

Restorying Arthurian Legend: Space, Place and Time in *Once & Future* and *Legendborn*

In ‘Notes toward a Black fantastic,’ Ebony Elizabeth Thomas argues that breaking the cycle of violence to which Black girl characters are subject in both fiction and life ‘requires rethinking our assumptions about magical child and teen characters. It requires reimagining who deserves magic in stories, and rethinking the treasure maps we’ve had for the past few centuries.’ Developing from this insight, and drawing on Katherine McKittrick’s analysis of Black feminist geographies this article considers how reimaginings of the Arthurian legend for young adult audiences engage with the history of a tradition co-opted in service of white supremacist and colonialist ideologies, remapping this territory to establish spaces for the experiences of marginalized subjects. In addressing the role of Arthurian myth as the site of an ongoing negotiation of how the past matters to the present, of whose pasts and whose narratives matter, texts such as Tracy Deonn’s *Legendborn*, A. R. Capetta and Cori McCarthy’s *Once & Future* construct new ways of understanding space, place, and time.

Vergeschichtlichen der Artus Legende:

Raum, Ort und Zeit in *Once & Future* und *Legendborn*

In ‚Anleitungen für ein Schwarzes Fantasia,‘ erörtert Ebony Elizabeth Thomas dass, um den Kreislauf der Gewalt dem Schwarze Mädchen oft in Fiktion und Fakt Gegenstand sind zu brechen, es ‚nötig ist unsere Annahmen über magische Kinder und Teenager Charaktere zu überdenken. Wir müssen neu erdenken, wer es in Geschichten verdient magisch zu sein und müssen unsere Schatzkarten, an denen wir seit Jahrhunderten festhalten, re-evaluieren.“

Von diesen Einblicken ausgehend und außerdem beeinflusst von Katherine McKittrick's Analyse Schwarzer feministischer Geografien, wird dieser Artikel abwägen, wie neue Vorstellungen der Artus Legende für die Zielgruppe der jungen Erwachsenen sich mit der

Geschichte einer Tradition auseinander setzen, welche sich weiße Vorherrschaft und kolonialistische Weltanschauungen zunutze macht, und dieses Territorium neu zuordnen, um Platz für die gelebten Erfahrungen von Randgruppen zu schaffen.

Indem die Rolle der Artus Sage als Schauplatz einer kontinuierlichen Verhandlung über die Bedeutsamkeit der Vergangenheit für die Gegenwart betrachtet wird, der Debatte darüber wessen Vergangenheiten und wessen Schilderungen relevant sind, konstruieren Texte wie Tracy Deonn's *Legendborn*, A. R. Capetta und Cori McCarthy's *Once & Future* neue Wege um Raum, Ort und Zeit zu verstehen.

Re-conter la légende arthurienne: espace, lieu et temps dans *Once & Future* et *Legendborn*

Dans 'Notes toward a Black fantastic', Ebony Elizabeth Thomas soutient que briser le cycle de violence auquel les personnages noirs féminins sont confrontés à la fois dans la fiction et dans la réalité nécessite une reconsidération de nos présomptions à propos des personnages adolescents et de l'enfant féérique. Cela requiert de repenser qui est digne de la magie au sein des récits, et de réinventer les cartes aux trésors que nous avons depuis les siècles derniers. Développé sur cette idée, et s'appuyant sur l'analyse des géographies noires et féminines de Katherine McKittrick, cet article considère la façon dont les réinterprétations de la légende Arthurienne pour jeunes adultes s'intéressent à l'histoire d'une tradition récupérée au profit des idéologies blanches suprémacistes et colonialistes, reformant ce territoire pour établir des espaces pour les expériences de sujets marginalisés. En abordant le rôle du mythe arthurien en tant que site d'une renégociation continue de l'importance du passé pour le présent, et quels passés et récits comptent, certains textes, tel que *Legendborn* de Tracy Deonn et *Once & Future* de A. R. Capetta et Cori McCarthy, construisent de nouvelles façons de comprendre l'espace, le lieu et le temps.

Keywords: medievalism; young adult fiction; science fiction; fantasy; Black feminist geographies; Arthurian adaptation; race

Restoring Arthurian Legend: Space, Place and Time in *Once & Future* and *Legendborn*¹

‘Ari was hiding out in the Middle Ages’:² the opening line of A. R. Capetta and Cory McCarthy’s *Once & Future* offers a miniature illustration of how the duology’s narrative works to critique and disrupt established conceptualisations of space, place, and time. Its protagonist, a queer woman of colour whose Arab identity and diasporic experience take inspiration from McCarthy’s Lebanese heritage³, is the forty-second incarnation of King Arthur, breaking a sequence of Arthurs running ‘From cis boy to cis boy’⁴, from the medieval past to a distant future. Ari is hiding in a museum, a place whose apparent obscurity, like that of Ari herself, belies its importance. It is both ‘a harmless museum in a forgotten wing of a giant floating mall’ and ‘ground zero for the Mercer Company’ (*Once & Future*, p. 2). A voracious capitalist enterprise, Mercer occupies the role of antagonist within Capetta and McCarthy’s young adult space opera; the museum in which Ari hides is located on the corporation’s galactic flagship, the starship *Heritage*. Although Ari perceives the museum as an obsolete space filled with objects recalling a bygone era, its designation as ‘harmless’ is arresting in light of the museum’s institutional role in promoting hegemony. Ari’s hiding place within ‘the medieval times section’ implies its existence within a larger historical exhibit (*Once & Future*, p. 5), a universal culture museum of the kind whose conception and

