serves to create a fixed, hallucinatory identity. I am an American citizen because I am not an illegal immigrant or an incarcerated delinquent. I am Swedish because I am not Roma or Bulgari or even Muslim. I am male because I am not female. I am white because I am not black. Thus, while suffering is singular, some experiences of suffering are left unintelligible because their unintelligibility makes intelligible the suffering of the dominant community, abject names are given to some so that others might find honor in their name. In our examples above those cast as unintelligible for the purpose of one's own intelligibility are the subject positions of the illegal, the incarcerated, female, black. Yet, these subject positions are not equivocal or flowing from one to the other, there is a unilateral specificity to the function of these distinct subject positions. Those who constitute their own pursuit of happiness upon the unintelligible suffering of these others are served by the equivocal confusion of these subject positions, for when a cry against violence goes up they are able to shift emphasis ("well at least you are not incarcerated", "at least you are not a woman", "at least you are a citizen", and so on). Those who suffer are absent to themselves within this structure of (mis)recognition. The structure of (mis)recognition takes the political-theological name, "the World". We will return to this later.

While presented abstractly above, this schema of naming is identified by Malcolm X in his own life. His struggle against anti-Blackness can be plotted through the antagonism of his given names and his taken names. Malcolm X, as the descendants of Africans captured and forced into slavery, was born carrying a given name that was forced upon his parents and their forbearers. This last name, Little, does not mark out Malcolm in relation to his kin, but marks out that they are not recognized as his kin. So when his father was killed, likely by anti-Black racists and white supremacists, the life insurance company was able to find ways to deny payment to the family and the strain upon his mother was taken by the anti-Black state as a sign of her "true identity", as one who cannot help but fail to be a mother.

Malcolm narrates his transition to taking the name Malcolm X as one of finding himself debased in the white world and transformed in his finding God in the religion of Islam: "I am spending many hours because the full story is the best way that I know to have it seen, and understood, that I had sunk to the very bottom of the American white man's society when –

soon now, in prison – I found Allah and the religion of Islam and it completely transformed my life."[15] That is, when he was imprisoned he was so angry with God that those incarcerated with him gave him the name Satan (though it is worth asking, after the analyses we will undertake below, at which God was Malcolm X angry). This anger was channelled against the white world through his reversion to Islam and the name that all Muslims in the NOI take: X.

The NOI practice of replacing the given name by taking the common and empty name X is a powerful act of refusal as well as a powerful negation of the sovereign act of naming. The legacy of Elijah Muhammad has not been given much theoretical attention outside of a very small group of academics, despite the continuing importance of his work outside of the academy. Elijah Muhammad's thought can be read as a form of ideology critique, seen most clearly in his critique of the various manifestations of religious belief in a "mystery God".[16] It was this critique of the mystery God, which is used to undergird white sovereignty, where the power of names became clear for Malcolm X. In his autobiography, he related learning from Muhammad what the sovereign naming of Black Americans as "Negros" constitutes:

> Elijah Muhammad spoke of how in this wilderness of North America, for centuries the "blue-eyed devil white man" had brainwashed the "so-called Negro". He told us how, as one result, the black man in America was "mentally, morally and spiritually dead". Elijah Muhammad spoke of how the black man was the "Original Man, who had been kidnapped from his homeland and stripped of his language, his culture, his family structure, *his family name, until the black man in America did not even realize who he was*".[17]

There were a number of responses to this capture and (mis)naming in the NOI and they were not all of a piece. There were certain attempts, of course, to reclaim language, culture, and family structure. There was a qualified and understandable acquiescence to the white pathologization of blackness. Yet, at the level of the political theology of naming in the NOI, there is a strict refusal by evacuating the name, leaving the name empty with the symbol "X" (no doubt calling upon the mathematical variable). Malcolm explains

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15. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York 1992, 150.

16. See Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, Phoenix, AZ 1973, 1–67. This insight does not feel original, but we have been unable to locate the original source of the idea.

17. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 197. Our italics.

this refusal beautifully, again in his autobiography, through the retelling of his receipt of his X:

> My application had, of course, been made and during this time I received from Chicago my "X". The Muslim's "X" symbolized the true African family name that he *never could know*. For me, my "X" replaced the white slave-master name of "Little" which some blue-eyed devil named Little had imposed upon my paternal forebearers. The receipt of my "X" meant that forever after in the NOI, I would be known as Malcolm X. *Mr. Muhammad taught that we would keep this "X" until God Himself returned and gave us a Holy Name from His own mouth*.[18]

The apocalyptic temporality is important here. For the "true family name", that is, the sovereign name that emerges from the household, is not recoverable in this schema. This particular element of sovereignty and the world it would require are forever lost and only after the apocalypse, the overturning of this world, will that name be given.

The refusal of the white sovereign's act of naming plays out at the level of theory and practice at once. We can see this in a particularly antagonistic interview on Chicago's WMAQ-TV *City Desk* where Len O'Connor (1912–1991), one of the panel of interviewers, demands to know Malcolm X's "real name". He responds with a simple, "Malcolm. Malcolm X." O'Connor then invokes the law, "Is that your legal name?" Malcolm X, refusing to recognize the authority of that law, responds by saying, "As far as I'm concerned, it's my real name." O'Connor continues and now invokes the force of law, "Have you been to court to establish [...]" and, before he can finish, Malcolm X interrupts to condemn that same force of law for its passivity in allowing for the capture of those "true African names" and thereby the way such force of law supports that capture by saying, "I didn't have to go to court to be called 'Murphy' or 'Jones' or 'Smith'." After repeating the history of the capture of true African names as part of the process of enslavement, O'Connor, who should be chastised and shamed by this history, asks with annoyance and invokes the spectre of kinship contained in the name of the father, "I get the point. Would you mind telling me what your father's last name was?" The trap is easily sidestepped by Malcolm X, knowing that his father was subject to the same exclusion from full kinship, saying "My father didn't know his last name. My father got his last name from his grandfather, and his grandfather got it from his grandfather, who got it from the slave-master. The real names of our people were destroyed

18. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 199. Our italics.

during slavery." O'Connor's last attempt to make Malcolm X acknowledge his given name is weakly given through an appeal to ease, "Was there any time – any point in the genealogy of your family when you did have to use a last name, and, if so, what was it?" Malcolm X makes clear that such names are not simply unacknowledged, but refused and rejected: "The last name of my fore-fathers was taken from them when they were brought to America and made slaves. And then the name of the slave-master was given – which we refuse, we reject that name today."[19]

This practice of refusal is not accidental to Malcolm X's understanding of Islam. In a speech central to understanding Malcolm X's analysis of naming and world, "Black Man's History", he locates this refusal of the world's naming in the name of Islam itself. For in Malcolm X's polemical philosophy of religion he identifies Islam as nameless in a very specific sense. Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism all take their names from the proper names of an individual and specifically with that man's death:

> This name [writes "Islam"], if you'll notice, has no connection, no association, with the death of a man. This is not a man's name, this doesn't come from a man [...] Islam is not connected with any name. Islam is independent of any name. Islam is an act which means submit completely to God, or obey God.[20]

Shabazz, Gnosis, and the Creation of the Human

"Black Man's History" is a crucial piece of oratory for many reasons. Most important for the present purposes, Malcolm here developed a clear gnostic rhetoric and theology of naming. Gnosis resists the concept of the world. Theologians of early Christianity, like Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–202), sometimes used the Greek term γνῶσις ("knowledge"), in opposition to what they considered false knowledge among rival Christian groups.[21] One such group, the Valentinians, were labelled gnostics in Irenaeus's magnum opus *Adversus Haereses* ("Against Heresies") because they (purportedly) claimed to

19. The full video of this interview is available online. "Malcolm X Interviewed on City Desk", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-2QLuAvhJ8, accessed 2020-02-09. The interview is permanently archived at The Museum of Broadcast Communications. This is our transcription and we consulted that created by Lybio.net, https://lybio.net/malcolm-x-our-history-was-destroyed-by-slavery/interview/, accessed 2020-02-09.

20. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches*, New York 1971, 47.

21. For an influential, but now outdated, discussion on gnosticism and Irenaues, see Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma I*, New York 1961. For a history of the use of the term gnosis in church history and among Protestant theologians (such as Harnack), see Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?*, Cambridge, MA 2003.

possess extra-biblical insights (*gnosis*) on the events of human creation.[22] In Valentinian protology (speech about the first things, in contrast to eschatology), the creation of man – along with the greater material and visible world – is not the result of the highest God. Further, the Supreme Being was thought of as beyond the scope of human rationality, and by extension, the entire cosmological order. A gap was envisaged between the (material) world and (the spiritual) God. Still, ancient Christian "gnostics", like Valentinians, are nonetheless remembered for having constructed protologies in which a god principle, or principles, constructs the human, rather than the highest God itself. Although much more can be said about the intricate and sophisticated manner of this gnostic creation story, the fundamental protological gap between the world and God is reified into the origin and life of the human.

Protology is an essential part of the "Black Man's History" speech, also known as "Yacub's History" (December 1962).[23] "Black Man's History" goes through many of the important loci of the Book of Genesis, through a distinct gnostic and allegorical hermeneutic. Malcolm X demonstrates that the creation of the white man was in fact not the act of Allah, taken as the one true God, the greatest and highest of Lords, but of a scientist named Yacub. Sixty-six trillion years ago, Yacub lost a dispute with another scientist, over the issue of uniting the world of (exclusively black) humanity and plotted to destroy the earth. The failure to convince the scientists of essentially constructing Babel's tower not only ended with the creation of the Moon through a gigantic explosion, but more importantly, "a new tribe, a weak tribe, a wicked tribe, a devilish tribe, a diabolical tribe, a tribe that is devilish by nature".[24] In short, Yacub creates the White man.

Interestingly enough, Malcolm X later describes a scientist in Mecca, by the name Shabazz, who was originally tasked with the mission to predict the future and keep track of the past, and who counteracted Yacub's Luciferian creation by himself bringing "about a tougher people".[25] Of course,

22. Contemporary scholars of Valentinianism are careful to point out the lack of sources from the Valentinians themselves and we should therefore be suspicious and careful when formulating Valentinian protology from the description of *Adversus Haereses* and other heresiological writings from that time. For details on Valentinus's life and works, see Paul Linjamaa, *Valentinianernas evangelium: Gnosticismen och den antika kristna idévärlden i ljuset av texterna från Nag Hammadi*, Lund 2017, 52–81; Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the Valentinians*, Leiden 2006; Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins*, Tübingen 1992.

23. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 18, 35–96.

24. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 66, 70.

25. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 71. Of course Malcolm X is here explicating the theology of the NOI. While some might argue that this means we should not

Malcolm X's name, Malik El-Shabazz (already in use at the time of "Black Man's History"),[26] is more than a mere prophetic link to the protology above and the chief antagonist of Yacub. The name Shabazz signifies a fundamental gnostic vocation of refusing (White) world-making. There is, therefore, something of a gnostic line running through, and conjoining, Malcolm X's thinking as a minister of the NOI with his later more mainstream Islamic Sunni theology.

Worlds and Gnostic Naming

What are the gnostic elements in Malcolm X's refusal of world-making from the NOI period? In December 1963, right before his excommunication from the NOI, Malcolm X's "God's Judgement of White America" speech (famously known as "Chickens Coming Home to Roost") asked "Who will make White America know what God wants? Who will present God's plan to White America?"[27] Although these rhetorical questions unexpectedly emphasize the vocation of the Black Muslims, something very interesting is happening in connection to these questions and the missional identity of the NOI. Malcolm X here links Muslim knowledge of self, as the consciousness of vocation and one's place in relation to the world, to a full realization of God's name by way of revelation. As will be seen, this revelation of God's proper name creates an epistemic divide of a more common, theological knowledge and gnostic insight.

First and foremost, to know God at all is to know God's proper name. "We who are Muslims call God by his true name: Allah… The great Elijah Muhammad teaches us that Allah is the true name of the divine Supreme Being."[28] While this may seem like common knowledge, Malcolm X's focus on Elijah Muhammad draws attention to the need for a special revelation into the meaning of God's name. "God's Judgement of White America" links revelation with a gnosis of God as knowing God's name(s). For instance, after a brief discussion of the sacred etymology of Islam and Muslim,

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recognize it or account for it as Malcom X's theology, this would miss that any theology is never simply one's own. The traditions that are given and taken up by vibrant and creative thinkers like Malcolm X act as the origin and material for the ways in which they allow us to think differently. Whether or not Malcolm X "believes" in the Myth of Yacub is not at issue (just as it is not really important if Christians in the Europe of the Middle Ages believed in the literal two bodies of the king), the fact is that he thought with, taught, and used the myth in his own political theology.

26. Imam Benjamin Karim (1932–2005), who gives a speech just before "Black Man's History", writes: "I remember clearly that day in December 1962. While I was opening up I saw Malcolm come in, carrying his tan briefcase that bore in gold letters the name, Malik El Shabazz." Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 21.

27. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 180.

28. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 181.

where Malcolm X gives an uncontroversial exegesis of their Arabic origin, the themes of revelation and gnosis kick in. Divine knowledge primarily revealed to Elijah Muhammad is not that of the "'orthodox' Muslims". Malcolm X claims that this is simply because non-NOI Muslims lack a proper understanding of the name Muslim.[29]

It is therefore not enough to simply have familiarity with semantic meaning of "Muslim", "Islam", and by extension even "Allah". Why not? God's name cannot be properly known without its connection with the present as a decisive apocalyptic temporality, and the imminent judgment of the White world:[30]

> Just as we believe in one God, whose proper name is Allah, we believe also that this one God has only one religion, the religion of Islam. We believe that we are living in the time of "prophecy fulfillment," the time predicted by the ancient prophets of God, when this one God would use his one religion to establish one world here on earth – the world of Islam, or Muslim world [...] which only means: a world of universal brotherhood that will be based upon the principles of truth, freedom, justice, equality, righteousness, and peace.[31]

Full knowledge of God's name (gnosis) is linked to the worlds of the present age and the coming world of justice. What is meant by the end of the world here? Malcolm X makes it clear that one should not think of this cosmological event in terms of the end of the earth, but rather as a particular world: a world among worlds:

> There are many "worlds" here on this earth: the Buddhist world, Hindu world, Jewish world, Christian world – Capitalist world, Communist world, Socialist world – Eastern world and Western world – Oriental world and Occidental world – dark world and white world. Which of

29. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 182: "'Muslim' is an Arabic word, and it describes a person whose religion is Islam. A Muslim is one who practices complete submission and obedience to God's will. Here in America the word 'Muslim' is westernized or anglicized and pronounced 'Moslem'. Muslim and Moslem are actually the same word. The true believers in Allah call themselves Muslims, but the nonbelieving infidels refer to Muslims as Moslems or Muhammadans. Many of the weak, backsliding Muslims who come to this country have also adopted some of these same pronunciations coined for them by the infidels. But we don't condemn these 'orthodox' Muslims, because the reward of the believer, as well as the chastisement of the nonbeliever and the backslider, come only from Allah. Allah is the only judge. He alone is master of this Day of Judgment in which we now live."

30. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 184: "God has himself declared that no one shall escape the doom of this Western world, except those who accept Allah as God."

31. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 183.

> these many worlds has come to the end of its rope, the end of its time? Look around you at all of the signs and you will agree that it is the end of time for the Western world, the European world, the Christian world, the white world.[32]

This imminent end is an immanent event, in terms of the exhaustion of the actual abusive and violent power of the White, European, Christian colonizer: "As the white man loses his power to oppress and exploit the dark world, the white man's own wealth (power or 'world') decreases."[33] World is power, and the world of the white man consists of the power of colonial, Christian, and imperial oppression over the other worlds.

To know God and God's name is made possible through a revelatory event given to Elijah Muhammad, revealing that it is intrinsically linked to the judgment and end of oppressive worlds.

Naming in the Muslim World

Something radical occurred in Mecca with Malcolm X's apocalyptic theology. When he became Malik, the gnosis of God's apocalyptic vision was replaced by an "inaugurated eschatology", where the Muslim can experience here-and-now the fruits of equality and justice. It is, therefore, necessary to speak of a different cosmological theology all-together.

After completing the *hajj*, the Meccan epistle (April 1964) indicates that the imminent and immanent apocalyptic event is indefinitely delayed. Consider the following statement: "In the Muslim World, when one accepts Islam and ceases to be white or Negro, Islam recognizes all men as Men because the people here in Arabia believe that God is One [...] and that all our brothers and sisters is One Human Family."[34]

What happens to the White world after Mecca? Is the missive of the discourse of worlds completely replaced by a new cosmology emphasizing the presence of the eschatological Muslim World? Malcolm X now states that faith in Allah "actually removed 'white' from their mind", making a juxtaposition of White and non-White possible.[35] The epistle reflecting on the same experience even goes so far as to mention this as a possibility for America: "If white Americans could accept the religion of Islam, if they

32. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 191–192.

33. Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 192.

34. For a transcription, see Malcolm X, "Letter from Mecca", https://momentsintime.com/the-most-remarkable-revelatory-letter-ever-written-by-malcolm-x/, accessed 2020-02-25.

35. For a more detailed history of Malcolm X's weaving together of Black Nationalism and Islam, see Emin Poljarevic, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X". For an analysis of the white/black antagonism, read through the political theological distinction of friend and enemy.

could accept the Oneness of God (Allah) they too could then sincerely accept the Oneness of Men, and cease to measure others always in terms of their 'difference in color'."[36]

Again, what does this mean in relation to the White world? Malcolm X's Meccan approach to the problem of the White world, and the removal of "the 'white' from their mind", seemingly shifts the tone to a less aggressive and more spiritual key. Yet, if the white is saved by Allah through the complete removal of whiteness, is this not a manner of merely paraphrasing the destruction previously described in "God's Judgement of White America", only now with a spiritual and possibly mystical emphasis? A gnostic element thus remains in the wake of Malcolm X's Meccan experience, in the sense of pointing to the need for an ascetic spiritual disavowal of the world, for the White. For instance, can the power propelling the (White) world remain for the white American after the removal of psychic whiteness and its accompanying identity? Implicit in the experience of brotherhood in Mecca is still a refusal of a White world, albeit now harboured in a more universal theological framework.

After Mecca, the mission of the Muslim was thought of differently. It was now not driven by revealed gnosis of God's name and the apocalyptic, immanent event. For El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, the identity and common name of Muslim now contained the realization of an apocalyptic promise of racial justice, at least in terms of staking out a political vocation in "this" world. In a speech shortly after the Meccan epistle, from the University of Ghana (13 May 1964), this was made clear, as Malcolm X now focussed on the need for political action against the wider problems of democracy facing the Black minority residing in America. As victims of Americanism, "we are born in a country that stands up and represents itself as the leader of the Free World, and you still have to beg and crawl just to get a chance to drink a cup of coffee, then the condition is very deplorable indeed".[37]

In the Ghana address, imperialism and (neo)colonialism was again named as primary problematic for "the Black man in America",[38] but now its eschatological charge was seemingly removed by a focus on how human and

36. Malcolm X, "Letter from Mecca".

37. For a transcription, see Malcolm X, "Malcolm X at University of Ghana (May 13, 1964)", http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.com/2013/07/university-of-ghana-may-13-1964_1.html, accessed 2020-02-10.

38. Malcolm X, "Malcolm X at University of Ghana": "If you are a citizen, you are free; if you are not a citizen, you are a slave. And the American government is afraid to admit that she never gave freedom to the Black man in America and won't even admit that the Black man in America is not free, is not a citizen, and doesn't have his rights. She skillfully camouflages it under these pretty terms of second-class citizenship. It's colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism."

civil rights are ignored. The American government is the principal antagonist in this scheme, more of a political enemy than an apocalyptic beast.

The vocation is to act for political recognition and human rights for the Black man living in America. This is structured on action from within a pre-established political order and to be distinguished from a refusal of that order. There is only one world, and the Black Muslim is called to political action by spreading the message of Islam and working for justice, on all levels of society.

Double Exile of the Black Muslim

Malcolm X's so-called failure brings forth a fundamental problem of the world that any radical is forced to confront. How do you refuse the world and still find a way to survive the necropolitical order of the world? This is a problem central to the experience of Black radicalism, carried forth in the well-known slogan of the Black Panther Party: "Survival pending revolution." Malcolm X's relationship to his own Blackness and the relation of that Blackness to the World – European or Muslim – is not simply sidestepped when he begins to look to the wider Muslim world. We have seen how, with regard to the notion of the World, there remains a continuity of refusal in his rhetoric, regardless of its gnostic or more mainstream material. What seems clear to us after this analysis is the primacy of Malcolm X's blackness over his Muslimness and that the political-theological power of his work is carried in the radical challenge of that Blackness to the World, be it (post-)Christian or some other human-made political world to come.

While the reconciliation of his rhetoric with the mainstream of global Islam marked an important evolution in his thought, it is without a doubt that Malcolm X would have had to reckon with the ways in which the Islamist project today is one of world-making. As we can see in the aftermath of American and European neocolonialism in North Africa and the Middle East, Islamist groups have brought forth the resurgence of explicit anti-blackness and re-instituted slavery in increasingly racialized ways. The Black Muslim is a figure produced by a double exclusion: first from recognition in the (post-)Christian secular (racialized here as a global savage, as a Muslim Other) and then in terms of recognition as Human (racialized here as not White but also not Arab, not Savage and so not even able to be dispossessed of land).[39] To further understand this distinction, consider how such double racialization speaks to the work of world-making found in the

39. The name "global savage" is adapted from Frank B. Wilderson III's analytical differentiation of figures within the social ontology of the White world. Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*, Durham, NC 2010. By no means does Wilderson – nor do we – support the underlying racism behind these terms.

secular project and the civilizing projects of hegemonic religious traditions. The figure of the Muslim in the West today is marked as a terrorist even as they approach Europe and America in the desperate position of the refugee. The Muslim is marked as an extreme threat to the secular project, Islam comes to stand as the irrational and fanatical form of religion par excellence. Yet religion, as one marker of humanity, is still denied to those who are Black. Anti-blackness among Arab Muslims in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East is well documented by fellow Muslims and anthropologists, so that the figure of the Black Muslim is marked as exiled from both the secular world and the religious world.[40]

The ideology of Islamism (taken here to name a disparate movement of resistance and antagonism to the [post-]Christian European world order) operates within a world-making grammar, even as it resists the colonial world. This is clear in theoretical projects that set out to think through a decolonial Islam, like that of Salman Sayyid's *Recalling the Caliphate*. Such a project is determined by the figure of politics and the promise of a future given by politics. So it comes as no surprise when we see Sayyid claiming that the Islamic venture is "not dissimilar" to the Western enterprise of crafting a common humanity.[41] Such a humancrafting is part and parcel of a political project – for which Sayyid largely accepts Schmitt's definition as concerning the distinction between friend and enemy – and so this humancraft takes place via divisions of friend and enemy, of killable and not, of enslaveable and human. How are we to reconcile the claim that overturning the world

40. Much of the academic literature on this topic focusses upon the ways it plays out between "immigrant Islam" and "indigenous Islam" (terms used by Sherman Jackson to name South East Asian and Middle Eastern Muslim immigrants to the United States and Blackamerican Muslims, respectively). In this vein Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*, New York 2016, traces how Blackness is rendered "un-Islamic" in the US context. Chanfi Ahmed, *AfroMecca in History: African Societies, Anti-Black Racism, and Teaching in al-Haram Mosque in Mecca*, Newcastle 2019, gives historical attention to the contemporary use of abd (Arabic for "slave") to refer to black-skinned peoples common throughout North Africa and the Middle East. For a more journalistic account, see Michael Muhammad Knight, *Journey to the End of Islam*, Berkeley, CA 2009, which contains details of his own experience of witnessing anti-Blackness while travelling in Muslim-majority countires and during his *hajj*. A number of online venues also host such reflections. See Fatima Dinee, "Anti-Blackness in the Ummah", http://between-borders.com/anti-blackness-in-the-ummah/, accessed 2020-02-10; Eman, "Here's One Muslim Girl's Take on Racism in the Ummah: It Does Exist", https://muslimgirl.com/racism-in-the-ummah/, accessed 2020-02-10; The Culture Critic, "Let's Talk: Anti-Blackness in the Muslim Ummah", https://www.amaliah.com/post/31317/lets-talk-anti-blackness-muslim-ummah, accessed 2020-02-10; Nabil Abdulrashid, "Sudan & Acknowledging Anti-Blackness in the Ummah", https://blackdawahnetwork.com/2019/06/sudan-acknowledging-anti-blackness-in-the-ummah/, accessed 2020-02-10.

