الفرسان المغتربون: موائمة الفارس الآرثري في اشعار جاي بيرنارد وإدوارد كاماو براثوايت

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Diasporic Knights: Appropriating the Arthurian Knight in the Poetry of Jay Bernard and Edward Kamau Brathwaite

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Abstract

This study tackles the implicit appropriation of the figure of the Arthurian knight by contemporary diasporic poets for the purpose of voicing the racialized history of subjugation, marginalization and violence of the diaspora. By drawing on Julie Sanders' model of appropriation, as well as Edward Said's concept of travelling theory, this paper argues that the figure of the Arthurian knight, as reimagined in contemporary diasporic poetry, is not a figure of chivalry and glorious heroism but a disillusioned, fractured post-exile figure whose Self has been shaped by displacement. By conducting a critical reading approach of Jay Bernard's "Duppy" and Edward Kamau Brathwaite's "Tom", this study engages in a textual analysis of these poems and thereby identifies the inverted forms of the Arthurian knighthood within the diasporic context. By gazing through the diasporic lens of Robin Cohen's typology of the diaspora, this study illustrates how the mighty figure of the Arthurian knight has surpassed the boundaries of time and space and is now recontextualized by

the diasporic poets to draw upon issues of displacement, injustice, and collective suffering. This paper contributes to intertextual and diasporic studies by presenting the figure of the Arthurian knight as a timeless motif which be found even in the margins of history, in the streets of protests, and on the cotton fields of slavery.

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة الموائمة الضمنية لصورة الفارس الآرثري في قصائد الاغتراب المعاصرة لغرض التعبير عن تاريخ من العنصرية والاستعباد والتهميش الذين يعاني منه المغتربون. استناداً الى نموذج جولي ساندرز للموائمة, ومفهوم إدوارد سعيد لنظرية الترحال, تزعم هذه الدراسة بأن نموذج الفارس الآرثري ليس رمزاً للفروسية والبطولة عند موائمتها من قبل شعراء الاغتراب, بل شخصية مفتتة تعاني من آثار التهجير والمنفى, بذات متكسرة تشكلت من خلال الهجرة والترحال. من خلال قراءة نقدية لقصيدتي *"الشبح"* لجاي بيرنارد و*"توم"* لإدوارد كاماو براثوايت, تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليلاً نصياً مفصلاً للقصيدتين, محددةً بذلك الهيئات التي يُوائم بها الفارس الآرثري ضمنياً في القصائد المعاصرة للاغتراب. وبالنظر لهاتين القصيدتين من خلال عدسة دراسات الاغتراب, وتحديداً من خلال تصنيف روبن كوهين لأنواع المغتربين, تبيّن هذه الدراسة كيف يتجاوز نموذج الفارس الآرثري المهيب حدود الزمان والمكان, ليُعاد توظيفه في سياقات جديدة في الادب المعاصر, لغرض تسليط الضوء على قضايا التهجير, والظلم, والمعاناة الجماعية لشعوب الاغتراب. تسهم هذه الدراسة في اضافة نقدية لدراسات التناص ودراسات الاغتراب, مقدّمةً شخصية الفارس الآرثري كرمز خالد, يسافر عبر السياقات ويمكن ايجاده حتى في القضايا المهمشة في التاريخ; في شوارع الاحتجاجات وفي حقول القطن التي شهدت العبودية.

Introduction

The Arthurian knight is a figure that has traditionally been conceived as a paragon of discipline, loyalty, chivalry, and heroism through his imperial service of realm and king within the Arthurian romances. Originally forged by renounced poets of the Middle Ages like Chrétien de Troyes in his romances, the figure of the Arthurian knight is a dynamic figure which has travelled across time and contexts, thereby undergoing significant transformations away from its origin. Initially, Nikoleta Nemečkayová in her thesis "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Critique of Medieval State of Knighthood and Chivalry" establishes the image of the Arthurian knight and how it may be prone to change through different genres and contexts. She asserts that the knight is perceived as a figure of chivalry, and such perception of the knight is initiated by his portrayal in medieval romances. However, "romances present to their audience a romanticized version of reality. Thus, the experience of medieval society … with knighthood may have been completely different than what we know from chivalric literature." (Nemečkayová, 2021, p.29). Hence, when the knight surpasses its Arthurian roots and expands into different contexts, it undergoes significant transformations.