organisation stakes a claim on heritage for a society, in a display of cultural capital that serves to 'equate that tradition with the very notion of civilization itself.'⁵ At the heart of a corporation with aspirations to galactic supremacy and heritage as its brand, Mercer's museum accords with Dan Hicks's proposition that '*as the border is to the nation state so the museum is to empire*. Like the border uses space to classify, making distinctions between different kinds of human, so the museum uses time.'⁶ Functioning 'as a device, as a weapon, as a machine for the generation of difference', the museum produces the distinction between civilisation and barbarism through 'the propaganda of cultural superiority in the form of stolen objects'.⁷ The medieval section of Mercer's museum has a similar ideological function, framing Mercer as heir to the legendary past of a Eurocentric elite, embodied in the figures of knights, Merlin, and Arthur as 'the one true king' (*Once & Future*, p. 1). Although Ari is concealed to prevent her discovery as a displaced person, unable to return to a homeworld placed under embargo for its resistance to Mercer's power, her presence manifests the forms of exclusion effected by borders and attributed to museums as their 'true function, which is to reinforce for some the feeling of belonging and for others the feeling of exclusion'.⁸ Ari's multivalent identity as a woman of Arab heritage and as Arthur disrupts the harmful tendency Jonathan Hsy identifies as 'a pervasive felt understanding, or deeply entrenched social encoding, of the entire time and place of the European Middle Ages as white property.'⁹ The specificity of Ari's embodiment and location point both to the erasure of medieval Europe's intellectual debt to the Muslim world enacted within such representations of the medieval past, and to the consequences of racist medievalisms that foster Islamophobia in constructing the present-day Middle East as medieval.¹⁰ The novel's sequel repeats and deepens the effect of Ari's concealment within the museum, unsettling linear conceptions of time as she travels back to the legendary past to escape Mercer. The parallel is underlined in the repetition of the series' opening line: 'Ari was hiding out in the

Middle Ages' (*Sword in the Stars*, p. 18).

In making the medieval past site of a productive engagement with medievalism that recognises the constitutive role of people of colour in shaping the sense of the medieval and its impact, *Once & Future* aligns with the larger tendency and history of antiracist medievalisms, as documented by Jonathan Hsy, a tendency also illustrated in Tracy Deonn's *Legendborn*. Hsy's own work develops on the scholarship of Ebony Elizabeth Thomas in its use and theorisation of restorying. Defined as the process of 'reshaping narratives to better reflect a diversity of perspectives and experiences', restorying 'is an act of asserting the importance of one's existence in a world that tries to silence subaltern voices.'¹¹ Hsy's project is one of "restorying" the past of medievalism itself, showing how people of color have always been part of the history or the stories that can be told about medievalism', and demonstrating 'transformative possibilities of decentering whiteness in medieval studies.'¹² Arthurian retellings in contemporary science fiction and fantasy play a significant part in the collective work of restorying medievalism, exemplified in both *Once & Future* and *Legendborn*. The nature of this contribution emerges more clearly in light of Thomas's formulation of the project of restorying fiction for children and young adults in terms of 'rethinking the cartographies of our imaginations': as Thomas argues, such rethinking 'requires reimagining who deserves magic in stories and rethinking the treasure maps we've had for the past few centuries.'¹³ Restorying is in this respect a geographic project that can be examined through the lens of Katherine McKittrick's work. McKittrick employs the term 'traditional geography' for material and imaginative 'formulations that assume we can view, assess, and ethically organize the world from a stable (white, patriarchal, Eurocentric, heterosexual, classed) vantage point.'¹⁴ As McKittrick argues

If we imagine that traditional geographies are upheld by their three-dimensionality, as well as a corresponding language of insides and outsides, borders and belongings, and

inclusions and exclusions, we can expose domination as a visible spatial project that organizes, names, and sees social differences (such as black femininity), and determines *where* social order happens¹⁵.

In this context, acts of resistance such as restorying are also spatial acts, ‘place-based critiques, or, respatializations’¹⁶; they imagine new forms of geography.

Arthurian legend is an important nexus in the production of imaginative and physical geographies: invoked to justify English imperialist and dynastic ambitions in the medieval and early modern periods, Arthurian myth reemerged as a significant focus for conceptions of national identity in the nineteenth century, mediating romanticised chivalric ideals that shaped elite British masculinities and perceptions of imperialism.¹⁷ The young adult Arthurian fictions of Deonn, McCarthy and Capetta operate to expose and critique the Arthurian legend’s contribution to imaginative and material configurations of space, place, and time, remapping discursive territories. In this way, as McKittrick argues, ‘openings are made possible for envisioning an interpretive alterable world, rather than a transparent and knowable world.’¹⁸ Arthurian retellings expose the work narratives of legendary history and its possession perform in the present, and ask how we might reimagine the cartographies of imagination to create a more ethical world.

Where the opening of *Once & Future* delineates the organisation of time enacted within the museum and its framing of the medieval past as political and spatial project, *Legendborn* articulates a more thoroughgoing critique of geographic domination and its connections to medievalism. Taking the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as its setting, *Legendborn* makes the manifestation of Arthurian legend in the present the focus of a powerful secret organisation, the Order of the Round Table, attributing the foundation of Carolina and other universities to the Order’s need for ‘an excuse to gather and train eligible Scions’.¹⁹ Descendants of Arthur and his knights, Scions are Legendborn, with the potential

to become vessels of their ancestor's spirits and abilities, bound to their bloodlines through Merlin's magic. The Order plays an active role in propagating Arthurian legend, with 'a hand in most of the stories about Arthur that spread beyond Wales and a pen in every text from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Tennyson' (p. 95). Although the Order itself is ancient and powerful, it nevertheless affords the novel's protagonist, Bree, the opportunity to reflect on the political functions of medievalism: 'It'd be easy for someone to dismiss the King Arthur connections as a medieval fantasy about chivalry and honor that the Order founders assigned to themselves to feel bigger, older, greater than they are' (p. 74). The built environment associated with the Order manifests this claim to longevity and heritage, in a material geography that communicates and reproduces racial domination. As Bree observes:

Growing up Black in the South, it's pretty common to find yourself in old places that just...weren't made for you. Maybe it's a building, a historic district, or a street. Some space that was originally built for white people and white people only, and you just have to hold that knowledge while going about your business. [...] You gain an awareness. Learn to hear the low buzzing sound of exclusion. A sound that says, *We didn't build this for you. We built it for us. This is ours, not yours* (p. 75).