41. Salman Sayyid, *Recalling the Caliphate: Decolonisation and World Order*, New York 2014, 23.

order of Europe is to be a political project (necessarily operating on a decisional basis of separating friend from enemy) with the generic declaration that "Islam is meant for all"?[42]

The lesson of Malcolm X's so-called failure is that there is no reconciliation between this form of politics and true justice. Here we find ourselves caught in the bind between politics built around distinctions and a form of ethics and justice that abolishes those distinctions, like that given in Malcolm X's eschatological vision that abolishes the White world as such. Another way to speak about this philosophically is to say that we move from an existence rooted in the Worldly philosophy of Being and move towards the Worldless existence of Oneness. A Muslim notion of Oneness that Malcolm X draws upon as the political-theological name for the destruction of the White world in his later speeches. Malcolm X's irreconcilable Blackness points to the only true universality within a theological-political World built upon distinctions. One must begin with the oppressed and excluded term, not as a positive identity, but as the abolition of those identities, as the wiping away of all worldly names. As the standing forth of one without all that comes with a name, be it land, kin, or even respect. Precisely because, unlike global Islamism which says "everyone must become Muslim", Black Islam points to the absolute deracination of Oneness and says every White must become Muslim and every Muslim must become Black.[43] ▲

SUMMARY

In this paper, we look at the terrain of Malcolm X's "failed rhetoric" as producing an apocalyptic refusal of world, and world making. This refusal finds its intensity from a distinct gnostic calculus, driving Malcolm X's political theology of names and worlds, seen in his oratory from the years 1962–1964. First, Malcolm X's nominal history is discussed in relation to the violence of naming and political theology. Then, by turning to the speech "Black Man's History" (1962), we look at fundamental aspects

42. Sayyid, *Recalling the Caliphate*, 51.

43. We will expand upon the intentionally provocative theoretical claims of our conclusion in a forthcoming expanded version of this essay. One potential criticism of our claim here is that we are being too hyperbolic, since global Islamism does not demand the conversion of everyone even as it does call for a social and political order that follows Divine commands. Everyone does not have to become a Muslim in the sense of belonging to that community, but a central claim of our criticism of Sayyid and Islamism generally is that it is a world-building project kin to the Christian-secular world-building project, where there are differences allowed within the overarching hegemony of a single form of power. So global Islamism does not require conversion – after all the Caliphate still needs its worldly tax earnings through higher taxes placed upon those who have not converted – but the name Muslim comes to overdetermine all other names while relying upon the difference created by the existence of those names to provide the foundation of the worldly name "Muslim".

of his gnostic theology of names and worlds. As we turn to the speech "God's Judgment of White America" (1963), a gnostic calculus is seen as intrinsically bound to the names of Muslim and Allah, and to refusal of the (White) World. With Malcolm X's *hajj* experience, best seen in the "Letter from Mecca" (1964), the rhetorical landscape of worlds shift into a discourse of a single Muslim World. As Malcolm X's rhetorical mood shifts from a gnostic indicative, of displaying and exemplifying the imminent end of worlds, into the imperative of political action for Black Muslims in the World, are fundamental elements of the 1962–1963 oratory transposed into a different key, or simply removed? We argue that much of Malcolm X's gnostic tendencies remain in the Meccan epistle, in terms of an unbending refusal of oppressive Whiteness. With the concept of being "double Muslim" of the Black Muslims, we finally turn to Salman Sayyid's *Recalling the Caliphate* in order to think a lasting problematic of the failure of Malcolm X's apocalyptic refusal of the world.

The Semiotics of Malcolm X from Harlem to Tahrir

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This article discusses the ways in which Malcolm X (1925–1965) and his legacy have been used within US hip-hop music.[1] Although it in no way provides a complete inventory of the uses of Malcolm X in US hip-hop, it maps some of the different ways in which US artists have articulated and expressed Malcolm X and his legacy. Premised on the analysis of a corpus mainly of hip-hop albums and videos from the US from 1980 to 2011, this article identifies and maps the usages of Malcolm X in aural, visual, and textual modes.

The main argument in this article is that US hip-hop artists, since the birth of the genre, have participated in the processes of transmuting Malcolm X and his legacy by not only casting him as a symbol of local

1. This article largely draws on the chapter "Sights and Sounds of Malcolm X in U.S. Hip-Hop" in my PhD thesis, Anders Ackfeldt, *Islamic Semiotic Resources in U.S. Hip-Hop Culture*, Lund 2019, 131–160. I wish to thank all the attendees of the workshop "The Political Theology of Malcolm X" in August 2019 at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. The comments I received on the first draft of this article were crucial. Particularly, I am grateful to Emin Poljarevic for his insightful comments and cooperation during the process of putting this special issue of *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* together. Thanks also to Joel Kuhlin for inviting me to speak at the symposium "From Malcolm X to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz – The Legacy of an American Icon" at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University, in October 2018, during which the first seeds of this special issue were planted. Two anonymous reviewers have made insightful suggestions on how to improve the text, which were greatly appreciated. Finally, thanks to the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University for financially supporting this project.

African American resistance against racial inequalities, but also by fashioning him as a global Muslim revolutionary by creatively name-, image-, or sound-dropping him in different audio and visual settings. More extensive usages mainly involve key quotes of Malcolm X or lengthy sound bites of classic speeches. The use of certain iconic photos is comparable to key quotes, as these are clearly meant to trigger established associations. It is important to stress that the legacy of Malcolm X and his political theology within hip-hop culture goes beyond national borders, religious beliefs, and political goals, in other words: from Harlem to Tahrir square.

The Semiotics of Malcolm X in US Hip-Hop

Malcolm X's unique life story and legacy provide the potential for several different kinds of meaning making. Manning Marable illustrates this by pointing to the many personas he adopted, the most famous being Detroit Red, Malcolm X, and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. To these we can add lesser-known personas such as Jack Carlton, the name he used when he performed as a dancer and musician at night clubs in Harlem during the 1940s, and prisoner 22843, the prison number he received during his stretch in Charlestown state prison.[2]

Each of these characters represents a significant phase in Malcolm X's life. Each phase has been emphasized or deemphasized by artists, activists, and scholars in order to conjure a Malcolm X (or an El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) tailored to the pre-figured narrative expression of the desires and intentions of these meaning makers.[3] Sometimes these different interpretations of Malcolm X's life and legacy cause heated debates, illustrated by Spike Lee, who described the confrontations he faced when making a movie about the life of Malcolm X:

> I know the challenge in front of me. Malcolm X was so many things to so many people, and then there are the people who think they know all about him, but they don't know anything that's true. And I also know for a fact that around ten million motherfuckers are going to come out of the walls saying that they were down with Malcolm, and that's bullshit. Malcolm X causes reactions, so there is no way the film won't do the same thing.[4]

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2. Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, New York 2011, 10.

3. See Michael Eric Dyson, *Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X*, Oxford 1995.

4. Spike Lee, *By Any Means Necessary: The Trials and Tribulations of the Making of Malcolm X*, London 1993, 10–11.

Michael Eric Dyson explores some aspects of these interpretations. According to Dyson there has been a tendency to "obscure and reduce the complex nature of his [Malcolm X's] achievements and failures" and a bent towards "idolizing or demonizing" Malcolm X's life and deeds.[5] Clearly, Malcolm X means many different things to innumerable people. And one of these "things" is his potential for being perceived as a Muslim icon. The "Islamic" aspects of Malcolm X, needless to add, do not exclude other popular interpretations of him and his legacy. For example, the interpretation of Malcolm X as someone who did not compromise about important principles, someone who came from hardship and "nothing", and yet built something for himself and spoke truth to power. More often than not these different meanings overlap and interrelate.

In order to disentangle the usage of Malcolm X in US hip-hop music, this article leans on concepts from the field of social semiotics. Social semiotics is a sub-field of semiotics that discards the structural determinism of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), and Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), finding fresh inspiration in theorists such as Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), and Michael Halliday (1925–2018). Central to the field of social semiotics is the assertion that language is not seen "as a set of rules but as a *resource*". The emphasis here is on the "human processes of interaction" and the constant changes to and reworkings of the meaning of these resources.[6] In recent years, scholars in the field have extended the linguistic origins of social semiotics to include other methods of communication, such as gesticulations, pictures, layouts, sounds, and motions. A central concept in the field is "semiotic resources".[7]

Semiotic resources have meaning potential, based on their past uses, along with a set of affordances. An affordance is the prospective use of a given object.[8] These semiotic resources (actions and artifacts) are channelled and shaped through the medium of the communicative act or mode. Examples of different kinds of modes include images, music, moving images, and gestures. Most communicative acts do not involve one mode (monomodal), but operate over two or more modes (multimodal), all of which contribute to the creation of meaning.

Consequently, in this article, Malcolm X and his legacy are described as semiotic resources, communicated and expressed in aural, visual, and

5. Dyson, *Making Malcolm*, xxv–xxvi.

6. Michael Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotics: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, London 1978, 192. Italics in original.

7. See, for exemple, Theo van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics*, New York 2005.

8. van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics*, 273.

textual modes. As such, Malcolm X is approached not as a fixed, reified persona, but as a resource for different kinds of meaning making in different times and spaces. In order to illustrate this, I suggest a periodization of the ways in which Malcolm X and his legacy have been used over time by US hip-hop artists.

The First References to Malcolm X

In 1980, the young aspiring musician Erik Nuri came up with the idea to create a hip-hop song in order to encourage young African Americans to vote in the upcoming election. The song "Let's Vote" was released during the summer of 1980.[9] "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugar Hill Gang had been released in September 1979, and the new sights and sounds of hip-hop culture were quickly spreading from New York's inner-city neighbourhoods to the rest of the country.[10] The song failed to reach mainstream recognition but was endorsed as the voter registration theme song by both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League (NUL).[11]

With lines like "I don't come to bang, bang the boogie" and "So throw your hands in the air / And shake your body like you really don't care but I hear you complaining about your property tax / they pay a little and you pay the max", the song clearly carried a political message in stark contrast to the party-oriented message in Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight", which the first lines of the quote above paraphrase. As such, "Let's Vote" probably stands as the first released political hip-hop song. The song also contains the lines "I love the rap of Brother Malcolm X but what was his plan of success? / He said the ballot or the bullet", in reference to Malcolm X's famous "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech, delivered at Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio in April 1964, making "Let's Vote" the first song in hip-hop

9. Erik Nuri, *Let's Vote* [7" single], New York 1980.

10. For written accounts of this development, see Alex Ogg & David Upshal, *The Hip Hop Years: A History of Rap*, New York 1999; David Toop, *Rap Attack 3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*, London 2000; Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, New York 2005. The pictorial accounts of the early years of hip-hop are often forgotten by academics. Photographers such as Martha Cooper, Henry Chalfant, Ernie Paniccioli, and Joe Conzo have all made important contributions to our knowledge of early hip-hop history. See Martha Cooper & Henry Chalfant, *Subway Art*, London 2015; Martha Cooper, *Hip Hop Files: Photographs 1979–1984*, Berlin 2013.

11. Author's interview with Erik Nuri in New York, 12 May 2015.

invoking the name of Malcolm X.[12] This less than a year after the release of "Rapper's Delight".[13]

In 1983, the drummer and staff member of Sugar Hill Records, Keith LeBlanc, became the first person to sample the spoken word of Malcolm X in a hip-hop song, "Malcolm X: No Sell Out".[14] Inspired by *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*,[15] LeBlanc decided to sample extracts of Malcolm X's voice from various recordings of his speeches and to put them over an early electronic hip-hop beat.[16] LeBlanc was also the first hip-hop artist to use a photo of Malcolm X on a record cover. The cover features the last known photo portrait of Malcolm X, taken by Robert Lee Haggins (1922–2006) on 18 February 1965, three days before his assassination.[17] In the photo, Malcolm X is wearing a tweed jacket, a dark tie, a white shirt, and his characteristic Browline glasses. He thoughtfully looks down, possibly reading something. Red block letters state "NO SELL OUT" on the top and "MALCOLM X" on the bottom, surrounding and contrasting the black-and-white photo.

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12. Already in the late 1970s and 1980s, the DJ and hip-hop pioneer Africa Bambaata was known to overlay Malcolm X's speeches over the German electro group Kraftwerk's driving and repetitive beats. But, to my knowledge, these sessions were never recorded. Toop, *Rap Attack*, 130. Later, in 1986, Afrika Bambaataa & Soulsonic Force released the single "Renegades of Funk", which made reference to Malcolm X in the following section: "Nothing stayed the same but there were always renegades / Like Chief Sitting Bull / Tom Paine, Dr. Martin Luther King / Malcolm X / They were renegades of their time and age / So many renegades." Afrika Bambaataa & Soulsonic Force, *Renegades of Funk* [7" single], New York 1983. In 2001, the funk metal band Rage Against the Machine released a cover of the song. Rage Against the Machine, *Renegades of Funk* [CD], Los Angeles 2001. The cover art of the latter includes the famous photo from 1964 of Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) and Malcolm X shaking hands and smiling. The speech can be found in full in Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, New York 1989, 38–64. In this speech, Malcolm X advised his audience to exercise their right to vote, but he also warned that if the government continued to restrict the rights of African Americans it might be necessary to take up arms. For background information and an analysis of the speech, see Marable, *Malcolm X*, 303–304.

13. Nuri started the short-lived record label Salaam Records in 1983, targeting the Muslim community in the US. The record label, named after his mother's surname, only released one group, The Whizdom Kids, consisting of Nuri's two kids. The group released songs such as "Come to Allah", "My Imam", and "Elijahville". The Whizdom Kids made several appearances at events in connection to Muslim gatherings and festivities, primarily in New York. Their curious sound can best be described as electro-nasheed soul and jazz with some hip-hop elements. Author's interview with Erik Nuri in New York, 12 May 2015.

14. Keith LeBlanc, *Malcolm X: No Sell Out* [12" single], New York 1983. Outside hip-hop, it is worth mentioning that the American soul singer Billy Paul sampled Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech in the song "Let 'Em In". Billy Paul, *Let 'Em In* [LP], Philadelphia, PA 1976. Thanks to Emin Poljarevic for pointing this out to me.

15. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York 1965.

16. Dan Charnas, *The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop*, New York 2010, 103.

17. Robert Lee Haggins was Malcolm X's personal photographer from 1959 to 1965. The cover was designed by Overnight Type & Graphics, who also designed the cover for Afrika Bambaataa & Soulsonic Force's single "Renegades of Funk".

The back cover features a brief biographical text about Malcolm X as well as a short statement from his widow, Dr. Betty Shabazz (1934–1997), stressing that Malcolm X is as important now as he was when he was alive.

Malcolmania: The Commodification of Malcolm X

Arguably, no other hip-hop group has contributed more to the aural and visual articulations of Malcolm X in hip-hop than Public Enemy.[18] Their carefully planned visual and aural agenda not only connected a new generation of hip-hop listeners to his legacy, they also became an exemplar for other hip-hop acts.[19] Chuck D has repeatedly told the following story:

> One-day Hank [Shocklee] and I was hanging a flyer with Malcolm on the cover of the flyer – of the gig that we were presenting – and this kid comes up and says: "You know, who's this Malcolm the Tenth?" And you know, we looked at each other, and said "well, something needs to be done about that!"[20]

Public Enemy's sophomore album, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, made Malcolm X a hip-hop household name.[21] The song "Bring the Noise" was first released on the soundtrack to Marek Kanievska's movie *Less than Zero* (1987), but it also served as the opening song on *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*. The soundscape of "Bring the Noise" consists of an aggressive mix of siren noises, James Brown funk beats, hard-hitting drum machine clatters, and wild scratching by the group's DJ, Terminator X (another possible Malcolm X reference). At the beginning of the song, Public Enemy's production team, the Bomb Squad, sampled parts of Malcolm X's voice from his speech "Message to the Grass Roots", delivered at the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference on 10 November 1963, at King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit. The phrase "Too black, too strong" is repeated twice.[22] This speech was delivered by Malcolm

18. The original members of Public Enemy were front man Chuck D, Flavor Flav, Terminator X, and Professor Griff. Public Enemy was formed in 1982 at Adelphi University on Long Island, New York. Comments by Professor Griff to *The Washington Times* in 1989 brought charges of antisemitism, which ultimately resulted in him leaving the group. Today, Professor Griff is again performing with the group.

19. Derrick P. Alridge, "From Civil Rights to Hip Hop: Toward a Nexus of Ideas", *The Journal of African American History* 90 (2005), 236.

20. Chuck D, quoted in James Hale, "Public Enemy: Prophets of Rage" [TV Documentary], London 2011. This story has been retold by Chuck D on several occasions. It can also be found in Chuck D, "Malcolm X the Tenth", in *Return of the Mecca: The Art of Islam and Hip-Hop*, Los Angeles 2014, 24.

21. Public Enemy, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* [LP], New York 1988.

22. The full quote: "It's just like when you've got some coffee that's too black, which means

X just a few weeks before John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) was murdered in Dallas, and is often considered to be the last great speech Malcolm X delivered as a member of the Nation of Islam (NOI).[23] The speech is 40 minutes long and contains some of Malcolm X's most commonly known tropes and metaphors: for example, the house Negro and the field Negro, the difference between the Negro revolution and the revolution, as well as the difference between black coffee and coffee with cream. It is also in this speech that Malcolm X started to make his move from local Black Nationalism to a more international approach.[24]

Public Enemy's formula for the successful promotion and mobilization of their ideas cannot be reduced to lyrical quotes and single samples of Malcolm X. The group's entire visual register, including record covers and music videos, signalled a radicalism that accentuated their vision of African American empowerment fuelled by Black Power ideology and the teachings promoted by the NOI. In concerts, interviews, and promotional pictures, Public Enemy surrounded themselves with the NOI's uniformed security force, the S1W (Security of the First World), something that added to the militant aura of the group.[25]

When MTV launched the show *Yo! MTV Raps* in late 1988, the group successfully made use of music videos to disseminate their ideas. Public Enemy's first real attempt in making a music video resulted in the video of the group's third single from *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, "Night of the Living Baseheads". The song addressed the crack epidemic in the US at the time and in the video, directed by Lionel C. Martin, Chuck D is seen performing in front of the Audubon Ballroom, in which Malcolm X was assassinated. The visual message is clear: Chuck D picks up the microphone where Malcolm X dropped it twenty-three years ago.

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it's too strong. What do you do? You integrate it with cream, you make it weak. But if you pour too much cream in it, you won't even know you ever had coffee. It used to be hot, it becomes cool. It used to be strong, it becomes weak. It used to wake you up, now it puts you to sleep." See Marable, *Malcolm X*, 264–265. The sample was taken from Malcolm X, *Grass Roots Speech Detroit, Michigan November 1963* [LP], New York 1979. Later the phrase "Too black, too strong" from "Bring the Noise" was sampled in 2 Black 2 Strong MMG's "2 Black 2 Strong" on 2 Black 2 Strong MMG, *Doin' Hard Time on Planet Earth* [CD], New York 1991. The song, which featured Gamilah Shabazz (daughter of Malcolm X), also paid homage to Malcolm X with the lines: "I'm rated X, like Malcolm / How come the brother wasn't welcome / To tell the knowledge about us?" Gamilah Shabazz also appeared on Big Daddy Kane's "Who Am I" on Big Daddy Kane, *Taste of Chocolate* [CD], New York 1990.

23. Saladin M. Ambar, *Malcolm X at Oxford Union: Racial Politics in a Global Era*, New York 2013, 32.

24. Marable, *Malcolm X*, 265.

25. Several of these pictures were taken by the photographer Ernie Paniccioli. For some examples of the photos, see Ernie Paniccioli & Kevin Powell, *Who Shot Ya? Three Decades of HipHop Photography*, New York 2014.

The use of Islamic themes in hip-hop climaxed in the early 1990s. Artists were inspired by Islamic traditions of interpretation, ranging from the cognitive universe of the Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE) and the NOI to different Sunni interpretations. Hip-hop acts like KRS-One, X-Clan, Brand Nubian, Lakim Shabazz, Kin Sun, The Jaz, Kool Moe Dee, The Poor Righteous Teachers, Big Daddy Kane, Ice Cube, Paris, A Tribe Called Quest, Movement Ex, and Gang Starr contributed heavily to this development. Islamic themes thereby underpinned different aural, visual, and textual articulations of the hip-hop of this era. In this context, Malcolm X proved to be a significant source of inspiration, references to his example and legacy abound, and they could even be seen as central to the message of hip-hop.

This trend accelerated with Spike Lee's guerrilla marketing campaign for his biographical film *Malcolm X* (1992). Lee strategically gave away his self-designed iconic black baseball cap with a silver "X" on the front to sports stars, hip-hop artists, and other prominent figures in the African American community. The popularity of the Malcolm X brand was also fuelled by the extensive bootlegging of Spike Lee's design. Soon the market was flooded with consumer products, including coffee mugs, lighters, refrigerator magnets, air fresheners, and potato chips containing Spike Lee's silver "X" or other renditions of Malcolm X's life and legacy.[26] Manning Marable has described this development as "Malcolmania", during which Malcolm X-related products reached an estimated annual sale figure of $100 million.[27] Between 1989 and 1992, the book sales of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* saw a 300 percent increase. This development can, at least in part, be attributed to the usage of Malcolm X in hip-hop culture and the latter's power to influence a broad audience with purchase power.[28]

Normalizing Malcolm X

In some ways, the Malcolmania of the late 1980s and early 1990s led to the normalization and somewhat diminution of the radical aura of Malcolm X. In turn, it also led to a multiplication of the meanings of Malcolm X.

The Wu-Tang Clan became one of the driving forces of hip-hop in the 1990s. The group, which originally included nine members, has to the present day released seven studio albums, along with at least nineteen compilation albums as a group. Most of the members have launched successful solo careers. To this must be added several affiliated artists, a successful clothing

26. Lee, *By Any Means Necessary*, 21, 25.

27. Manning Marable, "Rediscovering Malcolm's Life", in Manning Marable & Hisham Aidi (eds.), *Black Routes to Islam*, New York 2009, 303.

28. Lewis Lord & Jeannye Thornton, "The Legacy of Malcolm X", *US News & World Report* 1992-11-23.

company, and several record labels. Over the years, several Wu-Tang Clan members have made references to Malcolm X.