In the context of contemporary diasporic poetry, to be exact, the figure of the knight is detached from his idealism because he is no longer romanticized, but reimagined as an absented, historically burdened, and

fractured figure whose armor is stripped by the pressure of racialization, violence, enslavement, and forced migration. The circumstances which strip the knight from his armor, in the context of the diaspora, is mainly exile. According to Dr. Arwa Hussein Aldoory and Suhair Al-Shaia, "When you lose your homeland, you have lost the essence of your soul, which you can never retrieve. A person who loses the essence of his soul will not be afraid of losing anything else because he has lost everything that matters … The exiled person is like an unstitched wound that is continuing to bleed. Even if that wound coalesces with time, it will leave a scar forever" (Aldoory & Al-Shaia, 2024, p.223). Hence, it is through the perilous journey of exile where the diasporic individual can be perceived as a reimagining of the Arthurian knight, where the motif is transformed into a disillusioned, fractured individual in search for belonging. The Arthurian knight motif is mostly prone to reworking due to its universal association with mobility, service, and chivalry. When reworked into the context of the diaspora; a context which is marked by racial hierarchy and subjugation, knighthood is repurposed as a site of disillusionment where the ideals of duty and loyalty are transformed into resentment and unresolved tension towards the hostland.

The main theoretical framework of this study is Julie Sanders' concept of appropriation, which falls under the broader umbrella of Intertextuality; and is considered the device which draws the intersection between the Arthurian romance and the diaspora. According to Julie Sanders in her *Adaptation and Appropriation (2016)*, "The central problem with any tradition is the ability to recognize not only those who constitute that tradition but those who are at various times excluded from it, or, at the very least, consigned to its margins." (Sanders, 2016, p.13). This is the purpose of appropriation in this context, where it represents neither replication nor revival, but rather a transformative process aiming to address the exclusion from the canon and the marginalization of cultures and texts. Sanders' appropriation illustrates a complex relationship between the text and the intertext, where the text leads a journey away from the source text to shed light upon the new cultural product, that is the new context. (Sanders, 2016). Hence, in the poetry of Jay Bernard and Edward Kamau Brathwaite, an implicit appropriation occurs where the poets are indirectly influenced, by the romanticized portrayal of the past in the romances, as well as by the brutality of their reality, thereby reworking the figure of the knight as a victim of diasporic dispersal and exile.

Furthermore, to support Sanders' appropriation, this study tackles Edward Said's concept of "travelling theory" to illuminate the stages that the Arthurian knight goes through which lead to the dismantlement of his armor and sovereignty; as it arrives into the context of the diaspora. Said, in his travelling theory, emphasizes that there are documented cases where ideas and theories (in this context; motifs) tend to travel. And he outlines the four stages of travelling motifs: First, a point of origin, which marks the birth of an idea or theory; second, the passage which the theory or idea goes through as it attempts

to move into a different context; third, the conditions of acceptance and/or resistance which the theory or idea goes through in order to be tolerated into its new context; and lastly, the place of arrival which contains the new idea or theory, where it is "accommodated … to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place" (Said, 1983, p.227). Therefore, the Arthurian knight, according to Said's travelling theory, travels from its place of origin within the context of Arthurian romance, and goes through conditions of acceptance or resistance which strip the knight of his shining armor, revealing his bare back, filled with scars left by his perilous journey across contexts, until he arrives to his destination within the context of the diaspora.