For Bree, the Order Lodge is a building 'Not built *for* people that looked like me, but definitely built *by* them' (p. 75). Here, as McKittrick argues, the stolen labour of enslaved Black people 'unfolds as the production of white spaces rather than the production of black spaces; white ownership of black human-property, and black labor, discloses an explicit, top-down production of space.'²⁰

The architecture of the Order Lodge amplifies the exclusionary effect of its history: its design as a 'medieval castle' and the date assigned to its construction, 1793, connect it at once to the foundation of the university and to the Gothic revival fashion for building castles

(p. 75). Evoking a romanticised feudal past, Gothic revival architecture appealed to established members of the aristocratic elite and to those who wished to mould themselves as inheritors of a medieval past. William Beckford's creation of Fonthill Abbey is illustrative: founded upon wealth derived from the labour of enslaved Africans on Jamaican sugar plantations, its medieval spectacle obscures its underpinnings in representing new money as ancient patrimony.²¹ If the Lodge's design declares the Order's medieval origins, it also misrepresents the past in structuring the material geography of its location within the Battle Park forest reserve in terms of medieval European architecture, overwriting the land's status and history as unceded Indigenous territory.²² The Battle Park setting further recalls a more recent addition to the Chapel Hill landscape, Hippol Castle, a stone building in Gothic revival style, completed in 1926 as headquarters for the Knights of the Order of Gimghouls, a secret student society formed in 1889 and typified by a shared belief in 'the ideals of Arthurian knighthood and chivalry.'²³ The function of the castle in these imaginary and material configurations of space is usefully expressed in Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the castle as chronotope, capturing the unity of space and time:

The castle is saturated through and through with a time that is historical in the narrow sense of the word, that is, the time of the historical past. The castle is the place where the lords of the feudal era lived (and consequently also the place of historical figures of the past); the traces of centuries and generations are arranged in it in visible form as various parts of its architecture, in furnishings, weapons, the ancestral portrait gallery, the family archives and in the particular human relationships involving dynastic primacy and the transfer of hereditary rights. And finally legends and traditions animate every corner of the castle and its environs through their constant reminders of past events. [...] The castle had its origins in the distant past; its orientation is toward the past. Admittedly the traces of time in the castle do bear a

somewhat antiquated, museum-like character.²⁴

The castle, then, is an apt expression of the cultural and material inheritance at issue within *Legendborn*; the atmosphere of the Lodge serves as a reminder of who is, and who is not positioned as heir to this history, of the vested interests policing the transference of rights and property. It is a place that has ‘a certain museum-chic, don’t-touch-anything-or-else-someone-will-rape-your-knuckles charm’ (p. 89).

The chronotope of the castle also emerges in *Once & Future*, where its appearance underlines the particular significance of this medievalist fusion of time and space, with a twist that underscores and subverts its narrative role. Focal point of a themed planet, ‘the place where medieval dreams come true, better known as Lionel’, the castle in *Once & Future* is ‘swiped from one of Merlin’s most nostalgic daydreams’ (pp. 52, 56). Yet, if it at first appears to be a vision from the past, Lionel’s castle is immediately distinguished as ‘different from traditional castles’, with a metallic appearance later explained through its origins as a generational starship converted by the planet’s original colonists (pp. 56, 233). Like Capetta and McCarthy’s Merlin, who is later to discover his own identity as son of Ari and her wife, Gwen, this castle only appears to embody the past, a facade concealing its origins and orientation, in future time.

Subversion of the castle as chronotope goes to the root of its significance as epitome of what it means to possess time. As Pierre Bourdieu observes, it is

a social power over time which is tacitly recognized as the supreme excellence: to possess things from the past, i.e., accumulated, crystallized history, aristocratic names and titles, châteaux or ‘stately homes’, paintings and collections, vintage wines and antique furniture, is to master time, through all those things whose common feature is that they can only be acquired in the course of time, by means of time, against time,

that is, by inheritance or through dispositions which, like the taste for old things, are likewise only acquired with time and applied by those who can take their time.²⁵

The ‘paintings in gold-leaf frames and heavy-looking tapestries’, marble floors and family portraits that characterise the interior of *Legendborn*’s Order Lodge are of a piece with the ‘dinner parties and the opera tickets and the formal galas’ Scions and the Vassal families aligned with the Order enjoy, marking their mastery of time (pp. 78, 144). Within the Lodge, the narrative of temporal possession is extended to underscore its relationship to geographical conquest and chattel slavery: a plaque identifies the founders of the Order’s colonial chapter as pioneers and plantation owners (p. 79). Bree calls attention to the violent history of white possession and Black dispossession vested in the Order, ‘an institution founded by men who could have legally owned me, and wanted to’ (p. 92). The Order’s possession of time is further manifested in the Wall of Ages. A ‘single slab of silver [...] three stories tall, reaching all the way up to the far wall of the first floor’, the Wall documents the ‘thirteen bloodlines of the Round Table, and their Scions’ (p. 134). Like the castle, the Wall functions as part of a spatial project, configuring the world in terms of traditional geography as it assumes the stability of a white and Eurocentric viewpoint; Bree’s negotiation of this space as a Black woman entails, in McKittrick’s terms, a place-based critique:

To be able to trace one’s family back that far is something I have never fathomed. My family only knows back to the generation after Emancipation. Suddenly, it’s hard to stand here and take in the magnificence of the Wall and not feel an undeniable sense of ignorance and inadequacy. Then a rush of frustration because someone probably wanted to record it all, but who could have written down my family’s history as far back as this? Who would have been able to, been taught to, been allowed to? Where is *our* Wall? A Wall that doesn’t make me feel lost, but found. A Wall that towers over

anyone who lays eyes on it.

Instead of awe, I feel...*cheated* (*Legendborn*, p. 135).

Bree's unfolding, embodied response to the power over time asserted in the Wall of Ages reflects her own location in time and place, how she is constituted through the physical and imaginative geographies of the Black diaspora.

Underlining the legacies of chattel slavery, Bree's analysis of her relationship to the Wall and the history it represents bears a weight drawn out through its resonance with the work of Dionne Brand. In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand tells of her grandfather's struggle to remember the name of the people their family came from, and how his inability to do so revealed 'a rupture in history':

Having no name to call on was having no past; having no past pointed to the fissure between the past and the present. That fissure is represented in the Door of No Return: that place where our ancestors departed one world for another; the Old World for the New. The place where all names were forgotten and all beginnings recast.²⁶

