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BBC's *Merlin* (2008-2012) makes significant alterations to the Arthurian tradition in adapting the legend as a twenty-first-century television series. Scholars (and fans) typically draw attention to its "fantasy aesthetic" and refusal of historical realism;[1] its playfulness with components of the legend and "masterful manipulation of viewers' expectations";[2] its attempts to revise the legend to be "more in line with contemporary values and gender parity,"[3] as well as "with contemporary Britain's difficult attempts to come to terms with its own diversity";[4] and, above all, the age of its major characters/actors: Merlin (Colin Morgan), Arthur (Bradley James), Morgana (Katie McGrath), and Gwen (Angel Coulby). The relative youthfulness of these characters allows the series to follow the maturation of traditional Arthurian heroes and villains, and it chooses to do so by exploring parent-child relationships; as Erin Chandler demonstrates, "the centrality of the parent-child relationship" is affirmed in the series' treatment of medieval sources, and she concludes, "It is not the court which is at the heart of *Merlin*—it is the family" (108). What is striking about this emphasis, however, is that the series ignores the legend's traditional foster-family relationships in favor of biological ones, at least for Arthur. Unlike its most famous Arthurian pretexts, the television show makes Uther Pendragon (Anthony Head) present in his son Arthur's life. Chandler argues that "Arthur as a young man is doing the right thing in continually striving to break free from the faults and mistakes of his father, and the tragedy of his destiny is that he will never quite be able to" (111). Although this observation astutely summarizes one of the key conflicts of the series, its focus is the personal dimensions of the Uther-Arthur conflict. The series represents Uther and Arthur's relationship in contemporary terms in order to depict competing models of kingship and to make that competition emotionally significant because it sets father against son; the stakes in this generational conflict are not solely (inter)personal ones, but rather the anxieties of inheritance relevant to the series' twenty-first-century social context and its own status as adaptation.

Merlin's setting is a vaguely medieval fantasy world of historical castles (Chateau de Pierrefonds, in France, as the stand-in for Camelot) and computer-generated creatures (such as the Great Dragon, voiced by John Hurt). The series does not attempt to be historically accurate, creating what Jon Sherman terms "a generically medieval setting"[5] that can incorporate fantastic elements and, more significant thematically, contemporary rather than medieval cultural assumptions. Parent-child relationships are just one example. The idea of adolescence itself, particularly as a life stage involving parent-child conflict, develops most notably in the early twentieth century.[6] Arthur's relationship with Uther in the BBC series, then, follows what have become accepted as norms of adolescence, including a process of identifying and defining himself "in opposition to the father whose approval he desires" (Chandler, "Pendragons," 107). Chandler argues that key to the series is "that Arthur, *like many adolescents*, learns to distance himself from blind obedience to his father and his father's beliefs" (107, emphasis added). That one generation inevitably battles another, ideologically if not physically, grounds *Merlin*'s depiction of Uther and Arthur's relationship.

In medieval pre-texts, the Uther-Arthur relationship is biological, but otherwise non-existent. Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* provides precise information of Arthur's paternity, namely that "Kyng Uther lay

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[1] Erin Chandler, "Pendragons at the Chopping Block: Elements of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the BBC's *Merlin*," *Arthuriana* 25, no.1 (Spring 2015): 101. Subsequent references will be in-text.

[2] Jon Sherman, "Source, Authority, and Audience in the BBC's Merlin," *Arthuriana* 25, no.1 (Spring 2015): 83.

[3] Jennifer C. Edwards, "Casting, Plotting, and Enchanting: Arthurian Women in Starz's *Camelot* and the BBC's *Merlin*," *Arthuriana* 25, no.1 (Spring 2015): 61.

[4] David C. Tollerton, "Multiculturalism, Diversity, and Religious Tolerance in Modern Britain and the BBC's *Merlin*," *Arthuriana* 25, no.1 (Spring 2015): 113. Subsequent references will be in-text.

[5] Sherman, "Source," 83.

[6] For discussion of the development of concepts of adolescence, see Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), especially 116, and Sarah E. Chinn, *Inventing Modern Adolescence: The Children of Immigrants in Turn-of-the-Century America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2009), particularly 3-6.

with Igrayne more than thre houres after [the Duke's] deth, and begat on her that nyght Arthur,"[7] and similar information is repeated later in dialogue. Such repetition suggests that Malory's concern is to make the royal succession clear, for the audience if not for other characters. Arthur's claim to the throne could be disputed because Uther and Arthur never appear "on stage" together in Malory's text: Arthur is given to Merlin at his birth (6) and reappears to draw the sword from the stone when, after Uther's death, "stood the reame in grete jeopardy long whyle" (7). The father-figure Arthur knows is Ector, and although "Arthur made grete doole when he understood that Syre Ector was not his fader" (9), the emotional dimension of this relationship is not otherwise explored.