One example is Ghostface Killah, an original member of the Clan, who named a song after Malcolm X. The song is simply entitled "Malcolm" and features on his acclaimed solo album, *Supreme Clientele*. Ghostface Killah wrote the song before a four-month-long incarceration. The song begins and ends with a sample from Malcolm X's "After the Bombing" speech, delivered on Valentine's Day, 1965. The sample section of the speech contains the following words:

> But they try and project the image to the public that this is being done by thieves, and thieves alone. And they ignore the fact that no, it is not thievery alone. It's a corrupt, vicious, hypocritical system that has castrated the Black man; and the only way the Black man can get back at it is to strike it in the only way he knows how.[29]

In the song, Ghostface Killah enters the mind of a troubled young African American man, living a crime- and drug-ridden life. He starts the song by comparing himself to Malcolm X: "I'm like Malcolm out the window with the joint / Hooded up blood in my eye."[30] In the hook, Ghostface Killah encourages the protagonist of the song to walk the same path as Malcolm, in other words, to straighten up and leave his criminal life.

Another rapper that has invoked Malcolm X several times in his lyrics is Killer Mike. For example, in the song "Pressure" (featuring Ice Cube) from the album *I Pledge Allegiance to the Grind II*,[31] Killer Mike samples Malcolm X's voice from two different occasions.[32] In the song, Killer Mike and Ice

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29. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, 200. The speech was held after Malcolm X's home in East Elmurst, Queens, was attacked with Molotov cocktails. Malcolm X and his family were sleeping in the house when it happened. The house was seriously damaged, but Malcolm X and his family managed to escape without harm.

30. Ghostface Killah, *Supreme Clientele* [CD], New York 2000.

31. Killer Mike, *I Pledge Allegiance to the Grind II* [CD], Atlanta, GA 2008.

32. The two sections sampled are: "Who are you? You don't know? Don't tell me 'Negro' that's nothing. What were you before the white man named you 'Negro'? What was your name? It couldn't have been 'Smith' or 'Jones' or 'Bush' or 'Powell' that wasn't your name. They don't have those kind of names where you and I come from. No, what was your name? And why don't you know what your name was then? Where was your history? How did a man wipe out your history? How did the man, what did the man do to make you as dumb, as you are right now?"; "No negro leaders have fought for civil rights, they have begged for civil rights. They have begged the white man for civil rights, they have begged the white man for freedom, and any time you beg another man to set you free, you'll never be free. Freedom is something that you have to do for yourselves. And until the American Negro lets the white man know that we are really ready and willing to pay the price that is necessary for freedom, our people will always be walking around here second class citizens or what you call twentieth century

Cube relate the conditions for African Americans post-9/11 to the transatlantic slave trade. The duo rally against police brutality and perceived corrupt political leadership. According to Killer Mike, it does not matter how successful you are, or how much money you make, as an African American you will always be considered a lesser human being, and the ultimate price for freedom is death: "Liberation costs more than a damn dollar / It costs what Christ gave / King gave / X gave / A billion dollars don't make you an ex-slave."[33]

Other rappers have had a more politically quiescent attitude to Malcolm X. Kanye West invokes Malcolm X when it comes to fashion in the song "Good Morning": "I'm like the fly Malcolm X, buy any jeans necessary / Detroit Red cleaned up" is a nod to Malcolm X's catchphrase "By any means necessary" and his well-known fashion sense.[34] Another example of such a commercialized use is Drake, when he cleverly invokes Malcolm X in the song "Forever": "Labels want my name beside an X like Malcolm", and in the song "Uptown": "I drive two black cars / I named 'em Malcolm X and Martin Luther."[35]

In addition to these uses, artists have sought to commemorate the legacy of Malcolm X in the form of visual expressions. New York rapper Nas famously sports a rendition of the iconic photo of Malcolm X with his finger pointed to his temple on the side of his stomach. Similarly, the Washington, DC rapper Wale appeared on the cover of a 2013 issue of the tattoo magazine *Urban Inc* styled in the same way as Malcolm X, on the photo discussed above, showing off the same photo tattooed on his left arm. The headline of the cover reads: "Revolution is ink!"[36]

The trap phenomenon Young Jeezy used the same photo of Malcolm X and his words from a speech as inspiration for his mixtape *Trap or Die 2: By Any Means Necessary*.[37] The group The Root, meanwhile, used a 1944 mug shot of Malcolm X (then Malcolm Little) for their album *The Tipping Point*.[38] In order to memorialize the fiftieth anniversary of Malcolm X's death in 2015, the hip-hop magazine *The Source* commemorated him with

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slaves. [What price are you talking about sir?] The price of freedom is death."

33. This is a good example of the "dignity argument" discussed in Emin Poljarevic, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X: Between Human Dignity and Returning the Gaze", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 11–27.

34. Kanye West, *Graduation* [CD], New York 2007.

35. Drake (featuring Kanye West, Lil Wayne & Eminem), "Forever" [MP3], Atlanta, GA 2009; Drake, *So Far Gone* [MP3], Toronto 2008.

36. *Urban Inc*, Summer Edition (June 2013).

37. Don Cannon & Young Jeezy, *Trap or Die 2: By Any Means Necessary* [MP3], Atlanta, GA 2010.

38. The Root, *The Tipping Point* [CD], Santa Monica, CA 2004.

a special edition cover. Under the headline "X Legacy: Wake up, Clean Up, Stand Up", rappers from Chuck D and Raekwon to Ludacris and Kendrick Lamar expressed how Malcolm X had influenced their art and music.[39]

The Internationalization of Malcolm X

Yasiin Bey (formerly known as Mos Def) explained the significance of Malcolm X in an interview with Sohail Daulatzai, in connection to the latter's exhibit "Return of the Mecca: The Art of Islam and Hip-Hop":

> Speaking out against the injustices that exist in the world and dealing with our struggle in America not as an isolated – domestic – issue, but as an international problem. It's really inspiring but it's also really intimidating for a lot of people, you know. If you are an individual that's not afraid of anything then people tend to be afraid or threatened by you. That attitude is expressed in hip-hop. So it is very dynamic for anyone who has ever been poor, hungry, or hunted.[40]

Yasiin Bey's attitude is manifested in many songs from his catalogue. One of the more interesting examples is the opening song "Supermagic" on the album *The Ecstatic*.[41] The song starts with Yasiin Bey uttering the *shahada* (the Islamic creed) in Arabic, followed by a lengthy Malcolm X sample from the dramatic closing minutes of his address to the Oxford Union:

> You're living at a time of extremism, a time of revolution, a time when there's got to be a change. People in power have misused it, and now there has to be a change and a better world has to be built, and the only way it's going to be built – is with extreme methods. And I, for one, will join in with anyone – I don't care what color you are – as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth.[42]

Malcolm X's Oxford Union address, delivered at the famous debating society at Oxford University on 3 December 1965, has been described as "the lost jewel of the civil rights movement".[43] Saladin Ambar describes the

39. *The Source*, Issue 256 (April/May 2015)..

40. "Yasiin Bey (aka Mos Def) on Malcolm X, for 'Return of the Mecca: The Art of Islam and Hip-Hop'", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jln12UJ8H8U, accessed 2020-02-11. In relation to this, see Khairudin Aljunied, "A Travelling Model: The Mythicization and Mobilization of Malcolm X in the Malay World", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 79–94.

41. Mos Def, *The Ecstatic* [CD], New York 2009.

42. Ambar, *Malcolm X at Oxford Union*, 180.

43. Ambar, *Malcolm X at Oxford Union*, 33.

speech in the following way:

> Malcolm at Oxford represented the most comprehensive, best articulated, and clearest sense of his personal and political vision on the future of race relations – not only as a domestic concern, but also a global one. [...] Oxford suggests a pivotal moment in human history, as the majority of the world's population begins to unyoke itself from colonial or imperial rule while simultaneously struggling with, or anticipating, the challenges of racially pluralistic societies developing along egalitarian lines. The demands of the future, rather than a mere articulation of present or past problems, brought the very best out of Malcolm X – and it happened in Oxford.[44]

In many ways, "Supermagic" sets music to Malcolm X's internationalist vision. The lyrics of the song are basically a burst of freestyle energy, in which Bey showcases his skills as a lyricist. The phrase "Super magic black origin freshly out of dopeness" is repeated throughout the song. The words are a homophone-twist of the tongue-twisting phrase "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" from the 1964 Disney movie *Mary Poppins*. It is not Yasiin Bey's lyrics that communicate an international outlook; rather, the soundscape conveys that message. Bey does not, like Public Enemy, build the song around a James Brown drum break. Instead, "Supermagic" is built around guitar riffs from the song "İnce İnce Bir Kar Yağar" by the Turkish protest singer Selda Bağcan, which, in turn, is a rendition of composer and poet Aşık Mahzuni Serif's (1940–2002) song with the same name. The funky "oriental" guitar loop, in combination with portions of the highly politically charged Turkish lyrics that highlight the conditions of poor people in eastern Turkey, and in combination with Malcolm X's warning, carries the song across nations and establishes a sonic bond between disenfranchised groups around the world. The words of Selda ("Yandık yandık, bize okul, bize yol, bize hayat, etme ağam, n'olur, n'olur, n'olur, n'olur" [We're doomed, education to us, roads to us, life to us / Come now sir, please, please, please, please]) Yasiin Bey takes out of the local Turkish context and inserts on a global scale.

Another illustration of the internationalization of the semiotic resources extracted from Malcolm X's life in hip-hop is the cooperation between the Egyptian hip-hop trio Arabian Knightz and the Brooklyn-based rapper General Steele (from the duo Smif-n-Wessun). In April 2011, in the midst of the Arab uprisings, they recorded the song "I am Malcolm X" (2011).[45] The

44. Ambar, *Malcolm X at Oxford Union*, 33.

45. The title of the song is a reference to the ending scenes of Spike Lee's movie *Malcolm X*. The film ends with a scene of an African American teacher in an American classroom. Behind

lyrics of the song link the Arab uprisings to the civil rights movement in the US. The opening of the first verse accentuates the legacy of Malcolm X as the Sunni Muslim El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. The lyrics call for a new civil rights movement in Egypt (called *umm al-dunya*, the mother of the civilization), premised on an "Islamic truth":

> Malik was a king that had a dream like Martin Luther / Built an Islamic truth for constitution revolution / our generation needs a new one / the mother of the civilization needs civil rights movement.[46]

The video clip accompanying the song underlines this message and illustrates it with powerful video footage showing the crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965, when Alabama state troopers attacked civil rights demonstrators outside the town of Selma. These images are crosscut with more recent footage of demonstrators being brutally attacked by police at Tahrir Square in Cairo.[47]

Conclusion

As seen in the material discussed above, Malcolm X and his legacy as semiotic resources have the potential to both connect him to his African American Islamic heritage as a member of the NOI and as a universal Islamic semiotic resource, and indeed they have been used to these effects. As a universal resource, artists have highlighted Malcolm X's final years following his *hajj* to Mecca in 1964. In doing so, hip-hop artists have helped to turn Malcolm X into one of the cornerstones in the Afro-Arab political imaginary,[48] or, more broadly, a manifestation of what Manning Marable

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her on the blackboard are the words "MALCOLM X DAY". She tells the class that it is Malcolm X's birthday. "Malcolm X is you, all of you, and you are Malcolm X", she says. Some of the students in the classroom rise up and one after another holler, "I am Malcolm X!" The scene cuts to a classroom in Soweto in South Africa where students also stand up and shout, "I am Malcolm X!" The movie reaches its climax when the recently released anti-apartheid activist, the late Nelson Mandela (1918–2013), recites one of Malcolm X's speeches. The message, both of the song and the scene from the movie, is clear: Malcolm X's struggle was not confined to American soil, but was a global struggle to free all oppressed people in the world.

46. "Arabian Knightz – I am Malcolm X – Feat General Steele (Smif n Wessun)", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGbPccT5ChY, accessed 2020-02-11.

47. Linking Malcolm X and his legacy to local uprisings and struggles is not unique to Arabian Knightz. A similar strategy was deployed by the Basque separatist hip-hop group Negu Gorriak in the early 1990s. The group's usage of Malcolm X and his legacy in aural and visual modes are described in Jacqueline Urla, "'We are all Malcolm X!': Negu Gorriak, Hip-Hop, and the Basque Political Imaginary", in Tony Mitchell (ed.), *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, Middletown, CT 2001, 171–193.

48. Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary*, Chapel Hill, NC 2014.

calls the "perhaps most important" reinvention of Malcolm X: his function as a "bridge between the American people and more than one billion Muslims throughout the world".[49]

The cultural resonance of Malcolm X within hip-hop is key in order to understand the worldviews of many young Muslims around the globe.[50] Nowhere is this more applicable than in the contemporary Muslim struggle for civil rights, which has spread through several heterogeneous organizations, initiatives, and movements around the world, in which Islam has become a path to social, political, and religious liberation. Yet, as Graeme Abernethy reminds us: "Malcolm's Islamic faith has always been among the aspects of his life least embraced and understood."[51] Malcolm X's unique and complex story has found and will most likely continue to find new ways to inspire hip-hop artists as well as artists in general in their artistic expressions. ▲

SUMMARY

With no ambition to provide a complete inventory, this article introduces the reader to the ways in which Malcolm X and his legacy have been used within US hip-hop music. The central argument is that US hip-hop artists, since the birth of hip-hop, have been participating in the processes of reinventing Malcolm X and his legacy by not only casting him as a symbol of local African American resistance against racial inequalities, but also by fashioning him as a global Sunni Muslim revolutionary by creatively name-, image-, or sound-dropping him in different sound and visual settings. More extensive usages mainly involve key quotes of Malcolm X or lengthy sound bites of classic speeches. The usage of certain iconic photos is comparable to key quotes as these are clearly meant to trigger established associations. It is important to stress that the legacy of Malcolm X and his political theology within hip-hop culture goes beyond national borders, religious beliefs, and political goals.

49. Marable, *Malcolm X*, 486.

50. For other examples of this, see Yolanda van Tilborgh, "Expressions of Political Theology in Art and Islam: Malcolm X-Inspired Transformations among Muslims in the US and the UK", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 61–78.

51. Graeme Abernethy, *The Iconography of Malcolm X*, Lawrence, KS 2013, 227.

Expressions of Political Theology in Art and Islam

Malcolm X-Inspired Transformations among Muslims in the US and the UK

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The Spectrum of Mediation of Malcolm X

In the course of my study of how Muslim performing artists in the US and the UK relate art and religion,[1] it came to the fore that a significant number of artists have been influenced by the (political theology of) Muslim human rights activist Malcolm X (1925–1965), also known as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, mediated in more or less indirect ways.[2] Ranging from popular culture to social and religious authorities, these ways include the determined, multiple recorded speeches of Malcolm X on the Internet, his compelling autobiography as phrased by Alex Haley (1921–1992), the persuasive *Malcolm X* (1992) movie by Spike Lee, the powerful hip-hop music that samples Malcolm X's confrontational allegations, and the Malcolm X resurgence in the 1980s and 1990s.[3] In the case of African American artists and those with Caribbean backgrounds, influences may have derived from

1. The present article is based on an ethnographic study of Muslim performing artists in the UK and the US between 2009 and 2012, partly funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research NWO, which has taken place at Radboud University Nijmegen and the University of Amsterdam.

2. This phenomenon is not limited to the UK and the US, but occurs in Europe as well, as is expounded by Farid Hafez, "Malcolm X and Mauthausen: Anti-Semitism, Racism, and the Reception of Malcolm X in the Austrian Muslim Youth", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 95–108.

3. On the influence of Malcolm X in American hip-hop from the perspective of social semiotics, see Anders Ackfeldt, "The Semiotics of Malcolm X from Harlem to Tahrir", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 47–60.

the impassioned participation of family members in the Black Power movements or from any parental or personal membership of the Nation of Islam (NOI), or, subsequently, its breakaway movement the Five Percent Nation.[4] Additionally, the ideals Malcolm X stood for have been creatively passed through younger, idealist organizations, such as the multiracial American Muslim poetry collective Calligraphy of Thought. Arguably, mediation has occurred and occurs through authoritative Muslim voices – for example Islamic teachers in the US, the UK, and on the Internet – as well as through civil grassroots organizations that organize(d) cultural events, such as North American Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) and British Radical Middle Way (RMW), which are grounded in the fundamental advice of spiritual leaders. Other alternative authoritative voices have played a role as well by means of Malcolm X-inspired academics, role models, and friends.

In order to reflect on expressions of political theology in art and Islam, I will first discuss how the notion of political theology can be understood in the context of Muslim performing artists in the UK and the US. Being engaged, at the time of research, in cultural production in Anglophone hip-hop and alternative music, spoken word and poetry, storytelling, theatre and acting, stand-up comedy, film performance, and contemporary art on stage, they experience power structures as Muslims and as artists, which actuate the question of study in the present article. Then, I will present my previous findings with regard to the differentiation within the field of Muslim artists when it comes to the complicated or complex relationship between authoritative voices, religion, and culture. Subsequently, based on ethnographic data, the kinds of influences that the politico-theological conceptions of Malcolm X had and have, including those that have been drawn from his life, will be explored, leading to a multilayered discussion.

Political Theology and Structures of Power

Denoting how ways of spiritual (religious) thinking relate to politically principled questions within society, political theology becomes significant at the intersection of the domains of religion, politics, and culture – as in the case of Malcolm X, who aimed to counter the power structures that cause(d) institutional racism. Defined by Emin Poljarevic and Anders Ackfeldt, the signification of political theology is "the vibrant relationship between a dominant sacred order in a particular political context and the populations that coexist within such an order", in which the latter represents

4. Clarence 13X, a philosopher from Malcolm X's temple, founded the Five Percent Nation of Islam. Felicia M. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission*, Bloomington, IN 2005, 15.

the organizing principles or bearing ideologies in a society.[5] In getting hold of the reins of power, particular groups obtain the privilege to (re)shape the contents of these legitimized (consecrated) principles. Jeffrey Robbins discusses political theology as a shift from the transcending, indivisible kind of supreme (divine) power to the intrinsic, diffused, and competing kinds of sovereign powers, which impose different worldviews.[6] In order to get beyond domination (by the privileged), suppression, and war, he regards democracy as the rightful kind of coming-to-power proper to humanity, when power arises specifically from an immanent force. This understanding of political theology combines the theological grappling with supreme power with the ability to locate that power not in some transcendental realm but "*in us*, *with us*, and *for us*".[7] As such, the present kind of political theology is more radical in actively coping with external power, argues Robbins, than liberation theology, which did offer a theological interpretation of the world of the poor and the disadvantaged, but has been accused of having failed to change this world.[8] Blaming the institutional religion specifically for its contribution to oppressive structures, and representing an alternative perspective in liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez and Nancy Clasby therefore redefine the process of liberation as the continuous creation of "a new way to be a human", which will lead to "a just society".[9]

Importantly, these kinds of bottom-up ideologies focus on liberation in the present-day world instead of, more traditionally, in some otherworldly domain. In any case, they allow one to reflect anew on the emancipatory potential of (non-institutional kinds of) religion.

Muslim performing artists in the US and the UK experience – while searching for ways to synthesize their religious beliefs with their artistic ambitions, questioning what is allowed, required, and what not, and acting upon their answers (the subject of my basic research) – to different degrees multiform types of dominance leading to reflections on the definitions of "us" and "them". Variously, Muslim performing artists have met Islamophobia, discrimination, and stigmatization in the non-Muslim majority contexts of the UK and the US. These range from being depicted as Islamic villains by the corporate film industry and biased administrative measures at international airports, to British and American funding as cultural state

5. Emin Poljarevic & Anders Ackfeldt, "Introduction: Impacts of Malcolm X's Lifework and Political Theology", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 4.

6. Jeffrey W. Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, New York 2011.

7. Robbins, *Radical Democracy*, x, 6.

8. Robbins, *Radical Democracy*, 23.

9. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY 1973, 32; Nancy T. Clasby, "Malcolm X and Liberation Theology", *CrossCurrents* 38 (1988), 173–184.

measures of counter-terrorism strategies.[10] Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, these experiences have heightened the awareness of Muslim artists, and even more so of those with immigrant backgrounds.

Secondly, a significant number of artists experience religiously patterned structures of dominance through which they encounter prejudice in the overall Muslim world. Those considered established in Islam – representing the supremacist tradition of the Arab-centred trend, or, more broadly, the set of "Muslim old world" views within Islam – tend to legitimize definitions of Islam expressed by immigrant professionals from the Middle East and South Asia above those of Blackamerican (indigenous) Muslims, as Aminah McCloud and Sherman Jackson have argued among others.[11] Historically, however, the latter embody the established in American Islam, because they developed Islam in the US from the institutions of Black Religion, such as the NOI, where Malcolm X came to blossom. More broadly, understood from "the established and the outsiders" thesis,[12] the related tensions between "convert Muslims", who have chosen the religion of Islam later in life, and "born Muslims", who are predominantly raised in South Asian and Middle Eastern Muslim immigrant families, can partly be explained as an established–outsiders relationship in Islam in terms of (not) having relevant social and cultural resources, authority, and networks. All of this generates a picture of dominant and dominated religiosity.

A third, related kind of power structure in Islam is discussed by Sadek Hamid as the challenging contest between important Sufis, who tend to focus on the spiritual dimensions of faith and practice, and Salafis, known for their literalist interpretations of Islam.[13] The impressive success of the Salafi trends in the UK, which tend to severely restrict forms of art and music, prompted a response of leaders following the Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence, which Hamid identifies as "Sufism Strikes Back".[14] Popularized by Muslim American scholar Hamza Yusuf, a renewed "Traditional

10. Hisham D. Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture*, New York 2014; Kathryn L. Gardner, *Constructing and Deconstructing Islam in the Western State: A Comparative Look at the Politicization of Religion in France, Great Britain, and the United States, 1945–2008*, Notre Dame, IN 2010; Peter Morey & Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11*, Cambridge, MA 2011; Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, New York 2001.

11. Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection*, Oxford 2005, 3–21; Aminah B. McCloud, "Islam in America: The Mosaic", in Yvonne Haddad, Jane Smith & John Esposito (eds.), *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Experiences in the United States*, Lanham, MD 2003, 159–174.

12. Norbert Elias & John L. Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders*, London 1994.

13. Sadek Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism*, London 2018.

14. Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, 68–87.

Islam”, characterized by a relatively activist form of Sufism, brought forth an Anglo-American network of like-minded convert Muslim scholars and teachers. Participants of the network deconstruct Salafis’ claims to textual orthodoxy, accommodate sophisticated understandings of Islamic civilization, and are, to different degrees, politically engaged.[15] Purposefully, they share their recognition of Malcolm X, who inspirited Sunni Islam in the West.

From the context described above, the present article intends to examine the possible relationships between the politico-theological ideas and attitudes of Malcolm X and the cultural attempts of British and North American Muslim artists to cope with specific power structures, bearing ideologies, and dominant hierarchies; seek liberation; or create new ways to be human in their societies and the (overall) Muslim world. Being agency-based, radical political theology expands the scope of the outsiders–established thesis. In this article, it refers to governing the everyday relations between oneself and relevant social groups in specific social contexts from the personal to the international level (forming alliances, advancing goals, gaining influence), and from an ethos based on ideas about God, humanity, and salvation.

Malcolm X in the Differentiated Field of Muslim Artists

Related to competition out of ideological preferences and influences on the metalevel, the field of North American and British Muslim performing artists is, importantly, structured along views on the relationship between authoritative voices, religion, and culture.