The Door of No Return stands as counterpoint to the Wall of Ages with its litany of names, an opposition articulated in Deonn's own framing of Bree's experience within the novel: 'Like me, and so many other Black Americans, as she explores her family history she eventually comes up against the wall of enslavement—the wall where the answers stop, weren't recorded, and were stripped away.'²⁷ The Door of No Return is 'no place at all but a metaphor for place [...] no one place but a collection of places. Landfalls in Africa, where a castle was built, a house for slaves, *une maison des esclaves*.'²⁸ The history of the Door exposes and extends the meaning of the castle as image of the transference of rights of possession: 'All of those castles, their strong doors leading to ships, have collected in the imagination as the Door of No Return.'²⁹ It is a point of rupture that feeds a longing for the

power over time the castle embodies: as Brand puts it, a longing for ‘nation—some continuous thread of biological or communal association, some bloodline or legacy which will cement our rights in the place we live’.³⁰ Brand disavows this longing, pointing to the violence on which possession (territory, dominion, property) is founded: ‘I am not nostalgic. Belonging does not interest me. I had once thought that it did. Until I examined the underpinnings. One is misled when one looks at the sails and majesty of tall ships instead of their cargo.’³¹ Brand’s refusal of belonging informs Christina Sharpe’s conception of the wake, a term whose meanings encompass ‘keeping watch with the dead, the path of a ship, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness’.³² Sharpe develops the wake as ‘the conceptual frame of and for living blackness in the diaspora in the still unfolding aftermaths of Atlantic chattel slavery.’³³ Naming ‘the paradoxes of blackness within and after the legacies of slavery’s denial of Black humanity’, the wake in all of its meanings functions ‘as a means of understanding how slavery’s violences emerge within the contemporary conditions of spatial, legal, psychic, material, and other dimensions of black non/being as well as in Black modes of resistance.’³⁴ Wake work is an analytic that enables its practitioners to ‘imagine new ways to live in the wake of slavery, in slavery’s afterlives, to survive (and more) the afterlife of property.’³⁵ As Sharpe argues, the wake and wake work disrupt the relationship to the past encoded within museums and memorials:

if museums and memorials materialize a kind of reparation (repair) and enact their own pedagogies as they position visitors to have a particular experience or set of experiences about an event that is seen to be past, how does one memorialize chattel slavery and its afterlives, which are unfolding still? How do we memorialize an event that is still ongoing?³⁶

Rupturing the image of the past as settled and concluded, Bree’s response to the Wall of

Ages, like Brand's account of the fissure in her family history, operates as a reminder that 'In the wake, the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present.'³⁷ The violence of slavery emerges within the conditions of Bree's being and in her resistance to the narrative of heritage the Wall of Ages represents.

As Deonn observes, at the heart of her novel is the question of 'Whose lives and losses get forgotten or erased, and whose lives and losses become legendary?'³⁸ Within *Legendborn*, the Wall of Ages as memorial to Arthur and his legendary knights exists on a continuum with other forms of memorial whose presence contributes to the production of space as geographical and political project. The novel invokes North Carolina's commemorative landscape through the dominating presence of the statue of a Confederate soldier on campus. In her 'Author's Note,' Deonn connects this memorial with the Confederate monument known as Silent Sam, dedicated to students and faculty who enlisted in the Confederate army, and 'the subject of decades of debate and protest until it was taken down by activists in 2018' (p. 497). The statue's fictional counterpart is a monument to Julian Carr. In the novel, Carr is the 'rat-faced boy' responsible for whipping Abby, a young Black woman, for a 'perceived slight' against a white woman (pp. 229–30). Made accessible through 'a memory walk: a sort of time travel' into the memory of an ancestor, this episode enables the immediate juxtaposition of Carr's monstrosity and his status as subject of public memorial (p. 228). In its content and wording, this passage references the account the historical Julian Shakespeare Carr gives of his own actions in his speech at the 1913 dedication of the Confederate monument at UNC-Chapel Hill. Carr's racist violence has resurfaced in recent years as a focus for campaigning work for the monument's removal: in 2018 doctoral student and activist Maya Little doused the statue in ink and blood, giving visible form to the statue's meaning for Black people. Little writes of Silent Sam, 'You should see him the way that we do, at the forefront of our campus covered in our blood [...]

We see the mutilation of black bodies, the degradation of black people [...] I see Julian Carr whipping a black woman.³⁹ It is telling that Carr's speech brings his violence, mobilized on behalf of a white 'lady' and against a Black 'wench', into play to illustrate how the Confederate soldier 'saved the very life of the Anglo-Saxon race in the South'.⁴⁰ The term Anglo-Saxon's historic and ongoing association with white supremacy reflects the political function of medievalism in fostering colonialism and racial domination⁴¹, and the Ku Klux Klan, whom Carr endorsed, represented themselves in terms of a conception of medieval chivalric masculinity that entails a racialized construction of femininity.⁴² Although Carr was not the subject of Carolina's real-life Confederate memorial, his influence shaped the landscape through the naming of buildings on and off campus, many of them now rebranded, and in his role as the town of Carrboro's namesake.⁴³

Activism directed towards monuments and memorials to the Confederacy is kin to movements such as Rhodes Must Fall: the call for removal does not seek to erase history, but rather 'to underscore what histories were and continue to be suppressed by the statue's very existence as a glorifying tribute', and how statues 'can often exist to obscure full historical reckoning.'⁴⁴ Bree's response to the presence of Carr's statue recognises the operation of domination as a spatial project that reproduces traditional geography: her resistance echoes Brand's production of *A Map to the Door of No Return* in taking the form of cartography. Thinking back to the Lines of descent traced on the Wall of Ages, Bree describes how

I let my gaze draw lines here, too, from building to building, from tree to tree, from buried lives to beaten ones, from blood stolen to blood hidden. I map this terrain's sins, the invisible and the many, and hold them close. Because even if the pain of those sins takes my breath away, that pain feels like belonging [...] I stand at that statue and claim the bodies whose names the world wants to forget. I claim those bodies whose names *I* was taught to forget. And I claim the unsung bloodlines that

soak the ground beneath my feet, because I know, I just *know*, that if they could, they would claim me (p. 240–41).

Bree's map produces a different and mutual form of possession, undertaking a reckoning that transforms the landscape of pain and exclusion into points of connection, the medium of belonging.

With its reference to unsung bloodlines, Bree's place-based critique extends to another feature of UNC-Chapel Hill's memorial landscape incorporated within *Legendborn*, albeit transposed to a different location: the Unsung Founders Memorial. A round table in black granite with three hundred bronze figures supporting its top, the memorial is described in ambivalent terms:

'The Unsung Founders Memorial. Carolina's way of acknowledging the enslaved and the servants who built this place,' she says, her voice wavering between pride and disdain. 'We get this memorial, and it's something, I suppose. It was a class gift. Not unimportant. But how can I be at peace when I look down and see that they are still working?' (*Legendborn*, p. 161).