Malory is just one example, but he is representative of the way the Arthurian tradition, from medieval texts to twenty-first-century ones, creates distance between Uther and Arthur. The two characters are usually biologically related, but they are separated temporally and spatially, as Uther often dies before Arthur comes of age, and Arthur is usually fostered elsewhere. Texts that raise questions about their biological relationship, such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* with its multiple stories of Arthur's birth, increase this sense of distance. Uther is thus defined by his absence; he appears only in the first few pages of Arthur's story. He bequeaths to Arthur a kingdom, but he does not train his son to take up that inheritance. In some versions, such as Tennyson's, that inheritance includes injustice. In "Gareth and Lynette," both a widow seeking justice and the king assume that Uther is Arthur's father, and Arthur accepts the obligation to redress Uther's wrongdoing,[8] which emphasizes the ideological separation of dead father and living son. For the most part, throughout the Arthurian tradition, the king/father's *absence* creates the conditions for the son's ascendancy and fame.

If Uther's presence in Arthur's life in BBC's *Merlin* departs from the legend's most common traditions, it fits with the series' premise, which is that, as Julian Murphy an executive producer for the show says, "We wanted to look at our Merlin, Arthur, Guinevere, and Morgana when they were younger, before they were famous."[9] That focus makes the maturation of young people central to the show, which is not exactly a departure from tradition. As Andrew Lynch points out in discussing the suitability of Malory's text for young audiences, "many of them [Malory's stories] feature aspiring male youths," and Malory "returns repeatedly to their transition from youth to proven knighthood."[10] Such transitions are usually marked by physical combat in Malory, whether Arthur's battles with rebel kings, Lancelot's quests, or Gareth's encounters with colorful knights. BBC's *Merlin* includes such physical feats as well for its Arthur, but it makes more important emotional relationships, which is facilitated by including Uther in Arthur's life and presenting their relationship in twenty-first-century terms of parent-adolescent tensions.

The narrative exploration of the father-son and king-prince relationship is enhanced in two ways by the media within which the legend is transformed: the logistics of the series' casting and the promotional tools available to the series. Choosing to focus on lead characters who are younger meant that, as Murphy says, the producers "had to cast young actors–and potentially actors who'd done very little—to carry a . . . major BBC production, a primetime show in a primetime slot" ("*Merlin*: Behind the Magic").[11] To balance the risk of relying on these unknown quantities, the producers cast two older, more experienced, and more well-known actors for two roles: Anthony Head as Uther Pendragon and Richard Wilson as Gaius. James Hawes, one of

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[7] Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2004), 5. Subsequent references will be in-text.

[8] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Gareth and Lynette," *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2007), 693-735 (lines 327, 340-41).

[9] "*Merlin*: Behind the Magic Part 2," *Merlin: The Complete First Season*, prod. Mark Procter and Zoë Rushton, aired 2008 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD. Subsequent references will be in-text.

[10] Andrew Lynch, "*Le Morte Darthur* for Children: Malory's Third Tradition," in *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia*, ed. Barbara Tepa Lupack (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 5.

[11] Some of the minor characters in the series who make up the knights of the Round Table also tend to be relatively new to television and film work at the time of their casting: Gwaine (Eoin Macken), Percival (Tom Hopper), Elyan (Adetomiwa Edun), and Lancelot (Santiago Cabrera).

the directors for season one, refers to these actors as "older, more recognized faces who are pillars at the center of the cast" ("*Merlin*: Behind the Magic"), and they are "pillars," it seems, both because name-recognition might draw audiences ("more recognized faces"), and because they can share their experience with their young counterparts. Murphy refers to the "ridiculous amounts" of work that Head and Wilson have done, giving them experience of the business to share with the "four newcomers" ("*Merlin*: Behind the Magic"). The "father-son dynamic" of the Uther-Arthur relationship is thus paralleled by the relationship of experienced, older male actor (Head) and younger male actor (Bradley James), a fact that is acknowledged in the DVD bonus feature for season 1, "*Merlin*: Behind the Magic." Bradley James jokes, "Anthony and I have been working on our father-son dynamic off-screen, largely due to the fact that he'll have something on him and I'll borrow it" ("*Merlin*: Behind the Magic"). Such bonus features–one of the promotional tools of the series to encourage, or at least reward, fandom–have become commonplace in dvd releases of television series, and they are used, in *Merlin*'s case, to highlight particular themes of the show, one of which is the importance of the father-figure in the maturation of the son.[12] Besides the joking comments just mentioned, the feature includes clips of Bradley James and James Hawes discussing how scenes should be played to convey Arthur's feelings about Uther, suggesting the importance of father-son dynamics to people working on the series.