Moreover, the context of this appropriation grounded within Diaspora studies; namely, Robin Cohen's typology, and specifically, his formulation of the victim diaspora which situates the figure of the knight into a history of forced dispersal, racial violence, and enslavement. The victim diasporas have been coerced into dispersal from their homeland, thereby projected to harsh conditions of exile and violent outcomes of displacement. The African diaspora is considered one of the types of victim diasporas, whose history of racial violence and slavery expands across generations. However, Robin Cohen, in his article "Diasporas and the Nation-State: From Victims to Challengers" asserts that "For all the victim diasporas, their experiences in modern nation-states have been enriching and creative as well as enervating and fearful" (Cohen, 1996, p.513). Hence, despite the cruelty of their dispersal, victim diasporas manage to make the best of their painful experience by producing creative work; just like the diasporic poets of this study. Within such contexts, knighthood isn't marked by honor nor autonomous labor for the sake of the homeland; but it is laced with historical suffering, imposed labor, and unresolved tension in the hostland. The knight no longer represents the moral ideals of the homeland, but becomes a diasporic site of the imperial mindset of the hostland, where his identity is split, no longer whole, jumping on the two sides of the hyphen, his tension never resolved nor assimilated.

Through the intersection between Julie Sanders' appropriation, Edward Said's travelling theory, and Robin Cohen's delineation of victim diasporas, this study argues that the poetry of Jay Bernard and Edward Kamau Brathwaite can be read as the hyphen which splits the unified identity of the Arthurian knight, through the implicit appropriation of the figure into the context of the diaspora; thereby transformed into a subject of suffering, enslavement, and racial violence.

Literature Review

Previous scholarships have engaged extensively with the figure of the Arthurian knight. These scholarships mostly have been cited under Arthuriana studies, where the chivalry, moral values, and loyalty of the Arthurian knight are outlined and stated. Within Arthuriana Studies, Erich Pope in "Chrétien's British Yvain in England and Wales" illustrates the true knightly behavior by

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referencing *Ywain and Gawain*, an early-14th century Arthurian verse romance, written by an anonymous writer, as he recounts in lines written in Middle English that knights are known for their "dede of armes and veneri" (Ywain and Gawain, 25–9, as cited in Poppe, 2018, p.40), which means their deeds of arms and chivalry. Also, they are recognized as knights of the court through their "þaire gude ded" (Ywain and Gawain, 25–9, as cited in Pope, 2018, p.40), which refers to their noble deeds for the sake of land and king. Furthermore, a study by Nicole Clifton in her "Sir Gawain's Death and Prophecy in Morte DArthur" illuminates on the fact that despite the chivalric code which governs the behavior of knights, yet they are prone to errors. She draws attention to errors committed by Gawain in his first quest, asserting "Gawain does commit errors on his first quest, including failing to grant mercy to a yielded knight and accidentally beheading the knight's lady." (Clifton, 2018, p.63-64). This proves that knights, though portrayed in a romanticized manner as paragons of idealism, yet they are prone to mistakes.

Moreover, previous scholarships within diaspora studies are extensive. Though the paper doesn't revolve mainly around the diaspora theory, yet Zina Tariq Ahmed and Dr. Arwa Hussein Aldoory have tackled the influence of the diasporic experience on "Codemixing in Contemporary Arab American Poetry" where they tackle the concept of language mixing in Arab-American poetry under the effect of the diasporic experience where they assert that "The definition of diaspora by Cohen as a metaphor visualized by the insertion codes as "language does not refer only to spoken formal language, but to the metaphorical basis of communication"" (Kalra, et al., 2005, p.43, as cited in Aldoory & Ahmed, 2024, p.108). In Addition, previous scholarships on the diasporic poets focus on the historical contexts behind their poems, represented by the traumatic rupture from home, and the racial violence which laces their texts. Lourdes López-Ropero in her article "Two London Fires and a Critique of Grievability: Mournful Protest, the Black Elegy and Jay Bernard's *Surge*" reveals how Bernard's collection *Surge* is tragically inspired by the devastating New Cross and Grenfell Power Fires which claimed the lives of many within the British Black community. (López-Ropero, 2024). Moreover, the multiculturalism in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's poetry have been read by Assist. Prof. Raad K. Abd-Aun and Sabrina A. Abdulridha in "The Poetics of Multiculturalism in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's Poetry: A Study of Selected Poems" who stress upon the African diasporic poets' duty to retrieve lost cultural aspects through their works in order to reclaim their cultural identity (2017).