This framing reflects the divided response to this more recent addition to the campus, installed in 2005. In contrast to other memorials in the vicinity, which recognise particular individuals in specific terms, the Unsung Founders Memorial makes a feature of its generality: it is a monument that commemorates forgetting. As Timothy J. McMillan observes, this is not the inevitable result of archival paucity, as a wealth of formal and informal records, written and oral histories, attest the names of enslaved and free Black people at Chapel Hill: amongst those documented are Jerry Hooper, the poet George Moses Horton, Rosa Burgess, her son Wilson Caldwell, and his father, November Caldwell.⁴⁵ The lack of specificity is reflected in the inscription, which dedicates the memorial to 'people of

color', rather than Black people, and avoids using the terms slavery or enslaved. In its scale and in its function as a table, the memorial invites forms of interaction that facilitate the objectification of Black people, causing Black students in particular to comment 'on the disrespect they feel when viewing the way the figures and the monument as a whole are treated, without any discernible intent to offend by those who are merely sitting at the table as designed.'⁴⁶ The memorial's attempt to manifest a particular experience of chattel slavery as past event ruptures as the past that is not past reappears in the present, reproducing exclusion and harm.

In contrast to the production of material and conceptual geographies in the memorial landscape, the shaping of the material world that affects how embodied human subjects negotiate their surroundings, *Legendborn* imagines a mode of engagement with the past that does not rely on the assertion of rights of possession over territories or people. This form of being in relation to the past is articulated in the fictional magic system of Rootcraft, an 'ancestral, organic magic', whose creation takes its cue from the African American tradition of rootwork, though it is not identical with the living spiritual practice, and which also draws on the significance of the term 'root' across the Black diaspora (p. 497). Rootcraft entails the borrowing of power by consent, with permission secured through the making of offerings to ancestors, and the practice marks a refusal of possession: 'Rootcrafters [...] borrow root temporarily, because we believe that energy is not for us to own' (p. 223). It is a tradition that, like its real world counterpart, rootwork, emerges under the horrors of chattel slavery. Introducing Bree to the craft, the Rootcrafter Patricia describes its heart: 'Protection from those who would harm us, and, if they do, healing so that we can survive, resist, and thrive' (p. 231). In Patricia's analysis, the episode of Julian Carr's attack on Abby functions as 'an example of the circumstances that strengthened the alliance of energy between our living and our dead, forming the tradition we call Rootcraft' (p. 228). Rootcraft stands in opposition to

the magic of the Order, in this context renamed and revealed as Bloodcraft. Unlike Rootcrafters, ‘Bloodcrafters don’t *borrow* power from their ancestors, they steal it. Bind it to their bodies for generations and generations’ (p. 233). Here the majesty and ambition of the Wall of Ages is once again redefined as a site of conquest and dispossession: ‘Colonizer magic. Magic that *costs* and *takes*. [...] from the moment their founders arrived, from the moment they *stole* Native homelands, the Order themselves gave the demons plenty to feed on!’ (p. 233). Flip side of the Legendborn ideal, Bloodcraft is an apt symbol for the inheritance of wealth and power founded on colonialism and white supremacy.

The exploitative relationship to world, time, and people encapsulated in the term Bloodcraft anticipates the harms this form of power entails even for those positioned as its beneficiaries. Most evident in the Abatement, the price the Legendborn pay for their awakening, in a significantly shortened lifespan, this tendency is also marked in the imagery used to attune new members’ sense of what it means to pledge themselves to the Order. The Oath of Fealty is depicted as an ‘echo’ of

the ancient vows sworn by warriors of the medieval. In those days, men committed themselves to higher powers and greater missions, and left behind the petty concerns of earthly pursuits. Likewise, our Order is fashioned after the body politic (p. 109).

In his speech, Lord Davis gives the analogy between the Order and the organisation of the body detailed development, with each of its component parts imagined as particular elements of the body. Once Awakened, ‘our king is the head and the crown itself, leading us to victory by divine right’ (p. 109). The idea of the body as a model for collective identity has a long history reflecting its particular value as a means of promoting the perception of collective identity as differentiated and hierarchical, yet also cohesive and harmonious; in this context, disorder and revolt become unnatural. At the same time, the currency of this symbolic

function of the body impacts on how members of the collective perceive their own bodies and selves.⁴⁷ As the organisation achieves embodiment through directed and shared imaginative labour, it assumes an importance that mandates the imposition of discipline on the physical bodies of individuals, anticipated in Lord Davis's implication that earthly concerns are to be dismissed as petty. The perceived needs of the imagined body authorize still greater force in relation to the acquisition of resources necessary to its maintenance and reproduction, and in the policing of its boundaries. Within *Legendborn*, this effect is recognised in the Order's historical practice of eliminating daughters to ensure the passage of the bloodline's magical inheritance to a male heir (p. 182). Locating the Middle Ages as site of an idealised feudal social hierarchy, Order propaganda shares common ground with the alt-right: Cord J. Whitaker draws attention to a widespread tendency amongst white supremacists to found a nostalgic desire for inflexible political order on 'the fallacy of a heroic Middle Ages in which social stratification was uncomplicated, in which everyone knew their rightful place and stayed in it'.⁴⁸ Arthurian legend is an important node within this system, mobilized to political ends: the branding of the far-right British National Party's 2001 event for young people, held in Wales and condemned as a transparent attempt to 'recruit future fascists', as 'Camp Excalibur', offers a telling illustration.⁴⁹

As with the commemorative landscape of the campus, Bree's embodied presence as a young Black woman serves to enact a profound critique of the construction of the idea of the body politic as it is imbricated with historic and ongoing geographic practices of racial domination. Here too, the implications of Deonn's examination of what it means to live in the wake of chattel slavery emerge more fully when put into conversation with the work of Dionne Brand. Brand invokes the symbolic function of the body to observe its role in the practice of slavery, as the enslaved became 'extensions' of the enslavers:

their arms, legs, the parts of them they wished to harness and use with none of the

usual care of their own bodies. These captive bodies represent parts of their own bodies that they wish to rationalize or make mechanical or inhuman so as to perform the tasks of exploitation of resources or acquisition of territory.⁵⁰