Although, initially, I was not informed about the broad Sufism Strikes Back (SSB) network related to a renewed “Traditional Islam”, I came to sense the presence of a salient – i.e., focussed despite diversity – informal network of authoritative Islamic voices among a significant number of artists. In terms of cultural capital, the authoritative (convert) Muslim teachers in the West, such as American Hamza Yusuf Hanson and Zaid Salim Shakir, filled these artists with pride and provided the opportunity to identify with Islam in a way that is relevant to the American and British contexts.[16]

15. See, for instance, Imam Zaid Shakir, “United We Stand: One Nation, One Destiny”, https://muslimmatters.org/2011/08/16/united-we-stand-one-nation-one-destiny/, accessed 2020-02-07.

16. Hamza Yusuf advised the Bush administration related to the “War on Terror”, which was generally appreciated by American Muslims. However, current discussions on involvement of prominent Muslims in state initiatives to counter extremism demonstrate huge critique. Daniel Haqiqatjou, “Fighting for the Soul of ‘American Islam’ – Activists vs. Imams vs. Academics”, https://muslimskeptic.com/2019/08/26/fighting-for-the-soul-of-american-islam-activists-vs-imams-vs-academics/, accessed 2020-02-07.

Therefore, I use the label "SSB network" while acknowledging that several teachers and scholars do not define themselves as exclusively Sufi-oriented. For instance, Imam Talib el-Hajj Abdur-Rashid, of the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood in New York City (a successor to the Muslim Mosque Inc. of Malcolm X), explains: "We strive for a Salafi message, a Sunni [jurisprudential] way, and a Sufi truth."[17] Nevertheless, in terms of relating to art and music, these Islamic teachers display more tolerance or positivity towards art than Salafi-oriented adherents.

Drawing from my study,[18] the transnational SSB network is related to the conditional view at the centre of the differentiated field of Muslim performing artists in the US and the UK, where art and music moderately takes into consideration guidelines acquired from religion.[19] "Consciousness" has become one of the central notions revealed in the socially conscious hip-hop, stand-up comedy, and storytelling of Muslim artists in the twenty-first century, in the tradition of MCs who have radically expressed disturbing experiences in their communities since 1968, inspired by Malcolm X. Based on horizontal bonds, a part of the SSB network and beyond is also related to Muslim artists of the civilizational view, who are convinced that Islam needs art and music because it is culture that takes Islam forward into civilization. These artists of hip-hop, theatre, and film – who are often converts to Islam, frequently from mixed African lineage, just as Malcolm X – are eager to take his ideas further. In contrast, by defining boundaries that limit art and music, from rap to spoken word, in far-reaching ways for moral fortifications, Muslim artists of the strict view draw on rather Salafi-oriented classical scholars and (conservative) Islamic teachers with speech codes that echo Malcolm X in straightforward and pronounced speaking. They represent him as a powerful symbol of spiritual progression from the ghetto.

The Political Theology of Malcolm X in Relation to Muslim Artists

In the course of his fight against structural racism, Malcolm X developed various politico-theological conceptions, which are in one way or another reflected in the tastes, orientations, and artistic practices of various Muslim performing artists by means of mediating subjects. I will outline the most salient conceptions and explore those that have been drawn from

17. If not specified otherwise, all quotes are drawn from my interviews with Muslim artists, Islamic teachers, and academics on Islam.

18. In this study, which is informed by the concept of intersectionality, artists are part of the field of cultural production. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Stanford, CA 1996.

19. Yolanda van Tilborgh, "Islam, Culture and Authoritative Voices in the UK and the US: Patterns of Orientation and Autonomy Among Muslims in Art", *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik* 2 (2018), 101–134.

his life and reflect on their possible impact among Muslim artists. First, I will discuss "social action towards social justice", the related "paradise in the here-and-now", and, subsequently, "the Oneness of Humanity". Then the various "conversion narratives to enlightenment" and the "transformational views of art", which I have associated with constitutive views regarding the (im)permissibility of music, are considered. The narratives and views explain in which ways Muslim performing artists are influenced by Malcolm X's remarkable politico-religious trajectory and how religious experts who claim Malcolm X in contrasting ways have influenced the life trajectories of several artists.

Social Action towards Social Justice

Malcolm X was geared towards a religion that would encompass political and social action to eliminate racial and social injustice.[20] He detected that the religion of Christianity, despite its radical communitarian origins and compassion with the marginalized, failed to bring about a system of equality and solidarity.[21] According to Max Horkheimer, this was the result of it operating in symbiosis with the state.[22] In Malcolm X's view, Dustin Byrd argues, the religion of Islam was better equipped to incite revolution for human rights due to its commitment to "principled violence" (as a last resort), its encouragement of its adherents to engage in a *jihad* (struggle) against oppressors, and its vision of a just and equitable society.[23] Malcolm X felt attracted to *asabiyya* (social solidarity), which comes to fulfillment in the *ummah* by giving the believer (voluntary) obligations towards his fellow men.[24] Through focussing religiously, *asabiyya* is a guide for collective action towards political power and cultural hegemony.[25]

For the past two decades in the UK and the US, Islamic grassroots organizations specifically have stimulated their young audiences to be actively engaged in society[26] by means of Muslim performing artists, while taking advice, among others, from teachers and academics engaged in the

20. Malcolm X, *February 1965: The Final Speeches*, New York 1992, 22.

21. Dustin J. Byrd, "Malcolm X and Revolutionary Religion", in Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016, 92.

22. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, New York 2002, 129.

23. Byrd, "Malcolm X and Revolutionary Religion", 96. Malcolm X, *The Diary of Malcolm X: El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, 1964*, Chicago 2013, 40.

24. Malcolm X, *The Diary*, 26–27.

25. Beyza Sümer, "Ibn Khaldun's Asabiyya for Social Cohesion", *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences* 41 (2012), 253–267.

26. The practice of Islamic inspiration in civic organizations goes back to the Black Art Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

SSB network. From the perspective that this will help the growing Muslim communities in the UK and the US to survive and even gain cultural dominance, Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, for instance, aims to replace expressions of victimhood through stimulating a national Muslim identity with a related cultural citizenship.[27] Part of his civilizing attempts is the appreciation of both Islamic and indigenous (e.g., African American Muslim) forms of art and culture among Muslims. In the US, IMAN delivers social services in combination with cultivating the arts in urban communities by means of artistic festivals, community cafés, and guiding spiritual lectures. Its initial organizer, Kuwaiti American performing artist Asad Ali Jafri, of Indian and Pakistani parents, embraced the idea that hip-hop artists are ethically still learning to perform in line with Malcolm X, that is, through the advice of activist Imam Talib Abdur-Rashid, who has an artistic background himself. In the UK, by combining spiritual lectures with performances of popular (hip-hop) culture, RMW has encouraged an active, moderate kind of understanding of Islam. Organizer British Canadian Pakistani Abdul-Rehman Malik points at the life of Malcolm X for inciting civic engagement from the values of Islam to become self-determined and create a better society. RMW arranged the cultural *I Am Malcolm X* tour with spoken word performances, such as of the British Caribbean feminist hip-hop duo Poetic Pilgrimage and African American activist poet Amir Sulaiman. In both contexts, the Prophet Muhammad, who is regarded to be the first Muslim social activist, and Malcolm X are mentioned in one and the same breath. However, RMW and many other artistic Muslim organizations worked partly with funds of the Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) programme to promote a "Sufi way of thinking", the kind of state funding that divides the Muslim community.[28] To retain credibility in this matter, RMW referred to its long-lasting project to realize the ideals of Malcolm X before and after any funding.[29]

Paradise in the Here-and-Now

Malcolm X searched for a socially engaged religion to eliminate injustice to (Black) people in order to achieve a foretaste of Paradise here on earth,

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27. Umar F. Abd-Allah, *Islam and the Cultural Imperative*, Burr Ridge, IL 2004; "Cultural Jihad: Making Islam Matter", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTQtYNIaoTI, accessed 2020-02-07.

28. Interview with Michael Mumisa. See also Gardner, *Constructing and Deconstructing Islam*.

29. Similar to cultural organizations who organized performances in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia based on state funding, such as from The Rhythm Road programme, the organizations receiving PVE in the UK were criticized by members of the Muslim community.

according to William D. Hart.[30] He recognized that the Christian Jesus only seems to offer consolation in the face of suffering instead of an earthly liberation from that suffering.[31] Malcolm X remembered how Black followers of the Baptist Church would shout "for the peace-in-the-sky and their heaven in the hereafter while the white man had his here on earth".[32] He realized that there is nothing in the Qur'an that teaches people to suffer peacefully;[33] Islam rather teaches one to stand up and "make heaven right here on this earth".[34]

Through the mediation of Malcolm X and their own spiritual beliefs, Muslim performing artists interpret making heaven on earth artistically differently, deducing certain styles of "militant power" as well as "soft power".[35] Along doing so, social activism becomes justified especially by one saying in the *Hadith*: "Whoever among you sees an evil action and can change it with his hand (by taking action), let him change it with his hand. If he cannot do that, then with his tongue (by speaking out)."[36] While several artists may change the first part of the saying to "If you see an injustice" – which is more aligned with the way of Malcolm X – many perceive the fate of fellow Muslims, such as those in Palestine, as a matter of outrageous social injustice by Western powers.

In the UK, Malcolm X's accusations inspired the national to global critique of British Pakistani Haq Nawaz Qureshi, also known as Aki Nawaz, leader of the controversial socio-political world fusion music group Fun-Da-Mental. Nawaz represents the artistic view in the field of Muslim artists, which positions the act of questioning morals at the core of faith.[37] Since he grew up in the racial volatility of Bradford, he has experienced that immigrants, even when UK-born, are impeded to feel equal in a society that "targets their colour and culture in all its aspects". During his

30. William D. Hart, "Malcolm as Religious Peripatetic", in Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016, 19; Malcolm X, *February 1965*, 22.

31. Byrd, "Malcolm X and Revolutionary Religion", 111.

32. William D. Hart, *Black Religion: Malcolm X, Julius Lester, and Jan Willis*, New York 2008, 27.

33. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, New York 1965, 12.

34. Reiland Rabaka, "Malcolm X and/as Critical Theory: Philosophy, Radical Politics, and the African American Search for Social Justice", *Journal of Black Studies* 33 (2002), 145–165.

35. Yolanda van Tilborgh, "From Hell to Heaven: The Malcolm X Narrative of Muslim Artists: The Meaning of his Life in Relation to the Doctrine of Predestination for American and British Muslim Performing Artists in the 21st Century", in Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016, 273–320.

36. Sunan Ibn Majah, vol. 5, book 36, Hadith 4013, https://sunnah.com/urn/1291130, accessed 2020-02-08.

37. van Tilborgh, "Islam, Culture and Authoritative Voices".

international travels, he saw "newly marketed colonial ideas" leading to atrocities against "the victorious losers of humanity", for which no one has been held accountable.[38] Displaying the social and symbolic boundaries of class, race, and religion in a militant kind of style, Nawaz produced the uncompromising album *All is War (The Benefits of G-had)*.

In the US, African American director of Progress Theatre, Cristal Chanelle Truscott, learned from Malcolm X that, even though the US gave African Americans full-scale civil rights, their institutions did not heal the wounds of structural racism, because: "If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it [...] out – that's not progress. Progress is healing the wound that the blow made."[39] Employing the style of soft power in order to influence ways of thinking,[40] Truscott, who attends teachers from the SSB network, aims to weaken symbolic racial boundaries. With her attractive theatre productions, she contributes to the process of healing by deconstructing stereotypical representations of (Black) people. In interplay with the artists, who project meanings to Malcolm X and his politico-theological life venture, the complementary styles of militant and soft power reflect the attitudes of both anger and agency to change the present world for the better.

Social activism is not exclusively directed against state power or dominant White meanings, however. African American performance poet Dasham Brookins, also known as Brother Dash, whose art structurally exposes a vigorous Malcolm X-inspired activist component, does not shy away from issues within the community. On his album *Poetic Justice*, he also addresses domestic violence and (religious) extremism.

The Oneness of Humanity

Malcolm X sought to eradicate the structural dehumanization of African Americans in White American society.[41] On his pilgrimage to Mecca, he experienced a sense of community by meeting a society of peaceful coexistence and racial equality, apparently free of exploitation and oppression. Referring to the monotheist Islamic dogma of *tawhid* (the oneness of God), these experiences made him recognize "the Oneness of all Humanity".[42]

38. Correspondence with Aki Nawaz.

39. "Malcolm X – On Progress", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cReCQE8B5nY, accessed 2020-02-08.

40. Coined by Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York 2005, soft power can influence preferences by making use of the ability to attract instead of coerce, such as through cultural means. Used in an alternative way in the case of Malcolm X, see van Tilborgh, "From Hell to Heaven".

41. Byrd, "Malcolm X and Revolutionary Religion", 116.

42. Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, London 2011, 311.

Manning Marable and William Hart indicate that, along the way, Malcolm X realized that the intolerance dismissing all White people as "White devils" was incompatible with Sunni Islam and its claim to universalism as much as it was with his own political purposes to develop a broad movement.[43] He externalized the transformation of his goal from civil rights for Black American people to international human rights by describing his cause as something in which people of all faiths could participate.[44] Although his core aim continued to be improving the world-as-it-is especially for the African American population, during the travels in the last period of his life, Malcolm X strengthened the groundwork for Black–Palestinian solidarity as part of "Afro-Arab solidarity politics".[45] This development may indicate his more syncretic, ecumenical attitude.

In order to rehumanize Muslims in society, the field of Muslim performing artists holds the important goal to "normalize" the Muslim image by portraying Muslims as complete human beings instead of as Muslims only. To gain equal treatment, public fear for Muslims should be reduced. Filmmaker Lena Khan feels explicitly inspired by Spike Lee, the socially engaged African American film director of the biographical movie *Malcolm X*. Ever since Malcolm X's standing up against racism, filmmakers and artists such as Lee explored race relations and White domination artistically. In particular, in the process of giving more opportunities to Black artists, Lee detached any relation between role and race in all his productions, thus normalizing the image of Black people. By weakening the symbolic boundaries of distinction, Lena Khan intends to depict and treat Muslim people in similar normalizing ways.

In contrast, some artists reinforced the symbolic boundaries of distinction by starting their own businesses on Muslim terms to gain equal treatment. Meeting Malcolm X in hip-hop throughout his formative years, music producer and DJ Anas Canon, also known as BeLikeMuhammad, of a mixed African American and White background, gave birth to the independent Muslim music collective Remarkable Current in 2009. Defining "us" and "them" at the time – besides emphasizing the qualities of artists from American Islam – Muslims would have to control their own platform instead of "work under secular direction" in the mainstream of arts and culture to guard the status of Muslim expressions, preserve sacred religious aspects, and influence the world's perception of Islam.[46] However, by

43. Marable, *Malcolm X*, 12.

44. Hart, "Malcolm as Religious Peripatetic", 17.

45. Maytha M.Y.Z. Alhassen, *To Tell What the Eye Beholds: A Post 1945 Transnational History of Afro-Arab "Solidarity Politics"*, Los Angeles 2017.

46. "Remarkable Current Tour Dates and Concert Tickets", https://concerts.eventful.com/

collaborating with artists of multiform musical styles and spiritual backgrounds, and refraining from his Islamic name in the course of the process of professionalization, Canon's collective developed towards an inclusive serving of humanity.

Conversion Narratives to Enlightenment

In the following, I will explore the influences of the politico-theological conceptions that have been drawn from the life of Malcolm X. In a remarkable threefold ideological trajectory, Malcolm evolved from Malcolm Little, an unknown African American – exemplifying a deprived social group in the United States – and a street hustler, to Malcolm X, a successful Black Nationalist leader, and, subsequently, to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, a global Muslim leader and international human rights activist. Spiritually, after being raised in a Christian family, Malcolm converted to the NOI in the American prison complex, followed by – more than a decade later – embracing Sunni Islam.

Conversion or reversion with regard to religion is generally considered as a process of going "from darkness to light". The double conversion of Malcolm X strikes multiple Muslim performing artists and Islamic teachers. By his trajectory of passing from the considered state of "ignorance" and backwardness (as immigrant Muslims may regard the NOI) to the state of "truth", artists feel triggered – especially in the culture of hip-hop – to reflect on their own lives from performing sin to performing obvious virtue. The sequenced politico-theological trajectory of Malcolm X, by speaking truth to power as much as by being sincere to himself, inspires Muslim artists to develop their own biographical (conversion or born-again) narrative with a from-darkness-to-light structure.[47]

After his phase of embracing Islam when convicted for petty crime, British Caribbean Muslim rap and spoken word artist Masikah Feesabillah, also known as Abu Siddiq, became active in social *dawah* projects for vulnerable youths. Masikah, who participated in the *I am Malcolm X* tour, explains his strong attachment to Malcolm X: "The path that I came from till the path I am on now is similar to the path of Malcolm X."[48] Similarly, born in a Muslim Nigerian family, British Nabil Abdul Rashid acquired from Malcolm X that "one simple man can be influential to a lot of people" by standing up for what he or she believes in. After his imprisonment for drug-related street crimes at a young age, Abdul Rashid presented himself as

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Remarkable-Current, accessed 2020-02-08.

47. van Tilborgh, "From Hell to Heaven".

48. "I am Malcolm X", http://www.radicalmiddleway.org/media/i-am-malcolm-x/3, accessed 2014-07-16.

a proud "born-again" Muslim in stand-up comedy as a means to give back to the community and display his controversial views to fighting extremism.

Muslim performing artists emphasize the way to reach enlightenment and Paradise differently, inspired by distinct teachers. Jamaican-born Islamic teacher Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, who felt aroused when reading how Malcolm X converted from the NOI to Sunni Islam in the end,[49] promoted Islam in the video "How I Came to Islam From Darkness to Light" with the recommendation: "Earn Paradise! Bring the light of true faith to cease the darkness of ignorance!"[50] Because Philips came to understand that wind and string instruments are Islamically forbidden, due to its presumed relation with addiction, deviant behavior, homosexuality, and suicide,[51] he suggests that the anti-musical stance can lead to enlightenment. This perspective is part of the broader strict view in the field of Muslim performing artists in the UK and the US.

In contrast, during the cultural *I am Malcolm X* tour[52] of RMW, British Sudanese Sheikh Babikir Ahmed Babikir introduced Malcolm X to the audience as a man who "has come from the darkness to the light", by "rejecting all that is evil to stand fair with what is right".[53] Babikir connects the Malcolm X from-darkness-to-light narrative with advocating, albeit conditionally, music and dance. He aligns these artistic behaviours with "being human", which reflects the perspective that enlightenment encloses the musical stance. This perspective can be part of the conditional and civilizational view among the teachers of the SSB network and, in less conservative form, beyond.

The understanding of the sequence of "light" after "darkness", which Muslims acquire from the politico-theological life trajectory of Malcolm X, has created the sense that generating influence is within reach – especially to Muslim performing artists – through straightforward verbal acting as much as by being honest with oneself and others. This understanding may thus enhance speaking truth to external or internal relationships (the state, society, or Muslim communities). Besides, it demonstrates that Muslims

49. Amina Alhassan, "My Journey to Islam, by Bilal Philips", *Daily Trust* 2014-03-14, http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/my-journey-to-islam-by-bilal-philips.html, accessed 2020-02-08.

50. "How I Came to Islam from Darkness to Light – Dr. Bilal Philips", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Y8KakzkoZ0, accessed 2020-02-08.

51. "Shaitan's Azan 'Music' by Dr. Bilal Philips", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buoX3yJYJYQ, accessed 2020-02-08; "Music, Art, Photography – Contemporary Issues Bilal Philips", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFiQS7-5WA0, accessed 2020-02-08.

52. "I am Malcolm X – UK Tour '09", https://vimeo.com/8911092, accessed 2020-02-08.

53. "I am Malcolm X", http://www.radicalmiddleway.org/media/i-am-malcolm-x/7, accessed 2014-06-24; "Shaykh Ahmed Babikir I am Malcolm X Bradford Playhouse 28th Feb 09", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vL2wqYkP6A, accessed 2020-02-08.

enact enlightenment differently, depending on the mediation of Malcolm X by authoritative voices of different strands and their perspectives on Islam and music.

Transformational Views of Art

For Malcolm X, his atheist kind of adolescence was characterized by smoking, drinking alcohol, and immersing himself in jazz music. He was passionate about contemporary music and loved its environments – women, dancing, and gambling.[54] This period came to an end when Malcolm X was incarcerated. He converted to the NOI and developed the view that there was a certain connection between music and his "sinful past".[55] Malcolm X performed his piety strictly, according to Hart, with public acts of asceticism.[56] When turning to Sunni Islam, he had to adjust himself to the required habits again. After leaving the NOI and internationalizing his major cause concerning injustice by the US state against the African American population in newly independent states, such as Ghana and Egypt, Malcolm X immersed himself in cultural life again, as Hisham Aidi describes, by enjoying music and dance in the centres of art and entertainment in Egypt.[57] Reflecting on the development of his all-inclusive views to participation in the fight for social justice, this could be understood as a syncretic phase in living his political theology. After he had internalized restrained behaviour with regard to the codes of eating, praying (*salah*), and consuming music, it is possible that, through reconsidering the importance of music for Black liberation,[58] as much as previous phases that were crucial for his position as a human rights activist, Malcolm X could now loosen up his behaviour in a controlled way.

To some degree comparable to Malcolm X, Muslim performing artists, when converting or reverting to Islam, have to integrate new cultural codes in their lives related to the production and consumption of art and music. Along this process, they may experience more or less strain. From the theories of Norbert Elias (1897–1990) and Cas Wouters, the conception of "formalization" signifies a social phase towards more strict regimes of

54. Hart, *Black Religion*, 29–41; Marable, *Malcolm X*; Hisham Aidi, "The Music of Malcolm X", *The New Yorker* 2015-02-28, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-music-of-malcolm-x, accessed 2020-02-09.

55. Aidi, "The Music of Malcolm X"; Hisham D. Aidi, "Du Bois, Ghana and Cairo Jazz: The Geo-Politics of Malcolm X", in Olivia U. Rutazibwa & Robbie Shilliam (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics*, Abingdon 2018, 413–430; Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York 1992; Marable, *Malcolm X*.

56. Hart, "Malcolm as Religious Peripatetic", 10–11.

57. Aidi, "Du Bois, Ghana and Cairo Jazz".

58. Aidi, "The Music of Malcolm X".

manners and emotions, due to psychological and social pressures, whereas the conception of "informalization" reflects a following phase of controlled relaxation of behavioural regimes.[59] According to my study, some Muslim artists may pass formalizing and informalizing phases towards a syncretic stage in their career and life trajectories.[60] Especially among Muslims who embraced Islam later in life, informalization can be understood as "syncretism", which Monika Wohlrab-Sahr defines as a gradual combining of old and new religio-cultural aspects of past (for instance, American or Jamaican) and present (Islamic) selves and contexts.[61]

American singer of the hip-hop duo The Reminders, Aja Black, with an ethnically varied Jamaican, French Creole, and African American background, had Malcolm X as one of her role models because of his severe endurance for the benefit of other people. After converting to Islam, she formalized her behaviour by dressing discreetly and covering her dreadlocks while singing for Muslims. Nonetheless, she was socially criticized for performing anyway. The need to repress her cultural habitus and ethnic heritage was, however, put into perspective by the interpretations of scholars of the SSB network. Against the "old world attitudes" of patriarchal Muslims who reject unknown cultural habits, Abd-Allah, for instance, argues that Islam has been able to become a global civilization due to its ability to make itself "culturally relevant to distinct peoples in different times", e.g., in China and Malaysia.[62] Islam has thus displayed cultural understandings of positive content from ethnic, local, and national cultures. Informalized in her praxis since then, Aja Black now sings for both Muslims and non-Muslims with a certain controlling of her gestures but without toning down her artistic performance. In the Anglophone field of Muslim artists, this transition towards a syncretic phase is regularly encountered among convert artists with the civilizational view.