This paper addresses a significant gap in existing scholarship on diaspora studies, appropriation, as well as Arthurian romance. By focusing on the implicit appropriation of the figure of the Arthurian knight within the context of the diaspora rather than direct adaptations of it, this study reimagines the Arthurian knight as a fractured figure of unresolved tension and suffering, whose identity is split by displacement and dispersal.

The Ghostly Knight in Jay Bernard's "Duppy"

Jay Bernard's collection *Surge* is heavily inspired by true events; namely the 1981 New Cross Fire, which tragically caused the death of 13 young Black people attending a birthday party. The fire was considered an intentional act of racial violence against the British Black community, and represented a torch which initiated many protests throughout the years. Bernard's poems, which are mostly experimental and innovative, are also personal documentations of experiences.

In the poem "Duppy", Bernard specifically recounts the aftermath of the tragic fire; however, the narrative isn't simply an act of documentation, but an elevation to a spiritual level. Sarah Lawson Welsh in "Jay Bernard's Surge: Archival Interventions in Black British History" asserts that "In this remarkable poem, a victim of the New Cross Massacre witnesses from beyond the grave [the] community's activism in the form of the Black People's Day of Action of March 1981" (Lawson Welsh, 2022, p.7). In this poem, an act of appropriation and inversion occurs where the figure of the Arthurian knight is reborn amidst the fires of the Massacre, no longer an ideal hero in shining armor but something far more shadowy, where the knight is now a ghostly figure stripped from his armor. This aligns with Julie Sanders' appropriation as she clarifies that the relationship between the text and the source text are not "explicit", but rather "shadowy" (Sanders, 2006, p.43). Hence, the appropriation in this poem, is implicit.

To begin with, the poem is a continuous block with a rusty flow which represents a breathless act of expression; this breathlessness is a window to the headspace of the baffled speaker who tries to describe the events as they occur. The title of the poem, "Duppy", is a direct reference to the speaker. A *duppy*, according to MacEdward Leach in his article "Jamaican Duppy Lore" is "the soul of a dead person, manifest in human form … the idea of a duppy or spirit floating around is very African, and is connected with the belief that the spirits of the dead ancestors are always hovering around the village, protecting and watching to see that the tribal laws are wellkept." (Leach, 1961, p.207). The diction in this poem is significant; the use of the term "duppy" to refer to the speaker rather than "ghost" or "spirit" is an act of reclamation of the African, Caribbean voice. Hence, the spirit in this poem is not a physical hero of flesh and bone, as is the case with the Arthurian knight; but a ghostly witness who acts as an observant of a protest led by his marginalized community.

The first lines of the poem "I watch them twist back her arm / jerk her head back flash of the photographer / turns her irises to rings free flesh head wet with sweat / The light that evening turned from blue to siren blue." (Bernard, 2019, lines 1-4) set the tone and the role of the speaker. These lines are viewed through the ghostly knight's eyes; he is "watching". Just as the Arthurian knight in medieval romances obliges to his role of watching over the weak, the oppressed, and the people of his kingdom, the Ghostly knight watches over his own people. The act of watching is appropriated, yet

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significantly reconfigured. The Ghostly knight is a mere observant, he watches without the ability to act, as he stands witness to an act of police brutality as they subdue a protester and "twist back her arm". Furthermore, he watches the documentation of this incident through "flash of the photographer". The light of the evening turning from "blue" to "siren blue" symbolizes corruption and state intervention to a peaceful protest demanding rights. The speaker's detached tone in "I watch" symbolizes his helplessness, as he is disconnected from his physical form, where, unlike the Arthurian knight, he is in no position to aid his people; he simply hovers, as a traditional duppy does, over their heads. The protesters are bonded together by a single traumatic event which has changed the course of their lives; that is the New Cross Massacre. This aligns with Robin Cohen's typology, specifically the victim diaspora, as he states the victim diaspora have established "A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time … [and] a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group." (Cohen, 1996, p.515). Hence, the ghostly knight is a manifestation of the ethnic group consciousness of the people as he hovers above their heads.