As Brand's analysis indicates, the history of the bodily imaginary includes the pattern of its application to Black people under chattel slavery, ingrained through its repetition during the centuries of the transatlantic slave trade, and unprecedented in its violent dehumanization of Black people as property. Titling this section of her work '*Captive and Inhabited*', Brand speaks of 'the captors who enter the captive's body. Already inhabiting them as extensions of themselves with a curious dissociation which gave them the ability to harm them as well'.⁵¹ Brand's emphasis on inhabitation underlines McKittrick's observation that, under chattel slavery 'Geographically, in the most crude sense, the body is territorialized—it is financially claimed, owned, and controlled by an outsider'.⁵² In the afterlife of slavery, this history continues to unfold in the present of spaces 'originally built for white people and white people only' (*Legendborn*, p. 75). Existing in these spaces is experienced as bodily restriction and physical labour: for Bree and other Black people, interacting with the Order is 'Twisting yourself all up into a shape that's convenient for them', an '*exhausting...contortionist act*' (p. 302). Within the novel, Bree's navigation of her surroundings exposes the workings of geographical discourses of possession that produce spaces inimical to Black existence. Her role in this respect aligns with McKittrick's argument that the 'poetics of landscape' position 'black women as geographic subjects who provide spatial clues as to how more humanly workable geographies might be imagined.'⁵³

As conceived in *Legendborn*, Rootcraft shares common features with the Underground Railroad: as a clandestine route to emancipation and means of resistance based on human networks and relationships, it too is a powerful form of Black geography.⁵⁴ Siting Rootcraft as a practice founded on reciprocal agreement and care to use no more power than is needed,

Deonn represents this ancestral magic as means to a form of time travel whose effects parallel that depicted in Octavia Butler's *Kindred* as McKittrick interprets it. For McKittrick, the time traveller's movement 'fractures rational time-space progression', establishing an experiential connection to locations in the past and the present that 'respatializes the potential of black femininity and black subjectivity in general' as 'Blackness becomes a site of radical possibility, supernatural travels, and difficult epistemological returns to the past and the present.'⁵⁵ Time travel produces 'geographies' that 'indicate the ways in which the built environment and the material landscape are sites that are intensely experiential and uneven, and deeply dependant on psychic imaginary work.'⁵⁶ Bree's ability to 'memory walk' reflects the sense in which her negotiation of her surroundings as a Black woman underscores how geography is not fixed in time, as chattel slavery is not past, but continues to manifest itself in experiences of space and place in the present. It is a perspective on time that undermines the Eurocentric image of history projected in the museum and the castle, the idea of time as a space configured in linear terms and filled with objects from the past. As such, Deonn's conception of time in *Legendborn* is consonant with the fundamental importance of the Sankofa principle to Black intellectual history: of West African origin, in the Twi and Fante forms of the Akan language, Sankofa literally translates to 'go back and fetch it', underlining the philosophy that it is necessary to draw on the past to ensure the future, valuing memory, ancestors and elders as vital source of wisdom.⁵⁷ In *Legendborn*, the past is not dead, completed and closed, but the fundamental source of the knowledge Bree needs to live and act in the present, and time travel is not a speculative technology of the distant future, but a living practice with a long history.

Although *Once & Future* takes a distant future as its setting, here too time travel is positioned as a practice from the distant past, magic rather than future technology, and active engagement with a past that is not dead or linear is the foundation of a more nurturing future.

The series unsettles linear conceptions of time in relocating its characters to a version of the Arthurian past that invokes the Middle Ages as object of fantasy, rather than the specificity of a particular period in history: ‘Dragons were an endangered species by this time period’ (p. 37). Nevertheless, Capetta and McCarthy also undermine the construction of the historical medieval European past as white property, highlighting the role of fictional representations in establishing this image of the Middle Ages through Merlin’s observation:

I’d even grown used to the notion that people of color were not featured in this era of European history. I don’t know who started *that* lie, but Hollywood was quite talented at spreading it. Did you know that enough poorly cast movies can whitewash a time period you’ve lived through? (*Sword in the Stars*, p. 22).

Capetta and McCarthy’s fictive medieval past is in this respect in tune with the work of historians like Olivette Otele and Imtiaz Habib, who document the long history of the African presence in Europe.⁵⁸ Elsewhere, however, the idea of the medieval past is developed as location and source of ideas and values that are outmoded, especially in relation to gender and sexuality.⁵⁹ For Merlin, who has aged backward through history to embrace his sexuality as a gay cis man in the distant future of Ari’s time, return to ‘this closeminded past’ of the Middle Ages is the object of horror (*Sword in the Stars*, p. 119). Positioning of the Middle Ages as ‘a vicious time’, paradigmatic site of sexism, transphobia, and homophobia speaks to popular conceptions of the medieval past, rather than the contingent and variable construction and experience of gender and sexuality in a period before heterosexuality (p. 181).⁶⁰ If Merlin conceives the medieval past as a time of horror, however, it is significant that he is also identified as a profoundly unreliable observer: not only susceptible to the influence of later representations of the past, but also subject to a failure of memory that, as it transpires, is the result of deliberate contrivance by his future self. As Gwen and Ari’s child, responsible for

leaving himself alone to age backward through time, Merlin's role within the Arthurian mythos here marks a queer future running through the centre of the legendary past. In contrast to Merlin's rejection of the past, one of his companions, the genderfluid Lamarack, ultimately chooses to remain there: the future is not their home, and they recognise that even if 'so much of who [they] are will get erased by the stories later [...] That doesn't mean that what happens here [in the Arthurian past] doesn't matter' (p. 235). Lamarack's embrace of the legendary medieval past, and the unrepresented prospect of its consequences for the future that unfolds in the wake of their presence, gestures towards the possibility of a past that is queerer and more diverse than Merlin recognises. Capetta and McCarthy's representation of once and future is in sympathy with theoretical work in unsettling conceptions of time as linear, rational and progressive: as Jonathan Hsy argues 'contemporary queer theory amply demonstrates that time need not be conceived as entirely straight—in all senses of the word'.⁶¹

In *The Sword in the Stars*, temporal location facilitates an engagement with the place of the Arthurian mythos in the nineteenth-century reformulation of the idea of courtly love, as basis for idealised modes of heterosexuality and gender expression.⁶² Ari and her companions' presence in the Arthurian past at first appears to pose a threat to the legend, altering it irrevocably as Ari's wife Gwen, herself 'of mixed Asian and European heritage', becomes wife to the first Arthur (*Once & Future*, p. 66). Against this background, Merlin fears for 'the story of Lancelot and Gweneviere [...] the first tale of love in the Western canon to treat women as more than baby makers' (*Sword in the Stars*, p. 27). Instead, when Ari takes Lancelot's name in the past, it emerges that she is not playing a role: 'she is Lancelot [...] She always was, even before she knew it' (p. 85). Rather than imperilling the legend, Ari and Gwen are 'the original love story of the Western canon, two girls from the future hidden in the folds of the past' (p. 86). In consequence, as Ari underlines in an

incredulous exclamation, ‘Old Earth’s boring romantic repertoire of “cis boy plus cis girl equals love forever” is because two ladies from the future crashed into the past and broke their terrible mold’ (p. 198). Mirroring the opening of *Once & Future*, which locates the fugitive Ari at the heart of the medieval Arthurian past as laid out within the museum, the duology positions identities often conceived in terms of marginality as central and foundational, integral to the production of the order of things.