In contrast, convert Muslims who engage in "symbolic battle" undertake a radical break from their former, non-Muslim selves and contexts.[63] Indeed, some Muslim rap artists with experiences of socially destabilized (ghetto-related) environments display a contrasting follow-up by intensified

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59. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, Dublin 2000; Cas Wouters, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions Since 1890*, London 2007.

60. Yolanda van Tilborgh, "Career Trajectories and (In)Formalization among Muslim Performing Artists in the UK and the U.S.: Accommodationism or Fundamentalism?", *Journal of Religion & Society* 19 (2017), 1–25.

61. Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Conversion to Islam: Between Syncretism and Symbolic Battle", *Social Compass* 46 (1999), 351–362.

62. Abd-Allah, *Islam and the Cultural Imperative*.

63. Wohlrab-Sahr, "Conversion to Islam".

formalized behavior, such as Ashley Chin, also known as Muslim Belal.[64] Belal, who has tweeted that "Malcolm X started as a hustler, ended as a [*sic*] inspirational Muslim. I Wanna go #LikeMalcolm",[65] prefers artistically restrictive outlooks above those of the SSB network. Possibly emulating Malcolm X in his twofold conversion to Islam, these male Muslim artists of the strict view came to decide to abstain entirely from musical instruments by stressing its Islamic impermissibility, exchanging rap for spoken word or a cappella (*nasheed*).

Although the cases above demonstrate different orders of behavioural phases, they are all examples of emancipation from social contexts to higher kinds of religio-cultural self-determination related to the mediation of Malcolm X.

Conclusion

In examining the relationship between the political theology of Malcolm X and the socio-political cultural attempts among British and North American Muslim performing artists to cope with the power structures, hierarchies, and bearing ideologies they experience, the influence of Malcolm X appears to be mediated and/or expressed in manifold ways – of which this article gives an account.[66] Muslim performing artists deduce complementary styles from the passion of Malcolm X, as discussed in "Social Action towards Social Justice", and "Paradise in the Here-and-Now". These styles reflect the attitudes of formulating critique and standing up as well as the agency to heal grief and reform degrading mechanisms in the present world related to specific situations and images of Muslims, Blacks, and other Others. Nevertheless, the influence of the political theology of Malcolm X cannot be identified by a large commitment to a unified kind of activism among Muslim artists – on the contrary – and its significance therefore needs to be explained in alternative ways.

Translating their interpretation of the multilayered symbol of Malcolm X in divergent approaches, the artists and teachers discussed seem to make use of Malcolm X and his political theology as a reservoir of meanings, ideas, beliefs, theories, and practices through which they are shaped as well

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64. van Tilborgh, "Career Trajectories and (In)Formalization".

65. Ashley Belal Chin, https://twitter.com/ashleybelalchin/status/14302049164, accessed 2020-02-09.

66. I would like to gratefully acknowledge the participants Aminah Beverly McCloud, Anthony Simpkins, Anthony Smith, Farid Hafez, Joel Kuhlin, Khairudin Aljunied, and the organizers Emin Poljarevic and Anders Ackfeldt of the Malcolm X workshop at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, in August 2019, for their valuable comments as well as the peer-reviewers of *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*.

as shape theories, eschatological narratives, and myths themselves.[67] By informing processes of thinking, symbolizing, and reflecting on experiences, Christopher Partridge argues, a reservoir of concerns and values born from popular culture has developed in opposition to the secular. In constituting a new spiritual atmosphere, this functions as the re-enchantment of the West.[68] In the present case, this reservoir of Malcolm X-inspired meanings and practices might also be considered as a re-enchantment of the Muslim world.

While Malcolm X can be used as part of the politics of distinction, for instance by Blackamerican artists and teachers, he is also used in the politics of syncretism. Outside the centre of the field, instead of finding new ways to be human, Muslim artists prefer to normalize rather than distinguish their Muslimness in order to become equal human beings, which is in line with Malcolm X as discussed in "The Oneness of Humanity". They will be able to contribute to the bearing ideas in society, if liberated from restrictive identifications.

Besides the normalizing and liberating effects of the mediation of Malcolm X and his political theology by externally directed expressions towards societies and states, I found certain transformative, emancipative effects relating to intercommunity directed expressions, i.e., towards Muslims and Islamic currents. At the centre of the field, Muslim performing artists may draw their personal "Conversion Narratives to Enlightenment" from the spiritual trajectory of Malcolm X. Its from-darkness-to-light structure has an empowering quality, because it signifies a process of coming out of the gutter into a state of enlightenment encompassing influence, which – against the bearing ideas – seems accessible to new (convert) Muslims as well. In several cases, proceeding from Stuart Hall, the background of artists of the post-independence Caribbean nations, who had to redefine their identities, may play a role.[69]

The "Transformational Views of Art" subsequently explain as well how Islamic teachers – who claim Malcolm X in contrasting ways – have particularly affected several of the career trajectories of Muslim performing artists. From locating salient power in themselves, the life-changing processes involve the coming to terms with psychological tensions, leading to emancipation from religio-social pressures.

67. See Khairudin Aljunied, "A Travelling Model: The Mythicization and Mobilization of Malcolm X in the Malay World", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 79–94.

68. Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*, London 2004. On Partridge, see Anders Ackfeldt, *Islamic Semiotic Resources in US Hip-Hop Culture*, Lund 2019, 107–109.

69. Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, Cambridge, MA 2017.

In this sense, on the metalevel, specific Muslim artists may have become part of the informal Anglophone network of interdependent Islamic teachers and institutions – proceeding from Hamid's conception of the SSB network against the popularity of Salafism – which seems focussed on reforming the power structure between Islam and "Muslim old world" views and those of the "Muslim new world" by incorporating the inclusive symbol that is Malcolm X. Besides presumably aiming to re-explain the most powerful mainstream of Islam and its cultural standards in the world, the network is also active on the national level. Through expressing celebrated opposition, such as by Hamza Yusuf, those representing the network gained the privilege to co-define the contents of certain organizing ideas of the state in the case of Muslim matters. However, these kinds of engagement in symbiosis with the established and ruling governments are now very much debated. Altogether, Muslim performing artists who encountered a mediation of Malcolm X in politico-theological ways have thus become more or less involved in complex relationships concerning the bearing ideology in the Muslim world, as much as those in the nation states. ▲

SUMMARY

In examining the relationship between the political theology of Malcolm X, also known as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, and the socio-political cultural attempts of British and North American Muslim performing artists to cope with the power structures they experience, the influence of Malcolm X appears to be mediated, personalized, and expressed in manifold ways. Besides the liberating and normalizing effects of Malcolm X and his political theology by externally directed expressions towards societies and states, I found transformative, emancipative effects among expressions directed towards Muslims and Islamic currents. On the metalevel, specific Muslim artists may have become part of the informal Anglophone network of interdependent Islamic teachers and institutions that is focussed to re-explain the most powerful mainstream of Islam and its cultural standards in the world by incorporating the inclusive symbol that Malcolm X is.

A Travelling Model

The Mythicization and Mobilization of Malcolm X in the Malay World

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The celebrated Palestinian-American intellectual, Edward Said (1935–2003), once wrote that "[like] people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another [...] the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity".[1] Said termed this unique movement of thoughts and mentalities "travelling theory". Travel enables ideas to survive, as they gain new interpretations and meanings outside their places of origin. One historical figure that influenced Said and, at the same time, embodied his notion of travelling theory (and much more, as I will show) was Malcolm X (1925–1965).

To be sure, few African American Muslim figures have gained as much global significance as Malcolm X. In life, and more so after his assassination, Malcolm X's ideas travelled rapidly, taking on new forms, uses, and importance. His biography became a tool for social, political, and ideological action, particularly in the Malay world, which forms the basis of this article. One chief reason why Malcolm X became, and still is, a symbolic figure in the Malay world has much to do with his travels to that part of the globe. Impressed by the anti-colonial struggles there and the resolutions of the famed Bandung Conference in 1955, Malcolm X grew to become

1. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Cambridge 1983, 226.

progressively concerned with the injustices and exploitation that affected most of humankind, the bottom billion that populated much of Africa, Asia, and the wider Muslim world. Due partly to his encounters with, and admiration for, the activists in the Malay world,[2] Malcolm X's political theology morphed progressively from a racially-oriented position to one that leaned closer to the ideals of Islamic universalism until his untimely demise.[3]

And yet, despite Malcolm X's attentiveness to the plight of oppressed peoples all over the world, and the sway that he wielded in the Malay world in particular, little has been written about his influence outside his home country. He has been particularized as a quintessentially American activist who fused Islam, black suffering, and human rights discourse into a potent political theology.[4] Malcolm X's supra-local significance and the ways in which ideas, experiences, and models from outside the United States shaped his discourses have generally been ignored. As such, my purpose here is to add to the "growing cohort of interdisciplinary scholars whose work extends the project of recuperating Malcolm X's radical humanism and his global legacy, which collectively challenge the 'Americanization' of Malcolm X".[5]

In an effort to recuperate and rehabilitate the image of Malcolm X and to extend Edward Said's theory on the movement of ideas, this essay argues that Malcolm X was, by all means, a "travelling model". By travelling model, I first mean a historical icon whose influential ideas were conditioned by a dynamic and rapidly maturing state of being. His relentless search for a higher truth, the new solidarities that he encountered and formed, as well as the challenges and peregrinations that he faced, all aided in the process of him emerging as a paragon of action and hope for others. Malcolm X's lasting relevance as a travelling model can be traced in his shifting political theology, which developed from one that vindicated black nationalism to a movement towards addressing "racial injustice to the broader plane of human exploitation".[6] Malcolm X's reinvention was effected by his interactions with and acute observations of the state of the oppressed people globally and the alliances they formed against systematic persecution. The

2. The term "Malay world" consists of present-day Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, South Thailand, and South Philippines.

3. Dustin J. Byrd, "Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary", in Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016, 126; Edward E. Curtis IV, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought*, Albany, NY 2002, 12.

4. Emin Poljarevic, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X: Between Human Dignity and Returning the Gaze", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 11–27.

5. Zareena Grewal, "1965 and the Global Intellectual Afterlife of Malcolm X", *American Studies* 54:2 (2015), 11.

6. Saladin M. Ambar, *Malcolm X at Oxford Union: Racial Politics in a Global Era*, New York 2014, 116.

interplay between local experiences and global ideational influences coalesced and restructured Malcolm X's thoughts and activism, especially after his departure from the Nation of Islam (NOI) in March 1964.

The second interrelated meaning of the term travelling model is an exemplar whose life journey, personal reflections, and public pronouncements acquire a deep resonance and meaning among a broad spectrum of people, located far in space and time from her own. Malcolm X's life story and ideas have been translated from one language to another, absorbed, adapted, appropriated, and vernacularized among Malay-Indonesian Muslims, ushering novel formulations of the notions of justice, freedom, and equality in a setting that Malcolm X was unfamiliar with but had gained much intellectual stimulus from. His life and ideas are regarded by Malay-Indonesian Muslims as a minefield of inspiration, as a standard of conduct, and as a wealth of reflexive materials for socio-political reform. For those in the Malay world who encountered him, be it through fact or fiction, Malcolm X is a treasure trove to be read, studied, critiqued, and used to promulgate movements and effect change. He is regarded as part of the centuries-long Islamic heritage of intellectual-activists who placed all forms of hypocrisies, oppressions, and injustices under their rhetorical chopping board.

Therein lies a key conundrum inherent in all travelling models, including Malcolm X. As persons whose lives and ideas are seen as meaningful and authoritative, travelling models are often embellished with each retelling and every appropriation. Their imperfections are usually downplayed and the limits of their worldviews overlooked. Their character flaws are, for the most part, lost in many teleological narratives. In this regard, Michael Dyson has identified "at least four Malcolms who emerge in the intellectual investigation 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 as judge by his career trajectory from nationalist to alleged socialist".[7] Building on this schema and in pursuit of my argument of Malcolm X as a travelling model, I focus here on how Muslims in the Malay world projected different Malcolm Xs to serve different ends. In the first part of this essay, I look at the mythicization of Malcolm X, in that his life story was novelized with an eye to demonstrating how a marginal figure in society eventually became a champion of the marginalized. This is followed by a discussion of the mobilization of Malcolm X, whereby he was extolled by contemporary Muslims as a resource for youths, preachers, and political activists. In this, I place into sharp relief the

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7. Michael Eric Dyson, *Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X*, New York 1995, 24.

employment of the image of Malcolm X to promote certain religious, social, and political agendas. The mythicization and mobilization of Malcolm X's life and ideas is revealing of the wide and ever-expanding uses (and even abuses) of Malcolm X in the contemporary Muslim world.

The Shaping of a Travelling Model

Malcolm X was among the many prominent Muslims who narrated how travel had changed their visions of life and society. Muslim travellers, both in the modern and even premodern periods, have documented their life-changing experiences of venturing into faraway lands.[8] Like Malcolm X, the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) was especially powerful in bringing about a sea change in how many of these travellers viewed their place in the world and their relations with Islam as a faith. But what differentiates Malcolm X from other writers was that he popularized his sojourn by linking it to his struggles for African American and human rights. Malcolm X's assassination in the prime of his activist career further supercharged public interest in how travel had reinvented his life and thought. Zareena Grewal notes: "Malcolm X fits in two enduring traditions of travel: American seekers and Islamic pedagogical trips (*rihla*). Many American Muslim leaders, before and after Malcolm X, linked their claims to religious authority to the Muslim lands, whether real or imagined, and the (de-colonial) recovery of lost (sacred, powerful) knowledge."[9]

And yet, it is important here to note that there were two stages in Malcolm X's transformative travel experiences, each shaping his thoughts in radically different fashions. The first stage coincided with his tenure as a minister in the NOI. He attended the Bandung Conference in 1955 and, later on, visited Egypt, Iran, Syria, and Ghana in 1959. Biographers such as Peter Goldman highlighted that these travels impacted Malcolm X to such an extent that he saw the incongruities between what the NOI stood for, which was black nationalism and segregation, and the universalist ideals of Islam. A loyal follower of Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975), he did not question the NOI's ideology. He side-stepped the contradictions between what he saw as unity between people of all colours in Bandung and his calls for black unity against the white people.[10]

Malcolm X's fallout with Elijah Muhammad in 1963, his break from the NOI, and his subsequent travels a year later was monumental and

8. See, for example, the collection of essays by Dale Eickelman & James Piscatori (eds.), *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, Berkeley, CA 1990.

9. Grewal, "1965 and the Global Intellectual Afterlife", 19.

10. Peter Louis Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, Chicago 1979, 76.

constituted the next phase of his "evolving geopolitical philosophy".[11] On 10 November 1963, he delivered an iconic speech dubbed "Message to the Grassroots". He underlined the significance of the Bandung Conference in 1955, a point he repeated on a number of occasions until some days before his death:

> In Bandung back in, I think, 1954, was the first unity meeting in centuries of black people. And once you study what happened at the Bandung Conference, and the results of the Bandung Conference, it actually serves as a model for the same procedure you and I can use to get our problems solved. At Bandung all the nation came together. The dark nations from Africa and Asia. Some of them were Buddhists. Some of them were Muslim. Some of them were Christians. Some of them were Confucianists; some were atheists. Despite their religious differences, they came together. Some were communists; some were socialists; some were capitalists. Despite their economic and political differences, they came together. All of them were black, brown, red, or yellow. The number-one thing that was not allowed to attend the Bandung Conference was the white man. He couldn't come.[12]

More crucially, Malcolm X was rapidly moving away from being an advocate of racial struggle to becoming a promoter of the idea that formerly colonized nations all shared the same forms of oppression and suffering, and therefore should come together in pushing for a global movement towards equality, emancipation, and liberation. Nearing his assassination, Malcolm X "exudes the sort of polycultural ethos [...] a rich figure who cannot be seen as the possession of a people, or posthumous leader of a territorial nationalist movement".[13]

Beginning with the *hajj*, which was followed by his trips to countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, this phase of travel further structured Malcolm X's "moral geography" to one that acknowledged the global reality of Islam and the universal brotherhood of humankind above and beyond race as well as religion.[14] Or as Stephen Tuck handsomely observes: "His international travels were a response to changes in his outlook, but they

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11. James Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X: Black Radicalism and the Remaking of American Space*, New York 2006, 31.

12. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, New York 1965, 3–4.

13. Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*, Boston, MA 2001, 105.

14. Zareena Grewal, *Islam as a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York 2014, 82.

also caused his outlook to change in turn."[15] In his diary, Malcolm X related his conversations with the Chinese ambassador to Ghana, who made him realize the crucial need to move beyond racism and constricted ideologies towards approaching problems "as a human being. When we all learn to think as human beings instead of as capitalists, communists and socialist this will then be a world for all human beings."[16]

Upon his return from Africa, Malcolm X established the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), which was modeled on the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that had convened in Cairo, Egypt in July 1964. Malcolm X was an official observer during the meeting and submitted a memorandum that elevated the struggle of African Americans to the level of human rights.[17] In light of all of these experiences overseas, Malcolm X casually remarked: "Well, I've done a lot of traveling and, I think over all, travel does broaden one's soul. If anything at all, that's probably the most important of what's happened to me during the past five or six months."[18] That said, we must take heed of Aminah McCloud's remark that "Malcolm's thought and action represent the tension between *asabiyah* [local group solidarity] and *ummah* [global Muslim community], and the demand that Muslims participate in both arenas".[19]

The revolutionary struggles of Southeast Asians fascinated Malcolm X. The United States' entry into Vietnam to regain the territories left behind by the defeated French became the substance of his speeches, in his hope to underline that the oppressed peoples could stand up to the hegemonic forces of imperialism if only they were conscious of their own potentialities. "Also in 1964", Malcolm X stressed,

> the oppressed people of South Vietnam, and in that entire Southeast Asia area, the oppressed people of South Vietnam, were successful in fighting the agents of imperialism. All the king's horses and all the king's men having enabled them to put North and South Vietnam together again. Little rice farmers, peasants, with a rifle – up against all the highly mechanized weapons of warfare – jets, napalm, battleships,

15. Stephen Tuck, *The Night Malcolm X Spoke at the Oxford Union: A Transnational Story of Antiracist Protest*, Berkeley, CA 2014, 5.

16. Malcolm X, *The Diary of Malcolm X*, Chicago 2013, 133.

17. Akwasi B. Assensoh & Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh, *Malcolm X and Africa*, New York 2016, 55.

18. Malcolm X, *The Last Speeches*, New York 1989, 91.

19. Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam*, New York 1995, 37.

> everything else, and they can't put those rice farmers back where they want them. Someone's waking up.[20]

This speech was one of many examples of an emergent internationalism that defined the last moments of Malcolm X's life. Indeed, by criticizing Western imperialism in Southeast Asia, Malcolm X shattered "the myth of American innocence" and showed to his audiences that resistance to the world's superpower, the United States – or any form of exploitative power for that matter – was possible.[21]

During his speech at the London School of Economics, Malcolm X restated his point about the significance of the Bandung Conference and, by implication, the Malay world:

> At the Bandung Conference in 1955, one of the first and best steps toward real independence for non-white people took place. The people of Africa and Asia and Latin America were able to get together. They sat down, they realized that they had differences. They agreed not to place any emphasis any longer upon these differences, but to submerge the areas of differences and place emphasis upon areas where they had something in common. This agreement that was reached at Bandung produced the spirit of Bandung. So that the people who were oppressed, who had no jet planes, no nuclear weapons, no armies, no navies – and despite the fact that they didn't have this, their unity alone was sufficient to enable them, over a period of years, to maneuver and make it possible for other nations in Asia to become independent, and many more nations in Africa to become independent.[22]

Bandung was, to Malcolm X, a model of unity among different nationalities, religions, and ideologies against Western colonialism and neo-colonialism. Little did he realize that he too would soon become a model for postcolonial Muslims in the Malay world, the region in which the Bandung Conference was held.

Mythicization

In life and in death, Malcolm X is a perpetual source of myth, sometimes loved and, at other times, condemned. In the eyes of his dissenters, he was

20. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, 148.

21. Kevin Gaines, "Malcolm X in Global Perspective", in Robert E. Terill (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Malcolm X*, Cambridge 2010, 168–169.

22. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks to Young People: Speeches in the United States, Britain, and Africa*, New York 2002, 58.

a racist, a violent preacher, and a militant, among many other negative epithets. Among those who admire his courage in speaking truth to power, he is glorified as an ideologue for the weak, for human dignity, for revolutionary change, and for the excluded. The mythicization of Malcolm X has made him greater than the sum of the many dimensions and shifts in his life. For that same reason, his subjectivities are all too often drowned by a melange of hero-worshiping narratives and iconoclastic critiques, thus making him an either–or, a praised idealist or a demonic demagogue.[23]

Here, I wish to provide a critical analysis of an ongoing attempt at mythicizing Malcolm X as an icon, or to put it more pointedly, how a travelling model is constructed through a work of fiction. I place under scrutiny a recent and relatively popular novel written by Al Ghazali Sulaiman. Published in Malaysia, the book has gone through two reprints since its release in 2017. Al Ghazali has written twenty historical novels, which are all geared towards making his Malay-speaking readers aware of the lives of prominent historical figures as useful lessons for them to confront a complex future. His novels are, therefore, not sheer pulp fiction but fictionalized versions of actual historical personas narrated in ways that would serve a purposeful function: to reform society. Among the Muslim figures that formed part of Al Ghazali's corpus are Hamzah bin Abdul Mutalib (568–625), Abdul Rahman bin Auf (c. 581–c. 654), Ibn Battuta (1304–c. 1368), Hayreddin Barbarossa (c. 1473–1546), Umar Mukhtar (1862–1931), and Syeikh Ahmad Yassin (1937–2004).

The historical novel which has gained Al Ghazali the most attention recently is entitled *Malcolm X: Pembela Kulit Hitam Amerika* ("Malcolm X: Defender of the Blacks in America"). The title is in itself suggestive of the author's narrative framework. The novel aims at uncovering the making of a heroic personality, whose landmark political theology was to speak on the behalf of a marginalized group of people in American history. The word "hitam" (black) placed in the subtitle sets the tone for a story that shows how a valiant coloured man struggled in the face of white domination. This "black versus white" binary that Al Ghazali establishes is among the many myths about Malcolm X that have been circulating among writers, particularly among those who would like to position him as a victim of a white-dominated society and a spokesperson for the black community.[24] The first

23. Maria Josefina Saldana-Portillo, "Consuming Malcolm X: Prophecy and Performative Masculinity", *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 30 (1997), 307. The latest iconoclastic take on Malcolm X is by Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, New York 2011. A sharp yet informed critique of Manning's imbalanced and highly speculative approach to Malcolm X's biography is found in bell hooks, *Writing beyond Race: Living Theory and Theory and Practice*, New York 2013, 71–80.