In the next lines, the speaker clearly witnesses state violence against the protestors; which implicitly appropriates the Arthurian knight's battles against his foes, recontextualized into the context of the diaspora who fight for endurance: ""Everyone I know / present in the arch of the baton cracking heads / clamour like battered cod crackles when bitten / like kids skipping for freedom" (Bernard, 2019, lines 9-12). The use of the consonance /k/ in "cracking", "clamour", "cod", "kids", and "skipping" grants the tone a harsh effect, thereby making the flow rusty, filled with pauses and stops. This reflects the speaker's bitterness as he helplessly observes the situation. Though the image in "kids skipping for freedom" is hopeful, yet the sharp /k/ sound makes the situation ironic, as the ghostly knight's tone contrasts the hopeful image; he spits the word in resentment of the injustice which occurs before him. The use of the simile "like battered cod" reduces the speaker's people to commodity, where they represent nothing more than battered flesh in the eyes of the majority in the hostland. The subsequent simile "like kids skipping for freedom", though the tone is resentful, contrasts the previous simile, by stressing the resilience of the protesters in the face of suffering. This is a window through the ghostly knight's kingdom, where resistance and pain coexist. This resilience parallels that of the Arthurian knight as he faces perilous circumstances in battle, and in the diasporic context, is emerges from what Cohen calls "a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate." (Cohen, 1996, p.515) which bonds entire communities together in exile.

In the following lines, the Arthurian knight's armor is stripped, and replaced with absence: "No-one will tell me what happened to my body / I see my picture on a sign my name … every face come in like a cousin / tall boys

carry my empty coffin" (Bernard, 2019, lines 15-16 & 19-20). The implicit appropriation of the motif of the Arthurian knight climaxes in these lines, and the influence of recontextualization is evident; the Arthurian knight is stripped from his strength which lies in his presence; his armor. Schuyler Ejay Eastin asserts that "Since armor signifies seamlessness and wholeness, the wounded body … represents an essential loss of knightly signification; the chivalric body must be whole and sound and without leaks in order to remain symbolically intact." (Eastin, 2017, p.21). The Ghostly knight, unlike the Arthurian knight is in no possession of a "whole" body, and the absence of his armor in "what happened to my body," renders the state of his own body ambiguous, even to him. He then addresses a sight before him, as he exclaims "I see my picture on a sign my name". This emphasizes that though the Ghostly knight is physically absent, yet he is also present, through the cultural ideals which the crowd hold dear. His reputation in the past, and the manner of his death is what gives his life meaning, and elevates the spirit of the crowd. This aligns with Cohen's assertion regarding the diaspora as he states that "A strong tie to the past or a block to assimilation in the present and future must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge or be retained." (Cohen, 2001, p.24). Hence, the strong tie which connects the past (the Ghostly knight's death in the Massacre) and the present (the protests) is what grants the protesters a diasporic consciousness, and maintains their resilience. This explains why the speaker refers to the faces in the crown as "cousin", due to the mutual kinship which is established between them due to their diasporic consciousness. The crowd stand as one, in solidarity with their fallen comrade. The image of the "tall boys" carrying his coffin is chivalric in nature; paralleling funeral ceremonies in Camelot for the fallen knights. However, the Ghostly knight's body is absent; he is nowhere to be found, which is why the coffin is described as "empty". Yet, even though his body is absent, the empty coffin carries the crowds' ideas, their cultural ideals, and their demand of justice.

Finally, the Ghostly knight's quest is established in the final lines, as he quietly asserts "I follow them into the knight … / The crowd passes through me" (Bernard, 2019, line 42 & line 46). This reveals the nature of the knight's quest; endless, circular, as he haunts the march. He "follows" the protestors relentlessly across the blocks, where the crowd "passes" through him. Despite his physical absence, his spiritual presence is strong; his quest is not for a Grail which brings about spiritual salvation, but for the strength to endure an eternity of immortality, destined to hover above his people as he watches injustice tearing through them. Thereby, the Ghostly knight is forever a witness of everlasting injustice.