The concept of the margin in itself poses a problem for imagining new possibilities for being in the world, as Katherine McKittrick’s analysis suggests: ‘This language, the where of the margin, shapes it as an exclusively oppositional, unalterable site that cannot be easily woven into the ongoing production of space because the bifurcating geographies—margins are *not* centers—prohibits integrative processes.’⁶³ Addressing the problem this discursive geography poses for analysis, McKittrick instead relocates Black femininity as in “the last place they thought of”; geographies of black femininity that are not necessarily marginal, but are *central* to how we know and understand space and place’.⁶⁴ Bree’s narrative in *Legendborn* functions as this form of geographical story, opening up the possibility of respatialization, of new possibilities for subjectivity and the production of what McKittrick terms ‘more humanly workable geographies’.⁶⁵ It attends to the fundamental importance of the Black presence to the production of space across time, despite its erasure from the historical record. An attention to those lives and losses whose history has been suppressed and forgotten, rather than being framed as legendary, enables Bree to gain access to, and understanding of, her threefold heritage of power. Bree’s foremother, Vera, grants her knowledge because Bree’s motivation is her conviction that her mother’s life mattered: ‘Because her life counted. And I want to make sure her death counts too’ (p. 462). This knowledge takes the form of a painful epistemological return to the past that attends to what Bree calls

The history my mother
and her mother
and her mother never knew (p. 464).

The formal shift marks the difficult nature of this return, the insufficiency of words to describe the experience of Black people under chattel slavery. Although fictional, Bree's narrative brings the violence of this history into focus to disrupt the traditional geography of the past as white possession that converges in the Arthurian legend. Bree's status as Arthur's Scion, at the centre of this legend, is a 'legacy forced', the result of her foremother's rape by her enslaver (p. 471). The silenced history represented in Deonn's fiction points to the history of gender and sexuality as racialized constructions, to the treatment of Black women 'as wombs, as producers of property, as always consenting and unable to (not) consent'.⁶⁶ As McKittrick argues, 'Objectified black female sexualities represent the logical outcome of a spatial process that is bound up in geographic discourses [...] Geographic conquest and expansion is extended to the reproductive and sexually available body'.⁶⁷ In Bree's memory walk, Deonn gives the history that intrudes to disrupt Bree's experience of the Order Lodge, of the Wall of Ages, of the campus, an immediate and powerful presence. Like the ink and blood Maya Little poured on the Confederate monument, *Legendborn* functions as an intervention that reveals how conceptions of history manifested in material geography operate to reproduce racial domination, and tells a different geographic story about the meaning of ownership and possession. Underlining the role of Arthurian legend and the idea of the medieval in sustaining power and justifying conquest, Deonn exposes the underpinnings of legacies and bloodlines to imagine the transformative possibilities of centring Black experience.

Both *Once & Future* and *Legendborn* contribute to the work of restorying medievalism and the Arthurian legend, reimagining the cartographies of imagination to assert the centrality

of experiences often (mis)construed as marginal. The prominence of engagement with the spatial and material within these processes of restorying marks the extent to which the narratives reshaped in restorying are geographical stories, manifested in imaginative and material configurations of space and place, in the organisation of the museum, the castle, and the campus. In asserting the importance, presence, and history of lives and experiences positioned as absent or silent, these narratives expose the uncertainty of what appears to be transparent, fixed, and knowable, advancing different ways of knowing, navigating, and organizing the world.

¹ I would like to thank the issue editors, Renée Ward and Andrew B. R. Elliott, and the anonymous peer reviewers for their constructive feedback. Thanks are also due to Marlene Roessler and A. Hyacinth Fourrier for their translations of the abstract for this article.

² A. R. Capetta and Cory McCarthy, *Once & Future* (London: Rock the Boat, 2019), p. 1. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text. The title of the first book, *Once & Future*, is also the title of the duology, and is used to refer to the series as a whole where appropriate.

³ McCarthy highlights this influence in his acknowledgements, *Once & Future*, p. 351.

⁴ A. R. Capetta and Cory McCarthy, *The Sword in the Stars* (London: Rock the Boat, 2020), p. 238. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁵ Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum’, *Art History* 3 (1980), 448–69 (p. 451).

⁶ Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museums* (London: Pluto, 2020), p. 17, emphasis in original.

⁷ Hicks, pp. 127, 177.

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Darbel, and Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. by Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Oxford: Polity, 1991), p. 112.

⁹ Jonathan Hsy, *Antiracist Medievalisms: From 'Yellow Peril' to Black Lives Matter* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2021), p. 8.

¹⁰ Cord J. Whitaker, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), p. 187–88.

¹¹ Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo, 'Restorying the Self: Bending Toward Textual Justice', *Harvard Educational Review*, 86.3 (2016), 313–38 (p. 314). The concept is also central to Thomas's *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games* (New York: New York University Press, 2019).

¹² Hsy, p. 6.

¹³ Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, 'Notes toward a Black Fantastic: Black Atlantic Flights beyond Afrofuturism in Young Adult Literature', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 43.2 (2019), 282–301 (p. 283).

¹⁴ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xiii.

¹⁵ McKittrick, p. xiv. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶ McKittrick, p. xix.

¹⁷ For indicative accounts of the association of Arthur and imperial ambition, see Nicola Royan, "'Na les vailyeant than ony uthir princis of Britaine"; Representations of Arthur in Scotland 1480–1540', *Scottish Studies Review*, 3.1 (2002), 9–20; Andrew Lynch, 'Post-Colonial Studies', in *Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature*, ed. by Leah Tether and Johnny McFadyen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 307–20. On the nineteenth-century uses of Arthur, see Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Inga Bryden, 'Arthur in Victorian Poetry', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 377–89.

¹⁸ McKittrick, p. xiii.

¹⁹ Tracy Deonn, *Legendborn* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2020), p. 137. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

²⁰ McKittrick, p. 112.

²¹ On the fashion for castle-building, see Girouard, pp. 43–50. On Beckford, see Girouard, p. 40, and *Fonthill Recovered: A Cultural History*, ed. by Caroline Dakers (London: UCL Press, 2018), especially pp. 73–93.