24. See Regina Jennings, *Malcolm X and the Poetics of Haki Madhubuti*, Jefferson, NC 2006,

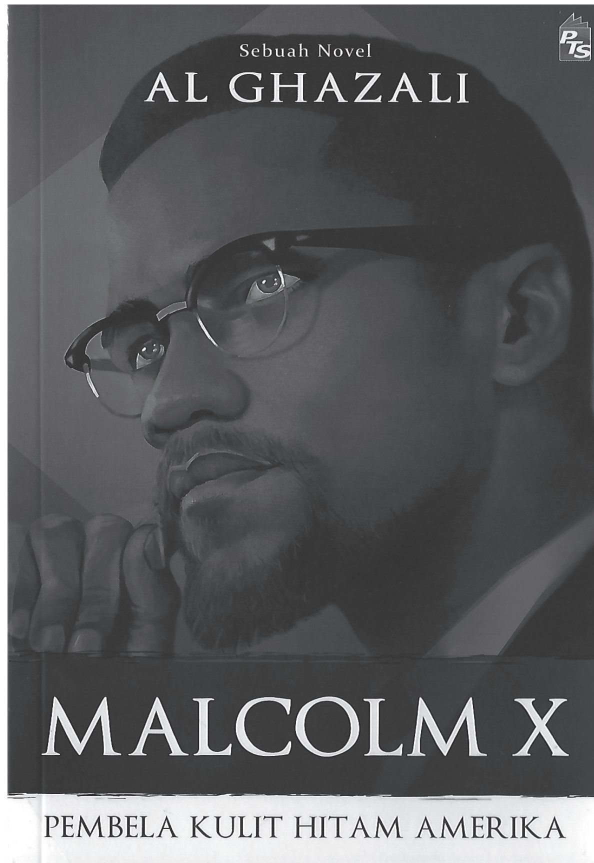

Figure 1. The cover of Al Ghazali's book Malcolm X: Pembela Kulit Hitam Amerika.

nine chapters of the novel (almost a third of the book) heighten this point, as Al Ghazali tracks how Malcolm X suffered under the continuous threats from militant white groups that led to his father's death and his family falling apart.

Nor is this all. Although the overall structure of the novel mirrors that of Malcolm X's autobiography, the novel departs in a few significant ways. First, like most texts of this genre, which is tailored towards making the readers sympathetic to or intimate with the main historical actor, it "summons powerful emotions, it disconcerts and puzzles. It inspires distrust of conventional pieties and exacts a frequently painful confrontation with one's thoughts and intentions."[25] Al Ghazali achieves this by interlacing the descriptions of actual figures and events with dialogues between them. Some

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25. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*, Boston, MA 1995, 5.

of these dialogues and descriptions are highly emotive. For example, while grieving at his father's funeral, the five-year-old Malcolm X said to his elder brother Wilfred (1920–1998): "I am scared." Wilfred replied confidently, which is the author's way of showing black confidence in the face of tragedy: "There is nothing to be afraid of. Our father was a human being. His time has come." Malcolm then looked at his brother in the eyes and replied: "I am afraid that our home will be attacked and burnt down again. Where would we live if our home has become ashes?" Al Ghazali then closes this emotional chapter with a more tragic note, which further dramatizes the grim childhood that formed Malcolm X's eventual character: "Malcolm was just five years old and too young to accept the reality of a painful life. Earl's demise is but a small setback. They [Malcolm's family] least expect a bigger problem that lurks in the horizon."[26]

Secondly, Al Ghazali's historical novel downplays many of Malcolm X's personal failings in an attempt to provide a linear account of his would-be role as an activist of black rights. One of these is the story of Malcolm X's relationship with an African American woman. An entire chapter in the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* is dedicated to discussing Laura and how much she was affected by Malcolm X leaving her to begin a crime-ridden relationship with a white lady, Sophia. Malcolm X openly acknowledged that "one of the shames I have carried for years is that I blame myself for all of this. To have treated her [Laura] as I did for a white woman made the blow doubly heavy. The only excuse I can offer is that like so many of my black brothers today, I was just deaf, dumb, and blind."[27] The reality is, of course, more complex than Malcolm X had readily admitted. Still, Al Ghazali chose to remove this significant part of Malcolm X's life story that showed that he was not merely a victim of circumstance. He was also a perpetrator of injustice towards his own people at one stage in his life; a fact that he openly disclosed. Viewed from this perspective, if a historical novelist is, as Alessandro Manzoni (1785–1873) argues, one who does more than regurgitating "the bare bones of history, but something richer, more complete. In a way you want him to put the flesh back on the skeleton that is history",[28] then Al Ghazali has removed more flesh from what could have been a more nuanced depiction, albeit fictional, of Malcolm X. Some flesh in the novel had to be removed to position Malcolm X as a travelling model.

Above all, Al Ghazali's novel embellishes his subject's virtues as a martyr of a pristine form of Islam. He achieves this in two ways. The first was to

26. Al Ghazali, *Malcolm X: Pembela Kulit Hitam Amerika*, Selangor 2017, 33.
27. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York 1965, 69–70.
28. Alessandro Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel*, Lincoln, NE 1984, 67–68.

show how Malcolm X transformed fully from being a black nationalist into a Muslim who accepted that all human beings are equal. In Chapter 35 with the suggestive title "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz", Al Ghazali related Malcolm X's radical transformation upon his return to New York City after completing *hajj*. Malcolm X told the press how he was wrong to assume that all white people were evil and he has since accepted that whites too could join hands with coloured people to undo injustices. The chapter ends hyperbolically. While driving his Oldsmobile, Malcolm X encountered a white couple in their car at a traffic junction. The man in the car recognized Malcolm X and called out his name. He then asked: "Are you willing to shake hands with a white man?" Malcolm X responded: "I have no issues with shaking hands with a human being." He then added: "Are you willing to do the same?"[29] Malcolm X's rejoinder as narrated by Al Ghazali showed how he had moved on from his racist past. A new Malcolm X emerges in the novel and is positioned as a travelling model for others elsewhere.

Al Ghazali's other strategy of aggrandizing Malcolm X's Islamic credentials operates through vivid coverage of his funeral in the closing chapter of the book. More than 22,000 people attended the highly publicized funeral. The highlight of the event was not the deceased, but a dozen Muslim men led by an elderly person dressed in "white turban, black robe, with a walking stick and visibly long white beards". He was a prominent Sudanese Muslim scholar, Sheikh Ahmed Hassoun (1898–1971), who washed Malcolm X's body. This was followed by prayers read by Sheikh Al-Hajj Hesham Jaaber (1931–2007). The presence of these two real-life clerics in the story is clearly the author's attempt to underscore Malcolm X's Islamicity and, more so, his Sunni inclinations towards the end of his life. Malcolm X, in Al Ghazali's formulation, is a standard for Muslims because he was endorsed by scholars in his time.[30]

In sum, Al Ghazali's mythicization of Malcolm X blurs the division between reality and fiction. Indeed, the "idea that reality and fiction are two discrete 'realms' is quite misleading, for it blinds one to the more subtle displacements and carry-over effects between the two as well as to the specific and mutable nature of the contradictions or modes of alienation that may arise between and within them".[31] Al Ghazali challenges the established story of Malcolm X's life to introduce his own version of the various events, actors, and other contexts that gave rise to a globally renowned African American activist. By de-emphasizing Malcolm X's frailties and bringing

29. Al Ghazali, *Malcolm X*, 216.

30. Al Ghazali, *Malcolm X*, 218–219.

31. Dominick LaCapra, *History, Politics, and the Novel*, Ithaca, NY 1987, 206.

to attention his radical transformations into a man "whose name would always be remembered in as long as human rights and equality are upheld", Al Ghazali's novel adds to the internationalization and vernacularization of the myth-making enterprise of Malcolm X.[32] His fictionalized life, or his mythicized biography, becomes part of the shared legacy of Muslims in the Malay world in the author's effort to portray him as a travelling model to be followed.

Mobilization

Since the late 1990s, there emerged a resurgence of interest in Malcolm X in the United States, as state and society coped with the marginalization and mistreatment of minorities, particularly the African Americans. The image of Malcolm X has been refashioned and mobilized recurrently to "represent the internalized expression of their [African American] anger and frustration. The promotion of Malcolm X becomes essentially a kind of voodoo doll – something to shake at white people and say, 'I'm not happy here. I'm not satisfied yet.'"[33] Although Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia did not experience the same form of challenges as the minorities in the United States, they view Malcolm X as an imperative tool of mobilization and as an effective instrument in highlighting stark prejudices. Malcolm X is a travelling model for Muslims in these countries because his political theology addresses the concerns of three main groups: the Muslim youth, preachers, and political activists. I examine here how these three groups mobilized Malcolm X for their respective causes. Due to limitations of space, I discuss only notable samples from the three groups.

Among the Muslim youth in the Malay world, Malcolm X is the epitome of courage, idealism, and self-reliance, traits that should be imbued in various programmes. An illustrative case in point is the Angkatan Belia Islam Semalaysia (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia), more commonly known as ABIM. The 40,000 strong globally recognized movement holds Malcolm X high as an iconic figure in modern Islamic history who affected change in the order of things, especially in the lives of the young Muslims. Malcolm X is therefore couched as not just an African American Muslim but "one who waged a battle against all forms of oppression",[34] as Ahmad

32. Al Ghazali, *Malcolm X*, 219.

33. Darren W. Davis & Christian Davenport, "The Political and Social Relevancy of Malcolm X: The Stability of African American Political Attitudes", *The Journal of Politics* 59 (1997), 561.

34. Ahmad Azam, "Mengenang El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X)", https://ahmadazam.blogspot.com/2009/02/mengenang-el-hajj-malik-el-shabazz.html, accessed 2020-02-05.

Azam, one of the former Presidents of ABIM, described him. Malcolm X's speeches, ideas, and life story are often quoted, publicized, discussed, and developed by ABIM into practical activities for the youth in the Malay world.

From 11 to 17 April 1996, ABIM organized a public screening of a documentary on Malcolm X at the Putra World Trade Center, Kuala Lumpur, in conjunction with the visit of Imam Warith Deen Muhammad (1933–2008), the son of Elijah Muhammad who transformed the NOI into a mainstream Sunni-oriented movement. This was one of the many programmes that ABIM organized in memory of Malcolm X's activism to inspire the youth.[35] In April 2016, the Malaysia Youth Council, an umbrella body of all youth organizations in the country, held a public forum to critically discuss Malcolm X's speeches, notably *Malcolm X Speaks to Young People*. One of the speakers at the event, Jufitri Joha, was ABIM's vice president. The main aim of the event was to make Malcolm X known to young people who may have not been aware of his importance. The speakers of the forum stressed Malcolm X's remarkable resilience in the face of life's challenges. Clearly, Malcolm X is projected as a travelling model for youth to take lessons from, to encourage them to be more involved in social and other grassroots causes.[36]

If Malcolm X's ideas and life story are mobilized by youth to encourage them to be prime movers of society and catalysts of change, among Muslim preachers in the Malay world he is the standard for any Muslim who works to spread the message of Islam to the world. A quick search on Google with the keywords "Malcolm X" + "dakwah" yields hundreds of websites written in the Malay-Indonesian language which extol Malcolm X's role in Islamic missionary work (*da'wah* or *dakwah* [in Malay]). Many of these articles explain how he brought thousands into the fold of Islam and brought the world's attention to the plight of African Americans. For example, Indonesia's most celebrated and award-winning journalist and poet, Goenawan Mohamed, described Malcolm X's Muslim missionary work as one that moved beyond the shackles of racism to acknowledging the universal conception of justice as enjoined by Islam. The spirit of *dakwah* of Malcolm X, according to Goenawan, is relevant for the Indonesians: "Still we know that Malcolm lives on. The one who transcended hatred or even death."[37]

35. Ahmad Azam, "Imam Warithudeen Muhammad", https://ahmadazam.blogspot.com/2008/09/imam-warithudeen-muhammad.html, accessed 2020-02-05.

36. Jufitri Bin Joha, "Kupasan Buku: Malcolm X Talks to Young People", http://belia.org.my/wp/2016/04/19/kupasan-buku-malcolm-x-talks-to-young-people/, accessed 2020-02-05.

37. Goenawan Mohamad, *Catatan Pinggir*, vol. 10, Jakarta 2012, 70.

For Ustaz Abdul Somad, one of Indonesia's most popular preachers today, Malcolm X was a modern manifestation of a known model Muslim, Bilal bin Raba (580–640), who was one of the Prophet Muhammad's closest companions from an African background. Like Bilal, Malcolm X preached Islam to non-Muslims instead of Muslims only. Reflecting on this point, Abdul Somad criticized Muslim clerics for preaching to the converted in the Malay world, who were making Muslims more Islamic instead of bringing the message of Islam to the non-Muslim population. Abdul Samad stressed that Malcolm X's *dakwah* was catered for all human beings, whom Malcolm X saw as his brethren.[38]

Finally, I wish to highlight here the mobilization of Malcolm X by political activists. A cursory survey of the extant literature shows that no incumbent politician in the Malay world had ever mentioned Malcolm X in their speeches and writings, the reasons for which are not hard to guess. Malcolm X's ideas would lay bare many of the jaundiced policies that were in place, especially in the realm of minority marginalization. For the same reason, Malcolm X's speeches and life story have found their appeal mainly among oppositional forces in mainstream politics as a means by which transformations could be agitated.

One prominent example is the use of Malcolm X by members of the former opposition party (now incumbent), Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in Malaysia. During his speech on 4 October 2014 in conjunction with the Hari Raya Haji celebrations (celebrations in honour of the month of *hajj*), Azmin Ali, the Chief Minister of the opposition-held state of Selangor, called to attention the spirit of Malcolm X. He urged the public "to support democracy, human rights and tolerance in a multi-ethnic society" which were issues that Malcolm X stood for toward the end of his life.[39] A few months later, in a lengthy interview, the youth leader of the PR, Nik Nazmi, mentioned how Malcolm X had influenced his views on racial equality in Malaysia and in calling for a new form of politics that would address social and economic injustices.[40] In the same month, the leader of PR (now Prime Minister in waiting), Anwar Ibrahim, tweeted Malcolm X's famous quote on the misinformation that newspapers are capable of purveying,[41] indirectly criticizing the ruling government of manipulating the media to entrench their power

38. "Malcolm X – Ustadz Abdul Somad", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8ffcNb4J68, accessed 2020-02-05.

39. "Azmin Invokes Malcolm-X in Sharp Hari Raya Haji Message", *Malay Mail* 2014-10-04, https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2014/10/04/azmin-invokes-malcolm-x-in-sharp-hari-raya-haji-message/757945, accessed 2020-02-05.

40. Rita Jong, "The Lessons that Malcolm X Taught Me", *Focus Malaysia* 2014-12-18, 10–11.

41. "If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing."

and consolidate their hegemony in Malaysia.[42] For opposition politicians in the Malay world, Malcolm X was a guiding light and also a weapon against their nemeses.

In sum, like mythicization, the mobilization of Malcolm X is inevitably a selective and condensed view of his multi-faceted life. Malcolm X's noteworthy traits and accomplishments are used for the purposes of mobilization for the marginalized, while his imperfections are redacted and refracted in ways that would transform the negative into useful lessons for personal and social reconstruction.

Conclusion

In an incisive take on the legacy of Malcolm X, Emin Poljarevic highlighted the epistemic bias within contemporary scholarly analyses that has done much to "sidestep an Islamic dimension of an iconic civil rights leader".[43] Poljarevic goes further to state that Malcolm X's "fearless commitment to justice and equality are still great moral resources for contemporary minority populations in the USA and, potentially, in Europe as well".[44] This essay furthers Poljarevic's point by arguing that Malcolm X was and is still more than a travelling model, not only for minorities but also for majorities seeking to realize Malcolm X's dream of a just and equitable society.

Malcolm X demystified the idea that the struggle of African Americans in America was a struggle of minorities against the dominant white population. As he put it sharply: "It's impossible for you and me to know where we stand until we look around in this entire earth."[45] His travels reshaped his approaches to the struggles for social justice and, in so doing, he became an icon, a model, whose words and deeds were emulated by his Malay world counterparts. It remains to be seen what other forms of appropriation of Malcolm X will pan out in the near future. For now, it is perhaps apt to end this essay with some words taken from Malcolm X's speech delivered at Cornhill Methodist Church, New York on 16 February 1965, merely a week before he was killed. Malcolm X reminds us of the continued significance of the Malay world and of the world at large in influencing his political theology, the struggles which, in effect, transformed him into a travelling model:

42. Anwar Ibrahim, https://twitter.com/anwaribrahim/status/541373306507493376, accessed 2020-02-05.

43. Emin Poljarevic, "Malik al-Shabazz's Practice of Self-Liberation", in Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016, 227–228.

44. Poljarevic, "Malik al-Shabazz's Practice", 245–246.

45. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, 163.

But a change has come about us. In us. And what from? Back in '55 in Indonesia, at Bandung, they had a conference of dark-skinned people. The people of Africa and Asia came together for the first time in centuries. They had no nuclear weapons, they had no air fleets, no navy. But they discussed their plight and they found that there was one thing that all of us had in common – oppression, exploitation, suffering. And we had a common oppressor, a common exploiter.[46] ▲

SUMMARY

In this paper, I examine works of fiction, digital resources, and speeches of Malay political ideologues who engaged in the mythologization, monumentalization, and mobilization of Malcolm X's thought. As a travelling model, his life and thought has been translated from one language to another, absorbed, adapted, appropriated, and vernacularized among Malay-Indonesian Muslims, ushering novel formulations of the notions of justice, freedom, and equality in a setting Malcolm X was least familiar with but had gained much intellectual stimulus from. It follows then that this paper seeks to address two main gaps in the ever-growing studies on Malcolm X: First, the lack of attention to how his ideas and life story were recast outside the Anglo-American world. Second, I hope to show how a study of Malcolm X can generate the development of new concepts in the path to analyze how political theologies travel from one particular temporality to another.

46. Malcolm X, *The Last Speeches*, 170.

Malcolm X and Mauthausen

Anti-Semitism, Racism, and the Reception of Malcolm X in the Austrian Muslim Youth

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Introduction

In 2019, the Austrian Muslim Youth (Muslimische Jugend Österreich, MJÖ), a multi-ethnic youth organization that was set up by young people in the 1990s, published the book *MuslimInnen gegen Antisemitismus: Gedenken. Begegnen. Bewegen* ("Muslims against Anti-Semitism: Remembering. Encountering. Moving"). The book was named after an eponymous two-year project of the MJÖ. One of the chapters is written by a long-time member and one of the original founders of the youth organization, Alexander Osman. The title of his chapter is "*Mühlviertler Hasenjagd*, Malcolm X, and the Austrian Muslim Youth". Osman also served as an adviser to the project and took the opportunity to present a larger picture as to where this project is to be located in the history of the making of the MJÖ. The term *Mühlviertler Hasenjagd* literally means "Mühlviertel rabbit hunt", a term that has its background in the final days of Nazi rule over Austria and is well-known to the average Austrian acquainted with local history.

The Mühlviertel rabbit hunt refers to the escape of 500 Soviet prisoners, who had revolted on 2 February 1945 and subsequently escaped from one of the six concentration camps of the Nazi regime, the Mauthausen concentration camp, which was located in the area of Mühlviertel in northern Austria. Following the escape attempt, soldiers and local Nazi organizations,

as well as local civilians, hunted down the escapees for three weeks. This resulted in the murder of 489 out of the 500 Soviet prisoners. A film about the *Mühlviertler Hasenjagd* was released in 1994 and, although being a local incident, it received prominence throughout the country in regard to the complex history of Nazism and Nazi war crimes in Austria. But how does the *Mühlviertler Hasenjagd* relate to Malcolm X (1925–1965)? These are not only two distant phenomena in terms of geography, but also presumably representative of two different stories in terms of actors, subjects, and objects.

This article explores the role of Malcolm X in the making of the MJÖ in relation to questions of anti-racist activism and the Austrian context of anti-Semitism.[1] I discuss the reception of Malcolm X and pose larger questions about the international struggle of people of colour, or what Sohail Daulatzai calls "the Black Muslim International", a term he uses drawing on Aimé Césaire's notion of the "compass of suffering" to "connect geographies of violence and shared territories of struggle against racial terror, global capital, and war".[2] Based on the existing literature, I first present and summarize findings of previous studies regarding the influence of Malcolm X as a central figure in hip-hop culture for young people in Austria in the 1990s, who founded a lasting social movement, the MJÖ. Then, I move on to discuss the role of Malcolm X, drawing on an excerpt from the book mentioned above.[3] Here, I also position myself as a scholar in relation to the MJÖ and this topic. I discuss the scope of reading Malcolm X's life and legacy in the context of local histories of anti-Semitism, racism against Black people in the United States, and by extension how Malcolm X represents a central figure of the Black Muslim International.

By centering this article around a quote from a founding member of the MJÖ, I discuss how racism as a global structure is connected by these youth to their own local histories of racism. I elaborate on how members of the MJÖ connected the figure of Malcolm X with their local realities, but also

1. The questions are related to issues that some analysts argue can be framed within the concept of political theology. See Joel Kuhlin & Anthony Paul Smith, "The World is a Prison to Believers: Naming and Worlds in Malcolm X", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 29–45; Emin Poljarevic, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X: Between Human Dignity and Returning the Gaze", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 11–27.

2. Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom beyond America*, Minneapolis, MN 2012, xxii.

3. For further discussions on how Malcolm X is used by hip-hop artists in different geographical contexts, see Anders Ackfeldt, "The Semiotics of Malcolm X from Harlem to Tahrir", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 47–60; Yolanda van Tilborgh, "Expressions of Political Theology in Art and Islam: Malcolm X-Inspired Transformations among Muslims in the US and the UK", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 61–78.

how he re-entered the space of the MJÖ to gain more significance following the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Austrian society.[4]

From the *Mühlviertler Hasenjagd* to Malcolm X

It is useful to consider that Alexander Osman's commitment against racism and anti-Semitism in the history of the MJÖ is one element of the analysis in this article. His project was dedicated to reflecting upon the history of anti-Semitism in Austria and at the same time engaging in reasoning about some of the features of the contemporary expressions of anti-Semitism in the country.

Osman expresses a number of detailed ideas of how the Mühlviertel rabbit hunt is related to Malcolm X and the MJÖ:

> We [the founders of the MJÖ] were impacted by the hip-hop movement and were interested in the Afro-American civil rights movement, reading the autobiography of Malcolm X and soon getting interested in the history of the Black Panther Party. The acquittal in the case of Rodney King following the documentation of police brutality did not only cause unrest in the USA. We were disturbed, disgusted and moved by this injustice and its consequences.
>
> But it does not necessarily need a view overseas. Obviously, we never had a Ku Klux Klan and no riots. There were no panthers, no Mumia Abu Jamal to demand his release. But we, the founders of the MJÖ, were sensitized and sharpened in our view on our society with the help of the circumstances and happenings in the USA.
>
> A whole generation of politically interested young people became witnesses of racially motivated riots in Rostock and Hoyerswerda. All of this was accompanied by the German rap sound of the 1990s, which made clear that youth sub-culture could have a political message.
>
> During these days, many young people became politicized. It was a time of young people, neighbours, and classmates joining the radical right milieu. And it was the time, when the first arson attacks on asylum centres made headlines in northern Austria. Also, a series of letter bombs and a deadly attack in Oberwart happened.

4. For a discussion of how Malcolm X can be viewed as a "travelling model" with relevance in different local contexts, see Khairudin Aljunied, "A Travelling Model: The Mythicization and Mobilization of Malcolm X in the Malay World", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96 (2020), 79–94.