The Enslaved Knight in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's "Tom"

Edward Kamau Brathwaite is one of the most prominent figures of English literature in general; and Caribbean literature in particular, whose poetry seeks to maintain the collective consciousness of the Caribbean people, by creating a link between the traumatic experiences of their ancestors as they

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travelled through the Middle Passage, and the present state of the African diaspora in exile. The Middle Passage, as a term, refers to the harsh sea voyage which claimed the lives of millions of enslaved Africans through their forced dispersal from their homeland across the Atlantic in slave ships, towards the Americas and the UK during the transatlantic slave trade. By arriving to the hostland, the enslaved Africans suffered harsh conditions of labor, picking cotton on hot summer days in open fields. They were forced to assimilate into an alien culture, significantly different than theirs. According to Yasser Thamer Abbas and Dr. Arwa Hussein Aldoory "The Caribbean identity, due to this fusion of histories and cultures, is constantly changing." (Abbas & Aldoory, 2024, p.150).

In the poem "Tom", Brathwaite presents the figure of "Tom" which is read as an implicit appropriation of the Arthurian knight in this study. The figure of the knight in this poem, unlike the Arthurian one, is not a heroic individual who seeks to battle the foes of the realm for the sake of King and land; but rather an enslaved individual whose very name is a testament of his lack of sovereignty. The title of the poem references "Uncle Tom" who is "a Black person who is overeager to win the approval of whites" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The individual is assigned with the foreign name in an attempt of rupturing him from his African lineage; his identity. This is the first act of implicit appropriation in the poem, where the heroic figure of the knight is subverted to a figure of enslavement, and subjugation. Furthermore, the nature of his name being singular without a last name parallels that of the prominent knights in King Arthur's court, namely "Gawain", "Lancelot", "Percival", and others, which is another act of implicit appropriation, as theorized by Julie Sanders, however, the context is different. The single name doesn't symbolize sovereignty, nor valor, as the Arthurian knights' names do; but rather anonymity. This is a clear alignment with Edward Said's Travelling Theory who asserts that "ideas and theories travel; from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another" (Said, 1983, p.226) where the figure of the knight has travelled from its point of origin in its medieval context, all the way to the context of the African diaspora.

Initially, the poem starts with an exhausted, breathless chant rather than a call for a quest as is the case in most Arthurian romances: "So many seeds / the cotton breeds / so many seeds / our fathers need / … where the sick / back dries, where no one knows / if he lives / or dies." (Brathwaite, 1973, lines 1-4 & lines 11-14). The structure of the poem is filled with fragmentations and enjambments amidst sentences, something which parallels breath-like speech. The shorter lines which consist of two or three words resemble chants, shortage of breaths, and gasps, which reflect the exhaustion of fieldwork. The flow in the poem is rusty, broken, and episodic, unlike the flow in Arthurian romances which smoothly convey serenity and peace. The speaker is "Tom", the enslaved knight who wearily wanders the cotton fields, searching for his image of the Grail; cotton. Cotton is the object of the knight's labor, it is a false image

of the Grail, which carries no salvation upon obtaining. The repetition of "so many seeds" signifies the never-ending quest, a circular journey of suffering. The line "where the sick / back dries" is in itself subversion of the Arthurian knight. The enslaved knight in Brathwaite's poem is stripped of his armor, and his bare back dries in the hot sun of the plantation. His fate is unknown; he doesn't know "if he lives / or dies". The tone carries sublimity in this line, "where no one knows / if he lives / or dies" which is ironic, due to the exhausted state of the enslaved knight, his back bare in the sun, stripped of his armor. This aligns with Cohen's typology of victim diaspora, specifically the African diaspora, where unlike the grandeur of Camelot and its glory, according to Cohen "To many, "Africa" signified enslavement, poverty, denigration, exploitation, white superiority, the loss of language and the loss of self-respect." (Cohen, 2001, p.40), where enslaved individuals were victims of white supremacy.