²² The *Native Land Digital* resource identifies the land on which Battle Park sits as traditional territory of the Occaneechi, Shakori, Eno, Sappony, and Lumbee peoples. *Native Land Digital* <<https://native-land.ca/about/our-team/>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

²³ ‘Historical Information’, Collection Number: 40262, Order of Gimghoul of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Records, 1832–2009, University Archives at the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, <<https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/40262/#d1e258>>.

²⁴ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 255–46.

²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1984), pp. 71–72.

²⁶ Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011), p. 5.

²⁷ Tracy Deonn, ‘Every King Arthur Retelling Is Fanfic About Who Gets to Be Legendary’, *Tor.com*, 23 March 2021 <<https://www.tor.com/2021/03/23/every-king-arthur-retelling-is-fanfic-about-who-gets-to-be-legendary/>> [accessed 9 November 2021].

²⁸ Brand, p. 18.

²⁹ Brand, p. 20.

³⁰ Brand, p. 67.

³¹ Brand, p. 85.

³² Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 17.

³³ Sharpe, p. 1.

³⁴ Sharpe, p. 14.

³⁵ Sharpe, p. 17.

³⁶ Sharpe, p. 19.

³⁷ Sharpe, p. 9.

³⁸ Deonn, 'Every King'.

³⁹ Maya Little, cited in Morgan Gstalter, 'Protester arrested for dousing Confederate statue with blood and ink', *The Hill*, 1 May 2018 <<https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/385644-protester-arrested-for-dousing-confederate-statue-with-blood>> [accessed 25 November 2021]

⁴⁰ Julian Carr, cited in Marouf A. Hasian Jr. and Nicholas S. Paliewicz, *Memory and Monument Wars in American Cities: New York, Charlottesville and Montgomery* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). p. 70.

⁴¹ Mary Rambaran-Olm, 'Misnaming the Medieval: Rejecting "Anglo-Saxon" Studies', *History Workshop Online*, November 2019, <<https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/misnaming-the-medieval-rejecting-anglo-saxon-studies/>> [accessed 25 November 2021]. See also Mary Rambaran-Olm, 'A Wrinkle in Medieval Time: Ironing out Issues Regarding Race, Temporality, and the Early English', *New Literary History* 52 (2021), 385–406.

⁴² See Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present*

(Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 141–43.

⁴³ Howard E. Covington Jr, *Fire & Stone: The Making of the University of North Carolina under Presidents Edward Kidder Graham and Harry Woodburn Chase* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library, 2018), pp. 44, 51.

⁴⁴ Dalia Gerbrial, 'Rhodes Must Fall: Oxford and Movements for Change', in *Decolonising the University*, ed. by Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial and Kerem Nişancıoğlu (London: Pluto, 2018), 19–36 (p. 27).

⁴⁵ Timothy J. McMillan, 'Remembering Forgetting: A Monument to Erasure at the University of North Carolina', in *Silence, Screen, and Spectacle: Rethinking Social Memory in the Age of Information*, ed. by Lindsey A. Freeman, Benjamin Nienass, and Rachel Daniell (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 137–62. On the records of enslaved people at Chapel Hill, see also the online exhibit 'Slavery and the Making of the University', UNC University Libraries, <<https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/slavery>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

⁴⁶ McMillan, pp. 150–51.

⁴⁷ See discussion in Mervyn James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past & Present* 98.1 (1983), 3–29.

⁴⁸ Whitaker, p. 188–90.

⁴⁹ 'Minister attacks BNP's teenage camp', *BBC News*, 9 September 2001 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/1534024.stm>> [accessed 26 November 2021]. Deonn highlights Whitaker's analysis of the uses of the medieval in connection with Camp Excalibur and the far right in an interview with Charlie Jane Anders and Annalee Newitz, 'King Arthur Must Die', *Our Opinions Are Correct* [podcast], September 24, 2020 <<https://www.ouropinionsarecorrect.com/shownotes/2020/9/24/episode-67-king-arthur-must-die>> [accessed 12 November 2021]

⁵⁰ Brand, p. 31.

⁵¹ Brand, p. 30.

⁵² McKittrick, p. 44.

⁵³ McKittrick, p. xxiii.

⁵⁴ On the Underground Railroad and Black geography, see McKittrick, p. 18.

⁵⁵ Mckittrick, pp. 1–2.

⁵⁶ McKittrick, p. 2.

⁵⁷ On the significance of the Sankofa Principle, see Abdul Alkalimat, ‘The Sankofa Principle: From the Drum to the Digital’, in *The Digital Black Atlantic*, ed. by Roopika Risam and Kelly Baker Josephs (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 3–19 (pp. 5–7).

⁵⁸ Olivette Otele, *African Europeans: An Untold History* (London: Hurst, 2020); Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500–1677* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).

⁵⁹ For valuable readings of *Once & Future* as critique of binary conceptions of gender and sexuality, see Lisa Kazianka, ‘“Queer King Arthur in Space”: Problematizing Gender Binaries, Heteronormativity, and Medieval(ist) Heroic Ideals in *Once & Future*’, *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 45.4 (2020), 383–406; and Kara Larson Maloney, ‘Once and Future Sovereign: Teaching the Gender Spectrum through Postmedieval Arthurian Narratives’, *The Year’s Work in Medievalism* 34 (2019), <<https://ywim.net/ywim-34-2019/once-and-future-sovereign-teaching-the-gender-spectrum-through-postmedieval-arthurian-narratives/>> [accessed 20 March 2022].

⁶⁰ Notable recent work in the rich and growing field of medieval queer and trans studies from 2021 alone includes *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. by Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021); Leah DeVun, *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021); and *Trans Historical: Gender Plurality Before the*

Modern, ed. by Greta LaFleur, Masha Raskolnikov, and Anna Kłowska (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021).

⁶¹ Jonathan Hsy, 'Co-disciplinarity', in *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms*, ed. by Elizabeth Emery and Richard Utz (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), 43–51(p. 44).

⁶² See Girouard, pp. 198–218. On the complexities of sexuality in relation to medieval conceptions of love, see James A. Shultz, *Courtly love, the love of courtliness, and the history of sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁶³ McKittrick, p. 57.

⁶⁴ McKittrick, p. 62.

⁶⁵ McKittrick, p. 146.

⁶⁶ C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p. 104.

⁶⁷ McKittrick, p. 45.