> As a result, the anti-human spirit of racism and the social division, which one was familiar with in the case of Los Angeles, Rostock, or Solingen, was right on your doorstep.[5]

This quote – although short – is rather distinctive in giving a historical perspective and an outline of the making of the MJÖ. The text ought to be considered as a part of a larger project, namely a project by an Austrian Muslim youth organization to tackle anti-Semitism. In the case of Austria and Germany, one can unambiguously say that anti-Semitism is the widest acknowledged form of racism, a racism that has resulted in a historically unique act of annihilation, the systematic and industrial killing of six million Jews in concentration camps, to which the Mühlviertel rabbit hunt also relates. At the same time, it is significant to note that anti-Semitism has broadly been excluded from the definitions of racism in large parts of the German speaking world.[6] In the imagination of many citizens, anti-Semitism stands on its own, unrelated to global structures of racism, especially colonization.[7]

It is also worth noting that there is some ambivalence in a project like this, given the attempt of centre-right and far-right politicians in Austria to oust members that have expressed anti-Jewish racism within their own ranks. This attempt goes hand in hand with transforming the problem of anti-Semitism into a Muslim problem. This is primarily done by promoting a discourse to problematize so-called "new (Muslim) anti-Semitism". This is something which is not only an Austrian phenomenon but one that can be found in many Western European countries, such as France. This transformation and its underlying processes are not explicitly discussed in the text by Alexander Osman, but were clearly mentioned during the commencement of the project, which took place in the House of Europe, the European Commission's representation in Austria.

Connecting some of the narratives of racism is an interesting political effort in itself, especially how they relate to the lifework of Malcolm X and its reception in the Austrian context. This is particularly relevant to how the MJÖ negotiated issues of identity and resistance to racism. In the following section, I take Alexander Osman's text as a starting point in discussing the

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5. Alexander Osman, "Mühlviertler Hasenjagd, Malcolm X und die Muslimische Jugend Österreich", in *MuslimInnen gegen Antisemitismus: Gedenken. Begegnen. Bewegen*, Vienna 2019, 63–65.

6. Fatima El-Tayeb, "'The Birth of a European Public': Migration, Postnationality, and Race in the Uniting of Europe", *American Quarterly* 60 (2008), 649–670.

7. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York 1973.

legacy of Malcolm X in a religious youth organization far away from the USA.

Previous research on the role of Malcolm X in the MJÖ has focussed on the ways in which Malcolm X was perceived by the founding members, namely as an enlightened believer, thinker, activist, and negotiator.[8] The young people from the MJÖ drew from the idea of collective youth consciousness and shared Muslim identity, through which they connected to the idea of Malcolm X as a revolutionary and anti-racism activist in order to position themselves within the emerging global hip-hop youth culture in a European context.

The Austrian Muslim Youth

In 1995, a small group of seven young Muslim males between the ages of 13 and 19 came together with the goal to devote themselves to "Islamic" anti-racist activism. These young males were partly active in other political and cultural youth organizations. Beyond this, most of them were part of an emerging youth culture, the growing global movement of hip-hop, and came from the Austrian region of Mühlviertel. In 1996, they formed an organization, which three years later was rebranded from a local Islamic group to the Austrian Muslim Youth, the MJÖ. Their group did not focus on economic conflicts, but rather on topics such as identity, ethnicity, and religion.[9]

Following its expansion in the early 2000s, the MJÖ became the largest multi-ethnic, co-educational, German-speaking youth organization in Austria. Since its inception, it has presented the concept of an "Austrian Muslim identity" as the key idea to position its activism in Austria as a form of critique towards the first generation of Muslim leadership, which, according to them, did not care about local needs, and as a critique towards wider society, whose conception of national identity often served to exclude people of colour and Muslims from the narrowly-defined collective identity of "Austrians".[10]

Like so many other movements around the world, the youth of the MJÖ became exposed to Malcolm X through hip-hop music. Hip-hop travelled from its homeland, the United States, to Austria, with all its its political

8. Farid Hafez, "From Harlem to the 'Hoamatlond': Hip-Hop, Malcolm X, and Muslim Activism in Austria", *Journal of Austrian-American History* 1 (2017), 159–180.

9. Donatella della Porta & Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Oxford 2006, 25–28, 135–162.

10. Farid Hafez, "Whose Austria? Muslim Youth Challenge Nativist and Closed Notions of Austrian Identity", *Anthropology of the Middle East* 12:1 (2017), 38–51.

potential.[11] As I have shown before in an article on Malcolm X, hip-hop, and Islamic activism in Austria, the founders of the MJÖ were highly exposed to African American culture, especially through music.[12] For them, Malcolm X – as revealed through his autobiography, the movie *Malcolm X* (1992) produced by Spike Lee, and, most importantly, music – played a particularly important role. These cultural productions opened up a new horizon of knowledge through which these young males were exposed to Malcolm X's African American experience in his many facets. As numerous scholars have shown,[13] Malcolm X is not only central to music as "hip-hop's prophetic voice",[14] but he was also central to the spiritual foundations of the Zulu Nation, which is often referred to as the beginning of the early hip-hop culture.[15] Hence, in the 1980s and 1990s, there was no hip-hop-culture without Islamicate contents and symbols, be it through Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, the Five-Percenter Nation of Gods and Earths, or the sampling of Malcolm X's speeches.

I myself have also been part of this development. I was exposed to hip-hop music in my youth in the early 1990s and it was my encounter with the figure of Malcolm X through reading his autobiography at the age of 14, which brought me to join the MJÖ in 1998. Many years later, in 2014, I wrote a short biography on Malcolm X in German for young people. In many ways, I would call myself part of this "Generation Malcolm X", which – as my global experience tells me – is a characteristic of a generation of young Muslims who grew up in the 1990s and became exposed to hip-hop youth culture. Although I left the MJÖ in 2007, shortly before I joined academia, and the history of the MJÖ was shaped by new generations of leadership, I am still somebody who is frequently invited to give talks, inform, teach, as well as listen to and learn from the young people of this organization through engaging with Malcolm X.

As much as Malcolm X's activism was central to the founding members of the MJÖ, his revolutionary potential decreased within the organization. The idea of an Austrian Muslim identity was further promoted, giving the organization less of an international profile. The Austrian political framework also led to a stronger integration of the MJÖ in the political system. Austria knows a high degree of institutionalization; the system of

11. Farid Hafez, "Political Beats in the Alps: On Politics in the Early Stages of Austrian Hip Hop Music", *Journal of Black Studies* 47 (2016), 730–752.

12. Hafez, "From Harlem to the 'Hoamatlond'".

13. Hisham D. Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture*, New York 2014.

14. Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 89.

15. Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 113–114.

"social partnership" in Austria has the purpose of solving or neutralizing conflict by transferring conflicting social and economic demands to a set of institutions for resolution. Problems are often solved through semi-formal institutional rule-making, which leads the state to formally include different interests in ways that make it possible for administrative institutions to recognize them.

Austria has a strong state and incorporates diverse interests in its policy-making, including those of young people. The MJÖ has become a member of the Austrian National Youth Council (*Bundesjugendvertretung*), which formally represents the interests of young people in Austria *vis-à-vis* state institutions, and must be informed whenever laws that affect young people are decided, and is thus supported by the Austrian Ministry of Youth Affairs. This inclusion in the Austrian political system had the effect of educating a generation of young Muslims to expect that the political elite accepted them as part of the Austrian society. They could expect to be treated the same way as youth organizations from churches and political parties, which were older and had a longer history of sharing political and social power in the country. Hence, the idea of an Austrian Muslim identity in later years gave credit to this inclusion and was strengthened by the empowerment of young Muslims as Austrian citizens. The young Muslims could rely on the support of the state and were included in the political processes of participatory citizenship.[16]

Over time, the Austrian government shifted its long-term tolerant politics *vis-à-vis* Muslims, which also gave a reason to the MJÖ to take a fundamentally critical position against the government.[17] For example, the organization framed its protest against the Islam Act in 2015, which was fundamentally considered as shifting Austria's Islam-related policies from relative tolerance to a more discriminatory set of government procedures.[18] The new state policies *vis-à-vis* Islam changed from cooperation with Muslim religious institutions to questioning constitutional rights such as freedom of religion and the equal treatment of all religious communities and churches before the law.[19] This has meant that legal discrimination has also

16. Hafez, "Whose Austria?".

17. Farid Hafez & Reinhard Heinisch, "Breaking with Austrian Consociationalism: How the Rise of Rightwing Populism and Party Competition Have Changed Austria's Islam Politics", *Politics and Religion* 11 (2018), 649–678.

18. Rijad Dautovic & Farid Hafez, "Institutionalising Islam in Contemporary Austria: A Comparative Analysis of the Austrian Islam Act of 2015 and Austrian Religion Acts with Special Emphasis on the Israelite Act of 2012", *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 8 (2019), 28–50.

19. Farid Hafez, "Muslim Protest against Austria's Islam Law: An Analysis of Austrian Muslim's Protest against the 2015 Islam Law', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37 (2017),

brought racism back as a central issue for the country's Muslims in general and the MJÖ in particular.

The quote from Alexander Osman in a way connects different times and political spaces. Being a long-time affiliate in the MJÖ, I can personally relate to his thoughts on the past, having also conducted narrative interviews with him as one of the most important founders of the MJÖ. At the same time, "Muslims against Anti-Semitism" is a unique project, raised by a Muslim youth leadership that was largely socialized in a post-9/11 era, a time when the original comparably quite pro-Muslim state policy has given way to aggressive anti-Muslim legislation following the rise of the right-wing Freedom Party in the 2010s.[20]

The Austrian Muslim Youth and Black Power

Osman says at the beginning of the excerpt that the founders of the MJÖ were heavily impacted by the hip-hop movement and connects this to the civil rights movement, linking Malcolm X's life to the history of the Black Panther Party. Indeed, as one of the interviews show, for the youth who established the MJÖ, Malcolm X's version of Islam became a third alternative between two unattractive options for these young Muslims at the time. Osman states: "From some inferiority complexes on one side, and a nostalgic national pride à la 'we are Ottoman', which I couldn't get into." But for others, a "connection between music and religion" was easy to infuse into the contemporary youth culture.[21] Malcolm X's life – from a hair-straightening imitator of white people with an inferiority complex, to a self-confident leader of the African American community – was a powerful lesson in autonomy and self-liberation.[22] For instance, the philosophy of Afrocentricity carries the idea of replacing African self-hate with African self-awareness and Blackpride.[23] This set of ideas came to be understood as a playbook to cope with one's own identity as a Muslim living in the West. While the Muslim heritage and identity was available in Austria in the 1990s, is was culturally insufficient and it did not resonate with these young people – Malcolm X's message did that. And even more than this, he showed a way out of the

267–283.

20. Hafez & Heinisch, "Breaking with Austrian Consociationalism".

21. Hafez, "From Harlem to the 'Hoamatlond'", 171.

22. Emin Poljarevic, "Malik al-Shabazz's Practice of Self-Liberation", in Dustin J. Byrd & Seyed Javad Miri (eds.), *Malcolm X: From Political Eschatology to Religious Revolutionary*, Leiden 2016, 227–251.

23. Molefi Kete Asante, "Afrocentricity and Malcolm X", in Robert E. Terrill (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Malcolm X*, Cambridge 2010, 156; Poljarevic, "Malik al-Shabazz's Practice", 229.

destriuctive state of mind – the inferiority complex, that presumably haunts some of the the young males.

Another member from the MJÖ's early days expressed the following: "Muslims [in the 1990s] were generally [regarded by society as] losers. To be Muslim, to be a foreigner, or to be black, and so on, was not cool. And suddenly it was all cool."[24] Malcolm X as an iconic figure, one whose speeches were sampled by famous rap-groups such as Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest, KRS-One, and others, articulated how active and young Muslims in the West were considered as unimportant and as a social nuisance, much like the African American youth in the urban US.

Malcolm X's relevance is embedded in an ambivalence of the Western cultural hegemony. Herein he was in conflict with a world that was governed by a white supremacist political power.[25] In other words, Malcolm X represents a seeker who is looking for a solid and authentic identity and at the same time a person who discovers the world beyond his cultural context. He was at the same time a product of a social, cultural, and political system shaped by white supremacy. This struggle was later translated into a part of the hip-hop culture that had transported his message, life story, and example, to the youth of the world. His life story therefore represents a version of western-based Islamic activism that is continuously communicated through the channels of hip-hop, which is recognized as important by young Muslims of colour.

When hip-hop music made Black people visible and central in American culture in the 1990s, for these young Muslims, Muslim identities were now identified with numerous positive traits: Western organizational forms, discipline, success, and the struggle for justice.[26] And all of this in the English language, the *lingua franca* of the latest imperial force in the world, the United States. There is an ambivalence in this process of diffusion of Malcolm X's messages. On the one hand, he arrived through the US cultural project of "coca-colonization", which made US culture the "second culture of nearly everybody" while on the other hand, he, as presented in hip-hop music, represents Black radicalism, internationalism, and thus an imagination of a world de-centred from the US empire.[27] Similar to jazz and the Black Arts Movement, hip-hop culture "became a space in which Black

24. Hafez, "From Harlem to the 'Hoamatlond'", 170.

25. See Poljarevic, "The Political Theology of Malcolm X".

26. Bakari Kitwana, "The Challenge of Rap Music: From Cultural Movement to Political Power", in Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal (eds.), *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, New York 2002, 452–455.

27. Reinhard Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, Chapel Hill, NC 1994, 82.

radicalism, Islam, and the Politics of the Muslim Third World" played a major role.[28] Hence, while embracing Black culture and a subversive countercultural force, it was still through the mechanisms of the dominant US culture. Embracing hip-hop meant embracing "Western culture", no matter how critical its stance towards it was.

The MJÖ does not represent a commercial and superficial "pop-Islam", but rather one which challenges social structures of inequality.[29] It is a historically informed movement that draws on Malcolm X not only as a religious pop star, but also as an educator, organizer, and activist. The horizons of the MJÖ founders were widened by critically discussing movements such as the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party. One founding member recalled his attraction to the Black Panthers: "The Black Panther Party also really impressed us because they organized themselves and showed a lot of discipline. And we also said: to be successful you need structure, you need discipline, you need proper task allocation."[30] Malcolm X's life story and activism has been considered as an introduction to racism and anti-racism in the United States. As the case of Rodney King (1965–2012) was mentioned by Osman, this shows that there was no post-racial imagination in place, but rather an understanding that racism and anti-racist struggle continue to shape contemporary societies in Europe and North America.

Today, this legacy of Malcolm X is still remembered. Malcolm X, although being of primary relevance to the founding members, is still held as an important figure in the social milieu of the MJÖ. Black History Month, which does not exist in Austria, has become a core part of the annual programme of the MJÖ. There is a Malcolm X week, which the MJÖ organizes around 21 February, the day Malcolm X was assassinated. They usually host the Spike Lee film along with lectures on Malcolm X and hip-hop. After I published my short biography on Malcolm X for young people, the MJÖ hosted several book talks throughout the country. During these talks, I tried to emphasize the global relevance Malcolm X still has today and connect his political activism with a global racial struggle, from the emergence of Black Lives Matter to the fight against anti-Muslim racism in Europe and Austria today. Hence, through his lifework and his commitment to fighting injustice, Malcolm X has continued to be taught and celebrated as an activist, cultural leader, and a role model by the MJÖ.

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28. Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 91.

29. Julia Gerlach, *Zwischen Pop und Dschihad: Muslimische Jugendliche in Deutschland*, Berlin 2006, 10–13.

30. Hafez, "From Harlem to the 'Hoamatlond'", 177.

Global Racisms

As was seen in the initial quote, Alexander Osman saw that police brutality in the US led to reactions also in other parts of the world. Osman, although living as a young person in the Austrian countryside, felt connected to the plight of Black Americans. But going beyond the emotional aspect, he reveals that the examination of the Ku Klux Klan, a number of race-riots in urban areas acrros the US, and the incarceration of Black power activists such as Mumia Abu Jamal had the direct impact of sensitizing and sharpening his and MJÖ's collective views. The United States and its problem of racism were translated and connected to their own local stories. Similar observations can be made with hip-hop, especially in the genre of gangster rap and Black rappers in Austria, such as *Untergrund Poeten* (Underground Poets) in the 1990s, who tied their own experiences of police racism in Austria to the racism of the Ku Klux Klan.[31] Likewise, Osman speaks of racially motivated riots in two German cities, Hoyerswerda and Rostock, and how these issues were covered in German rap music in the 1990s. He makes a discursive connection between the racism experienced in the United States and the racism in Germany, including in his own neighbourhood.

Osman thus connects different stories of racism and episodes of racist violence. More important is that all of this is done in the backdrop of publishing a piece on "Muslims against Anti-Semitism", connecting the concentration camps with Malcolm X through hip-hop music and with racial violence around the world. What Osman implicitly does is counteracting what I would call the externalization of anti-Semitism as a political phenomenon. The externalization of anti-Semitism is connected to different aspects of the neglect of racism in the German-speaking world.

Anthropologist Fatima El-Tayeb's research gives some support to Osman's analysis. First, she argues that one encounters a denial of the existence of racism in general, which is connected to the historical and scholarly neglect of racism in Germany from the colonial period (the era of German South West Africa) to the present.[32] She further claims that Europe largely "continues to imagine itself as an autonomous entity [...] untouched by 'race matters' [...] a colorblind continent in which difference is marked along lines of nationality and ethnicized others are routinely ascribed a position outside the nation, allowing the externalization and thus silencing of a debate on the legacy of racism and colonialism". El-Tayeb also makes an argument

31. Hafez, "Political Beats in the Alps", 746.

32. Fatima El-Tayeb "'Blood is a Very Special Juice': Racialized Bodies and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Germany", *International Review of Social History* 44 (Supplement 1999), 149–169.

that this can be achieved by excluding colonialism, which leads to the externalization of its postcolonial populations, from the list of key events that have shaped contemporary Europe.[33]

Second, El-Tayeb connctes the first set of arguments to the history of German *völkisch* anti-Semitism, which led to the annihilation of six million Jews during the Holocaust, initially resulting in a denial of guilt. This later led to depoliticization through the creation of a culture of remembrance in which *völkisch* anti-Semitism was framed as a singular phenomenon, without engaging in a critical reflection on contemporary racism in Germany. This is what Astrid Messerschmidt termed the post-National Socialism era in Germany.[34] For the Austrian case, where the country presented itself after 1945 as a collective victim of National Socialist Germany and which has since not fully come to terms with its history,[35] this is even more the case. Osman connects his perception of racism in the US and Germany with his lived experience in northern Austria. He expands thereby the perception of anti-Semitism as a singular and unique event in the history of Nazi rule in Germany and Austria to the larger world. This can also be interpreted as an attempt to construct a counter-narrative to the widespread externalization of anti-Semitism.

As noted by the sociologist and racism scholar William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963), local forms of xenophobia are connected with each other. In 1952, following Du Bois' visit to Poland, especially the Warsaw ghetto, he wrote in the journal *Jewish Life* on his experience, that it

> was not so much clearer understanding of the Jewish problem in the world as it was a real and more complete understanding of the Negro problem. In the first place, the problem of slavery, emancipation, and caste in the United States was no longer in my mind a separate and unique thing as I had so long conceived it. It was not even solely a matter of color and physical and racial characteristics, which was particularly a hard thing for me to learn, since for a lifetime the color line had been a real and efficient cause of misery. It was not merely a matter of religion. I had seen religions of many kinds – I had sat in the Shinto temples of Japan, in the Baptist chapels of Georgia, in the Catholic cathedral of Cologne and in Westminster Abbey. No, the race problem in which I was interested cut across lines of color and physique and

33. El-Tayeb, "'The Birth of a European Public'", 658.

34. Astrid Messerschmidt, "Rassismusthematisierungen in den Nachwirkungen des Nationalsozialismus und seiner Aufarbeitung", in Karim Fereidooni & Meral El (eds.), *Rassismuskritik und Widerstandsformen*, Wiesbaden 2017, 855–867.

35. Hella Pick, *Guilty Victims: Austria from the Holocaust to Haider*, London 2000.

> belief and status and was a matter of cultural patterns, perverted teaching and human hate and prejudice, which reached all sorts of people and caused endless evil to all men. So that the ghetto of Warsaw helped me to emerge from a certain social provincialism into a broader conception of what the fight against race segregation, religious discrimination and the oppression by wealth had to become if civilization was going to triumph and broaden in the world.[36]

In reverse, Osman challenges the social provincialism not of American perspectives, but of Austrian perspectives in linking Malcolm X with Mauthausen. By discussing Malcolm X together with Mauthausen, Osman shows that he is not trapped in the Austrian provincialism of reducing anti-Semitism to a history of Nazism or Christian anti-Judaism. This social provincialism is overcome by acquiring a broader conception of racism that connects Los Angeles with the German cities of Rostock and Solingen. And Malcolm X became a compass for finding an answer to this racism that was experienced at the hands of white supremacists in Austria.

Conclusion

The writings of Alexander Osman reveals the impact Malcolm X has had beyond the borders of the US. In the middle of the Alps, a small country in central Europe, a Muslim youth organization made an effort to connect itself with the world through hip-hop music and as a result, with Malcolm X. MJÖ youth, through reading, contemplating, and discussing Malcolm X's speeches, autobiography, and interviews, deepened their insights into their own experiences of racism. They connected their local experiences of racism to the United States' history of racism, as well as to the local Austrian history of racism. This is especially clear in how MJÖ youth connected the Austrian state and society's history of anti-Semitism under the rule of the Nazi regime to the contemporary struggles against racism in both the US and Austria. Malcolm X therefore symbolizes a central figure of a Black Muslim International.

Yet, at the same time, Malcolm X, as an iconic symbol for anti-racism, seems to be less important in times of political calmness. For instance, when the political establishment considered the MJÖ as a positive contributor to the Austrian civil society, and thus treated it as an equal partner organization alongside many other youth organizations, Malcolm X was not highlighted as a central symbol of anti-racist activism. It is only when the

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36. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *Writings by Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others: Vol. 4, 1945–1961*, Millwood, NY 1982, 175.

Austrian political elite changed its tolerant politics *vis-à-vis* Muslims that Malcolm X's lifework became important in fighting anti-Muslim racism. Malcolm X once more gained an iconic status, especially at the height of anti-government protests.

The MJÖ founder Alexander Osman challenges the social provincialism of Austrian perspectives on anti-Semitism by linking Malcolm X with Mauthausen, anti-Semitism with anti-Black racism, and the violence of the Ku Klux Klan in Los Angeles with racist arson attacks on asylum centres in Solingen, Germany. The MJÖ thus perceive racism as a global structure, clearly connected to their own local histories of racism. Malcolm X, who for Osman served as an inspiration in the early days of the founding of the MJÖ in the mid-1990s, was again invoked. And for Osman, Malcolm X seems to never have disappeared. In summary, Malcolm X, who had served as an educator, organizer, and activist in the early days, who stood for discipline, organizational skills, and integrity throughout the making of the MJÖ, served again as a link to bring together different worlds and collective experiences of anti-racist activism. ▲

SUMMARY

Malcolm X has an enduring significance in his political-religious youth activism for the Austrian Muslim Youth (*Muslimische Jugend Österreich,* MJÖ), the largest Muslim youth organization in Austria. This essay presents and summarizes findings in previous studies regarding the influence of Malcolm X in hip-hop culture and among young people in Austria in the 1990s, who founded a lasting social movement in 1995. The essay also discusses the lasting relevance of Malcolm X for a new generation of leaders in the MJÖ, who are annually paying tribute to him by discussing his life during the US-imported Black History Month. Based on my analysis of these events and in-depth interviews with the organizers, the essay discusses how Malcolm X was understood by young people of a religious youth organization.

Thomas Girmalm & Marie Rosenius (red.). *Inomkyrklig sekularisering*. Umeå: Umeå universitet. 2018. 114 s.