In the following lines, the enslaved knight stops picking cotton momentarily to recall the glory of his homeland: "recalls the salt dream / the yellow waves awash / on our shore. / Drown the screams,… / keep the dream pure" (Brathwaite, 1973, lines 25-30). The speaker recalls the "salt dream" which represents the salty ocean; which stands as a symbol of the African connection to the outer world as well as a symbol of destruction in the form of the Middle Passage. The ocean waves are "yellow", which represents a promise of a new day, where the sunlight reflects upon the water. The choice of diction is essential; the enslaved knight is reminiscing in the collective "our" voice, which symbolizes the collective African consciousness. This aligns with Cohen's typology of the African diaspora, as he asserts that the diaspora share "A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements" (Cohen, 1996, p.515). Then the enslaved knight pushes the suffering down, by calling his fellow enslaved knights to "drown the screams" in order to "keep the dream pure". This parallels the Arthurian knight's yearning for Camelot, upon departure towards their quests. The quest of the enslaved knight, however, is to maintain a glorious image of the past, not to return home victorious; because there is no hope for return.

Finally, the climax of the poem lies in the speaker's declaration of his stripped power: "And I / timid Tom / father / founder / flounderer / speak … / no crack / in the chain / starts / no bitter / flame / marks / my wrath." (Brathwaite, lines 91-96, & lines 102-108). These lines represent the enslaved knight's soliloquy, through which he admits his helplessness against subjugation and oppression. The enslaved knight, by identifying himself as "timid Tom", embraces the identity imposed upon him by his oppressors; he tries to assimilate with the hostland, without resistance, yet he substantially fails to do so. This aligns with Cohen's delineation of the victim diaspora as he expresses "A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least" (Cohen, 1996, p.515). The use of alliteration in "father / founder / flounderer" is important. The Arthurian knight also assumes the role

of a protective father of the realm, under the shadow of King Arthur, a founder of justice through his sword which he unsheathes against foes. The enslaved knight, similarly, acknowledges his role as a father; an ancestor of a great lineage and culture. However, by juxtaposing "father" and "founder" with "flounderer", the enslaved knight pitifully remembers his reduced position as an eternal flounderer of the fields of the hostland. Moreover, the Arthurian knight's "wrath" is the invincible hand which brings the foes to justice; however, here, the enslaved knight's wrath is futile, where "no crack" is to be found "in the chain" which imprisons him, both the physical chain of enslavement as well as the metaphorical chain of colonization.

Conclusion

The Arthurian knight is a relentless figure whose heroic acts stand in parallel greatness with his bravery, loyalty, and unified identity. He is a sovereign figure under King Arthur's wing, a protector of the realm and a founder of justice. The figure of the Arthurian knight, in this paper, is implicitly appropriated by Jay Bernard and Edward Kamau Brathwaite, a recontextualization which is manifested in the poets' depictions of the diasporic individual. In the landscape of the diaspora, the figure of the knight is a dispersed individual who suffers the disillusionment of exile and migration, helplessly trying to assimilate into the hostland, and no longer in possession of a unified identity. The two poets, by reimagining the figure of the Arthurian knight as the diasporic exile, shed light upon the distinct, individual and collective diasporic experience through their poems. Jay Bernard in his poem "Duppy" presents the Ghostly knight who stands as a subversion of the Arthurian knight whose strength lies in his physical wellbeing and his armor. The Ghostly knight stands as a witness to racial violence and oppression, helplessly wandering the land, searching for closure yet never finding one. He remains forever a disillusioned soul, a mere observant of injustice, on a never-ending journey of haunting, never attaining his version of the Holy Grail; justice. Edward Kamau Brathwaite's "Tom", on the other hand, presents the enslaved knight, an implicit subversion of the invincible Arthurian Knight whose sovereignty is granted to him by the King, employed in protecting the weak and vanquishing the foes of the land. The enslaved knight in Brathwaite's poem is not only stripped of his armor, but of his sovereignty, and identity. He works aimlessly, day to night, chasing a false depiction of the Grail; cotton, while the true manifestation of the Grail; his freedom, remains unattainable. By presenting two subversions of the Arthurian knight, Bernard and Brathwaite implicitly appropriate the figure of the Arthurian knight to voice the

personalized experiences of diasporic subjects under the hammer of oppression and marginalization in the hostland.

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