Här har vi en liten bok med stor sprängkraft. En betydande del av samtalen inom Svenska kyrkan de senaste tjugo åren har nämligen handlat om sekularisering på ett eller annat sätt: vikande medlemstal, nya organisationsformer, partipolitik i kyrkomötet, språket i kyrkohandboken, samkönade vigslar, vården av det kyrkliga kulturarvet med mera. En bok som reder ut vad sekularisering är och hur sekularisering påverkar kyrkolivet har potential att skapa större klarhet i dessa debatter, och det är precis vad denna lilla volym gör.

Redaktörernas föredömligt korta inledning motiverar temat och förklarar hur boken kom till. En liten anmärkning här är att de faller in i det vanliga påståendet att det finns många olika förståelser av vad sekularisering är. Det är riktigt, men förutsättningen för att vi alls ska kunna kommunicera är att begrepp, hur mångtydiga de än är, har en grundläggande innebörd som alla förstår. Redaktörerna hade gott kunnat sätta ord på att sekularisering i dagligt tal betyder ”en minskning av religionens betydelse i samhället och för individen”. Det framgår i alla fall klart att bokens ämne är sekulariseringstendenser *inom* kyrkan, och att ”kyrkan” här ska förstås som Svenska kyrkan.

Den första av bokens fem artiklar är skriven av Karin Johannesson. Det är också den allra bästa. Med utgångspunkt i Charles Taylors analys av sekulariseringens olika dimensioner formulerar Johannesson åtta ”tankefigurer” som var för sig beskriver en aspekt av Svenska kyrkans inre sekularisering. Artikeln avslutas med en tabell som uppmuntrar läsaren att reflektera över (a) empiriska tecken på förekomsten av dessa tankefigurer och (b) pastorala strategier för att övervinna dem. Johannesson framträder här som en eminent företrädare för modern praktisk teologi: med sina skarpa religionsfilosofiska verktyg analyserar hon aktuella kyrkliga förhållanden på ett sätt som gör det möjligt inte bara att förstå dem utan också att förbättra dem. Hon kan få oss som till professionen är praktiska teologer (eller kyrkovetare som det också heter) att skämmas för att vi antingen gräver ner oss i interna diskussioner om ecklesiologi och reflexivitet eller sysslar så mycket med historiska förutsättningar att vi aldrig når fram till nutiden.

Jag måste dock få klaga på att Johannessons bruk och benämning av sina tankefigurer inte är konsekvent. Med tankefigur menar hon, enkelt uttryckt, sätt att tänka och tala om något. Eftersom ämnet är inomkyrklig sekularisering borde samtliga tankefigurer vara inomkyrkliga sätt att tänka och tala som i något avseende är sekularisera(n)de. Benämningarna borde också tydliggöra detta. I de båda första tankefigurerna, ”den sekulära organisationens tankefigur” och ”aktivitetsutbudets tankefigur” stämmer detta. Det finns sätt att tänka och tala om kyrkan som om den vore en sekulär organisation vars grundläggande uppgift är att tillhandahålla populära aktiviteter. Men nästa tankefigur heter ”den förvanskade förkunnelsens”. Med den benämningen skiftar perspektivet från de kyrkligt aktivas till den utomstående kritikerns. Den som förkunnar på det sätt som Johannesson beskriver här torde inte själv beskriva sin förkunnelse som förvanskad. Ett bättre namn vore därför ”den sekulära kommunikationens tankefigur”.

Tankefigur nummer fyra kallas ”aktivitetsdeltagandets”. Det är också missvisande, men av ett annat skäl, för här handlar det om att kyrkligt aktiva tänker och talar om deltagande i gudstjänster och annan kyrklig kärnverksamhet som något frivilligt när de inte är i tjänst. Ett bättre namn hade varit just ”frivillighetens tankefigur”.

Tankefigurerna fem och sex, ”den gudomliggjorda människans” och ”den gudomliggjorda församlingens”, har benämningar som visserligen uttrycker kritikerns ståndpunkt men som tack vare sin uppenbara ironi ändå fungerar.

Den sjunde tankefiguren däremot, ”språkförlustens tankefigur”, är ingen tankefigur alls. Här handlar det om problematikens kärna, att sekularisering leder till förlust av förmågan att beskriva erfarenheter i andliga termer och därmed av förmågan att alls uppfatta andliga dimensioner i tillvaron. Det handlar alltså om förlusten av andliga tankefigurer, inte om en viss sekulär tankefigur.

Den sista tankefiguren heter ”den förlamande trons” och handlar om att viss förkunnelse i sin strävan att vara luthersk ger intrycket av att det inte spelar någon roll hur man lever, det ordnar sig ändå. Precis som vid tankefigur nummer tre är perspektivet här den utomstående kritikerns. En mer konsekvent benämning hade varit ”den passiva trons tankefigur”.

Ovanstående anmärkningar gäller dock alla artikelns form. De fråntar den inget av dess höga diagnostiska värde. Den kan varmt rekommenderas, inte minst för bruk inom Svenska kyrkans professionsutbildningar och andra kurser.

Nästa artikel, av Sven-Erik Brodd, handlar om ekonomi och ecklesiologi. Under den kyligt akademiska ytan anas en bubblande vrede. Inledningsvis ponerar författaren att inre sekularisering äger rum i en kyrka när centrala aktiviteter planeras och genomförs utan teologisk förståelse. Detta leder till att sekulära ideologier fyller det teologiska tomrummet och börjar prägla kyrkans självförståelse. Fem exempel ges: bolaget Svenska kyrkan, varumärket Svenska kyrkan, kyrkan som marknadsanpassat företag, kyrkan som tjänsteföretag och kyrkan som partipolitiskt styrd organisation. Det alla exemplen har gemensamt är pragmatism: en praktik är bra om den ger ett gott resultat, bedömt enligt en sekulär måttstock för framgång såsom fler deltagare eller bättre ekonomiskt utfall.

I två fördjupande avsnitt försöker Brodd sedan karaktärisera och förklara den konstaterade sekulariseringen. Till sin karaktär är den ”teologisk ut-rationalisering”, vilket betyder att pragmatism snarare än kyrkolära präglar kyrkans mål- och strategiarbete. ”Viljan att upprätthålla dopfrekvensen leder till att dopets innehåll förändras” (s. 46). Eukaristins integrerande perspektiv på historia och eskatologi, skapelse och frälsning saknas helt i kyrkliga dokument om ekonomi och administration (s. 51). Orsakerna till detta tillstånd söker Brodd dels i ett modernt utvecklingstänkande som har lett till ”kollektiv minnesförlust”, dels i tendensen inom protestantiska kyrkor sedan 1800-talet att separera andlighet och institution.

Artikelns slutsats, att pragmatism har blivit ett Svenska kyrkans kännetecken, en *nota ecclesiae*, är en provokation. *Notae ecclesiae* är ju kyrkans grundläggande kännetecken, det som gör kyrkan till kyrka och inte något annat. Pragmatism kan inte vara ett kyrkans kännetecken i den meningen. Men troligen är det just det som är Brodds poäng: genom inre sekularisering har Svenska kyrkan delvis upphört att vara kyrka.

Denna allvarliga och mycket tänkvärda artikel lider tyvärr av brister som gör att dess ärende försvagas. En är att kyrkans inre sekularisering behandlas som om den bara vore ett intressant ämne för akademiskt studium, inte som det brännande existentiella problem som både författaren och hans läsare naturligtvis uppfattar att det är. En annan brist är den ymniga användningen av ordet ecklesiologi med avledningar – fler än 60 gånger på 25 sidor. Allt tycks vara ecklesiologiskt i författarens värld: mening, beslut, analyser, begrepp, konsekvenser, betydelser, slutsatser, mönster, kategorier, principer, strukturer, reflektion, perspektiv, sammanhang, undersökningar, förändringar och motsägelser. Genom att ordet ecklesiologi dessutom inledningsvis sägs *inte* vara synonymt med kyrkosyn eller kyrkobegrepp töms det på innehåll. Det blir enbart en markör för författarens vetenskapliga profil. I rättvisans namn bör det dock sägas att många teologer (inklusive recensenten) använder ordet teologi på precis samma slarviga, självrefererande vis.

Anneli Öljarstrands intervjustudie av hur kyrkoherdar och förtroendevalda i fyra

församlingar beskriver den lokala verksamheten utgör ett fint empiriskt komplement till Johannesson och Brodd. Öljarstrand söker efter uttryck för värderationell respektive målrationell logik, där det senare betyder ungefär samma sak som pragmatism hos Brodd och motsvarar innehållet i Johannessons båda första tankefigurer. Inte överraskande dominerar den målrationella logiken fullständigt i intervjuerna. Författaren kunde gärna ha diskuterat i vilken mån själva intervjusituationen kan ha påverkat detta resultat, men det är lätt att stämma in i hennes slutord: fler empiriska studier behövs för att fördjupa förståelsen av inomkyrklig sekularisering.

Det enda genuint historiska perspektivet i boken erbjuds av Stefan Gelfgren, som skriver om den norrländska väckelsen på 1800-talet. Hans tes är att denna samtidigt var en reaktion på och ett led i en begynnande sekularisering. Tesen är inte ny, men framställningen är föredömligt klar och relateras på ett förtjänstfullt sätt till sociologisk sekulariseringsteori.

Bokens sista artikel är den mest teologiska. Carl Axel Aurelius använder sig i sin analys inte av sociologer och filosofer utan av Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872), Martin Luther (1483–1546), Paul Tillich (1886–1965) och Olov Hartman (1906–1982) samt den teologiskt bildade latinisten Emin Tengström (f. 1929). Författaren skriver inledningsvis om sekularisering som ett allmänt samhällsfenomen och ställer sedan frågan om kristen troslära kan bidra till att övervinna denna genom att teckna sammanhangen i den kristna tron. Skulle Gustaf Wingrens *Credo* eller Jarl Hembergs, Ragnar Holtes och Anders Jeffners *Människan och Gud* kunna vara till hjälp? Svaret är att de är alltför teoretiska. Man måste ta på allvar Grundtvigs insikt att kyrkans grundval är den levande församlingen, ”där människor inlemmas genom dopet och samlas vid nattvardsbordet” (s. 108). Gudstjänsten är primär i förhållande till teologin. Därför behöver teologen vara en reflekterande praktiker, teologin vara ”en svarande teologi” (s. 112). Men gudstjänsten måste också behålla sin relation till samtiden. Aurelius slutsats blir att det som kan motverka en inre sekularisering är en stark korrelation mellan gudstjänst och vardagsliv.

Utan att notera det resonerar Aurelius mycket likt den liturgiska teologen Gordon Lathrop. Recensenten är också i huvudsak enig: en teologiskt fullödig och samtidigt vardagsnära gudstjänst är ett nödvändigt och starkt motgift mot kyrkans inre sekularisering. Men vad gör man när sekularisering har börjat prägla själva gudstjänsten, börjat tömma både predikan och sakrament på deras innehåll, såsom beskrivs i de övriga bidragen i denna bok? Det är frågan som ropar på ett svar.

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Cecilia Wejryd. *Lagen, synden och väckelsen: Åtta svenska 1800-talsväckelseledare och moderniteten*. Stockholm: Verbum. 2017. 313 s.

På 1870-talet började olika väckelserörelser på allvar konkurrera med Svenska kyrkan. Cecilia Wejryd vill klarlägga denna övergång till en mer pluralistisk kristendomstolkning. Hon undersöker här hur olika föreställningar om Guds lag uppkom i svensk kontext under 1800-talet och vad de bestod i. Väckelsen blev ofta anklagad för antinomism i olika former, ett vitt använt begrepp. Wejryds andra frågeställning rör sig kring hur olika väckelseledare förhöll sig till den så kallade moderniteten.

I de inledande två kapitlen visar Wejryd bakgrunden till studien och dess vetenskapliga uppbyggnad. Hon tar hjälp av två kyrkohistoriker, David Bebbington och Reginald Ward, och sociologen Peter Berger, för att analysera väckelseledarnas förhållanden till moderniteten. Matnyttiga begreppsförklaringar som till nämnda modernitet, men också till väckelse, nyevangelikalism

och så vidare finner man här, liksom genomgångar av hur lagen och synden betraktades i kristna miljöer alltifrån den lutherska reformationen till 1800-talets statskyrka och i de olika med denna konkurrerande reformrörelserna.

Därpå har Wejryd delat in undersökningen i tre kapitel, vari de åtta väckelseledarna sorteras utifrån sina uppfattningar om lag och synd. Fredrik Olaus Nilsson (1809–1881), Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg (1811–1893) och Dordlofva Erik Ersson (1833–1923) ansåg enligt Wejryd att lag inte borde predikas för oomvända. Erik Jansson (1808–1850), August Sjödin (1832–ca 1900) och Helge Åkeson (1831–1904) hävdade att den kristna människan var syndfri och att rättfärdiggörelsen gjorde människan helt ny, medan Victor Witting (1825–1906) och Nelly Hall (1848–1916) betraktade syndfrihet som en möjlighet att uppnå under jordelivet.

Kapitlen sex, sju och åtta används för undersökningens andra del och sätter teorierna från Bebbington, Ward och Berger i samband med väckelseledarnas uppfattningar om människan och lagen, väckelsen och samhället. Flera olika företeelser lyfts fram som betydelsefulla för moderniteten, såsom nya uttryck för människosyn, omvändelse, bibelläsning och kulturell mångfald. Moderniteten kom att påverka möjligheterna till och uttrycken för ett kristet liv.

Wejryds slutsatser, vilka läggs fram i det nionde, sista kapitlet är att dessa så kallade antinomistiska förkunnare såg på olika sätt på Guds lag. Sammanlagt sex av de åtta ansåg att lagen inte skulle predikas för dem, som ännu inte var omvända. Fem av åtta ville inte gå med på den lutherska läran om tillräknad rättfärdighet. De betonade i stället människans egen förbättring. På dessa punkter kom väckelseledarna i konflikt med Svenska kyrkan. Trots detta visar Wejryd hur de åtta hade betydelse för en ny offentlighet, där religionen blev mer en privatsak och pluralismen ökade i samhället.

Kapitlet lyfter också fram det moderna. Teocentrisk autonomi är enligt Wejryd vad man kan utläsa ur väckelseledarnas världssyn. Detta innebär i undersökningens sammanhang att väckelseledarna uppvisade autonomi på det inomvärldsliga planet, men att de samtidigt såg sig själva som helt beroende av Gud. De kombinerade modern individualism med förmodern gudstro. Gud talade till den enskilda människan, vilken såg sig som frikopplad från det gamla kollektivet. Vägen till salighet gick enligt Wejryd även snabbare inom väckelsen än i Svenska kyrkan, vilket gynnade marknadsföringen av rörelserna.

Wejryd ser även en teocentrisk optimism hos väckelseledarna. De ansåg i olika grad att Gud redan under livets gång kunde hjälpa människan att bli mer rättfärdig eller befrias från synden. Tron kunde också bli nyttigt effektiv på ett modernt sätt och hjälpa till att till exempel hela från sjukdomar. Väckelseledarna hyste ett komplext förhållande till det moderna, och det skilde sig mellan individerna. Wejryd har funnit anti-lutherska och anti-pietistiska drag i uppfattningen om lagens bruk hos de åtta. Hon har samtidigt noterat en starkare påverkan från kontinenten vad gäller evangelisk kristendom än vad Bebbington har sett i anglosaxiskt perspektiv. Lagförståelsen och spänningen hos grupperna ser hon som ett komplement till Wards syn på väckelsen som mer en alternativ modernitet, med tidigast medeltida rötter. Samband mellan metodism och helgelsetradition och även mellan förmoderna källor, herrnhutism och pietism har påvisats i undersökningen om lagförståelsen. Katekestraditionen i vårt land gav Wejryd anledning att komplettera de teoriperspektiv som ser ett samband mellan frälsningsvisshet och det moderna. Väckelseledarnas uppfattning om lagen visade sig inte stämma överens med synen på frälsningsvissheten.

Wejryds bok kompletterar alltså forskningen om väckelsen med ett svenskt perspektiv. Boken framstår ibland som lika komplex som väckelseledarnas modernitet, dock är den skickligt och koherent uppbyggd. Repetition och tillbakabläddring krävs för att hålla isär dessa åtta, starka

personligheter, som var och en hade förtjänat ett liknande verk om sin teologi. Stundtals tar nästan berättelserna om personerna överhanden framför teoriperspektiven. Den imponerande, noggranna bilagan, där synen på lagen och synden hos väckelseledarna respektive Svenska kyrkan schematiseras, hjälper här översynen. Att Wejryd tidigare forskat på erikjansarrörelsen märks i den insatta och levande beskrivningen av dess utveckling. Man vill läsa mer om deras bokbränning, emigration och församlingskonflikter. Att Nelly Hall som kvinna i slutet av 1800-talet försörjde sig som predikant och helare fascinerar.

Ibland förvirrar Wejryds ordval som kring att vara, bli eller betraktas som syndfri, vilka används snarast som synonymer. Möjligen hade också ett mångsidigt begrepp som helgelse tjänat på att tas upp i första kapitlets förklarande lista. Några korrekturfel märks. Pluralismen, den personliga teologin och betydelsen av och möjligheterna som kom ur enskild bibelläsning och -tolkning är insikter som stannar kvar från beskrivningen av tidens religiösa landskap. Dagens individualism har tydligt några rötter även i väckelsen.

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Rowan Williams. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum. 2018. 304 s.

Rowan Williams akademiska produktion täcker flera överlappande fält, vilka sammanfattas väl i *Christ the Heart of Creation*. För en svensk läsare, kanske van vid den skandinaviska skapelseteologins starka fokus på trons första artikel, kan Williams arbete framstå som en främmande fågel. Om skapelseteologin med Gustaf Wingren (1910–2000) i spetsen betonat skapelsen och det allmänmänskliga som utgångspunkt för den teologiska reflektionen, lyfter Williams snarare fram den thomistiska och bysantinska traditionens betoning på trons andra artikel. Vad Williams argumenterar för, utifrån ett teologihistoriskt perspektiv, är att Kristus är skapelsens utsiktspunkt, från vilken samtliga tre artiklar bör förstås.

Williams tar oss med på en i kronologisk mening märklig dogmatisk resa. Nästan som för att få det överstökat inleds boken med ett längre kapitel om Thomas av Aquinos (1225–1274) teologiska vision, för att sedan sträcka sig tillbaka till Augustinus (354–430) och den patristiska perioden och sedan vidare in i den östkyrkliga medeltiden med Maximos Bekännaren (ca 580–662) och Johannes av Damaskus (ca 675–749). Bokens andra del gör ett hastigt hopp in i reformationstidens stridigheter. Jean Calvin (1509–1564) sätts här, utöver de tidigare patristiska och medeltida sammanhangen, i dialog med Martin Luthers (1483–1546) kristologiska engagemang. Det sista stora hoppet sker rakt in i 1900-talet till att handla om Karl Barths (1886–1968) och Dietrich Bonhoeffers (1906–1945) uppgörelse med liberalteologin. Detta kapitel representerar den etiska och politiska dimensionen av Williams arbete.

Bokens starka sidor sammanfaller på ett sätt med dess främsta svaghet. Precis som Thomas själv, syntetiserar Williams en hel tradition. Detta innebär att styrkan delvis ligger i själva sammanfattandet: det är genom att sammanfatta en stor, många gånger oöverblickbar, kristologisk tradition som Williams skapar en imponerande överblick. Detta sker dock delvis på bekostnad av originaliteten. Men den kristologiska tradition som Williams presenterar för oss är samtidigt – och här vilar den verkliga storheten med boken – en metafysisk och ontologisk reflektion. Boken ska därför snarare ses som ett engagemang i kristologisk och i förlängningen trinitarisk ontologi. Därmed knyts trons andra artikel samman med de övriga två: Kristus är, i enlighet med bokens rubrik, skapelsens hjärta. Därför handlar vara och verklighet, menar Williams, också om Kristus och vice versa. Här framträder den kosmiske Kristus, samtidigt som Williams knyter denna så typiska bysantinska tradition samman

med en stark teologi om korset. I samband med detta sker också mötet mellan medeltidens Konstantinopel och vår egen tid. Bonhoeffers konfrontation med nazismens ofattbara ondska lyfter in det eviga Ordet i en konkret situation och ger det kropp. Den kosmiske Kristus, det eviga Ordet, kan aldrig förstås bortom det jordiska och materiella. Detta slags paradox, som Williams relaterar till just genom Bonhoeffers liv och arbete, handlar om hur Gud förmedlar sig genom att vara såväl radikalt annorlunda som genomgripande nära allt skapat. Denna balans mellan gudomligt och mänskligt i Kristus ger boken ytterligare en huvuduppgift, nämligen att påvisa hur kyrkomötet i Kalcedon år 451 är relevant också för samtida teologi.

Ordets människoblivande handlar enligt Williams inte om hur ett objekt kommer in utifrån för att ”konkurrera om utrymme”, för att tvinga sig på världen, utan om hur Gud redan från skapelsens början berett en plats åt sig genom Kristus. Skapelsen är så att säga skapad för Sonen att träda in i. Framför allt värjer sig Williams mot allt tal om Gud som enbart ett slags ”agent” (hur än gudomlig) bland andra. Gud måste för att kommunicera sig samtidigt vara såväl beroende av skapelsen som fri, samtidigt ett subjekt som mer än ett subjekt, på samma gång immanent och transcendent. Ordet handlar efter sitt människoblivande på skapelsens villkor, men är samtidigt också självständigt och oberoende av allt skapat. Genom att också stå utanför skapelsen garanterar Ordet skapelsens fulländning. Gud är så att säga – och här lånar Williams från Erich Przywara (1889–1972) – såväl i som mer än skapelsen. Den hypostatiska föreningen innebär att Gud möjliggör försoning.

Hur Ordet skapar världen är dessutom helt kontinuerligt med hur det verkar i Israel och genom historien, skriver Williams. Konsekvensen för skapelseperspektivet innebär för Williams att Gud inte ersätter något eller tar upp plats för att bli en rörelse vi kan peka på som något isolerat ”gudomligt” i världen, något ”annat”. Snarare innebär det att Ordet förkroppsligar ett särskilt sätt att vara i skapelsen som är analogt, det vill säga samstämmigt, med hur världen är skapad från början. Ordets kontinuitet och verkan i världen ger, enligt Williams, också form åt och utvecklar den ständigt pågående teologiska tradition, vilken kyrkan såsom Kristi kropp är bärare av. Den skapade verkligheten står inte bara still och ”existerar” utan är alltid, skriver Williams, involverad i ett gensvar till Ordet, alltid upptagen i ett analogiskt engagemang som ytterst sett är en existens i ljuset av treenighetens eviga rörelse.

Dessa slags påståenden, framför allt att Gud inte gör våld på en autonom skapelse utan snarare genom Ordet redan ”är” i sin skapelse på ett analogt sätt, placerar kristologin näst intill främst på den fundamentalteologiska kartan. Vad vi säger om Kristus säger vi alltså också, enligt Williams, om teologiska och filosofiska förutsättningar – och om vara och verkligheten i stort. Williams arbete är såväl en god (om något krävande) introduktion till kristologin för nybörjaren som en gedigen fördjupning för den redan insatte. Boken landar dessutom helt rätt i tid. När kyrkan med resten av världen oroas över klimatförändringar och naturkatastrofer blir kristologin en god utgångspunkt: hur vi ser på Kristus hör samman med hur vi ser på skapelsen.

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