Merlin's Arthur must learn compassion and humility–among other qualities–to be a good ruler, and he can only do that if he separates himself from his father's assumptions of the way Camelot should work—what Chandler refers to as "his father's order" (110). The presence of the king/father who is admired and emulated, but also argued with and resisted, therefore shapes the structure of many episodes. As I have argued elsewhere, episodes often begin with "good" Camelot under threat from some external "evil" force, which leads to a struggle within Camelot between generations as to the best way to win. Uther, who is usually representative of the older generation, can be oblivious to the true nature of the danger that faces Camelot. Either enchantment impairs his perspective (as in the second season's comic two-part episode "Beauty and the Beast"), or his assumptions prevent him from discerning the truth: for example, in season one's "The Poisoned Chalice," he prefers to blame a rival king rather than listen to other possibilities for the attempt on Arthur's life; in both season one's "Valiant" and season three's "Gwaine," Uther's privileging of the nobility over the lower class means that plots against Arthur and Camelot nearly succeed.[13] In such cases, Uther is an obstacle to the success of the protagonists: he limits their mobility by imprisoning them for real or perceived infractions, and his laws force them to acquire more evidence–for example, he does not accept the testimony of servants–or to hide their activities (particularly those that would reveal Merlin's forbidden magical abilities). As a result, the protagonists must encounter the evil forces repeatedly to gather evidence, and they often must do so alone in order to hide from both Uther and the villains; both situations lend themselves to comedy and suspense.[14]

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[12] Other aspects of the series that receive significant discussion are Morgana's character and Merlin's struggle to fulfil his destiny.

[13] Jake Michie, "Beauty and the Beast - Part 1," *Merlin: The Complete Second Season*, season 2, episode 5, directed by David Moore, aired 24 October 2009 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2011), DVD. Ben Vanstone, "Beauty and the Beast - Part 2," *Merlin: The Complete Second Season*, season 2, episode 6, directed by Metin Hüseyin, aired 31 October 2009 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2011), DVD. Ben Vanstone, "The Poisoned Chalice," *Merlin: The Complete First Season*, season 1, episode 4, directed by Ed Fraiman, aired 11 October 2008 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD. Howard Overman, "Valiant," *Merlin: The Complete First Season*, season 1, episode 2, directed by James Hawes, aired 27 Sep 2008 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD. Julian Jones, "Gwaine," *Merlin: The Complete Third Season*, season 3, episode 4, directed by David Moore, aired 2 October 2010 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2012), DVD. Subsequent references will be to episode titles in-text.

[14] These sequences lend themselves particularly well to physical comedy, as in situations where Merlin has to dive under beds or behind curtains to spy on people, or comes up with ridiculous explanations to excuse his presence.

The presence of the king/father thus provides a series of conflicts through which Arthur's growth can be manifested,[15] and as suggested by some of the examples already given, many of these conflicts have to do with assumptions about class. Scholars and fans have commented on class issues in the series from its beginnings because both Merlin and Guinevere are servants, but Uther's "insistence on respecting the hierarchy of classes" makes them an ongoing narrative concern.[16] The second episode of season one, "Valiant," introduces Uther's privileging of the nobility when Gaius tells Merlin that Uther will not take the word of a servant over that of a knight. When the only knightly witness to the episode's crime dies, leaving Arthur with just Merlin's testimony to Valiant's activities, the king is furious: "You made these outrageous accusations against a knight on the word of your servant!" ("Valiant"). The fourth episode of season three has a similar scene; in this case two knights accuse Gwaine of attacking them and he calls them liars, and Uther predictably responds with outrage: "How dare you speak to a knight in that way!" ("Gwaine"). Dramatic irony makes Uther's prejudice blatantly wrong in this case; viewers know the two "knights" are actually commoners disguised by sorcery to kill Arthur, while Gwaine is actually the son of a knight. Uther justifies the hierarchy he believes in by calling it a code: the knight's code is invoked in season one's episode "Lancelot," when the titular hero is rejected for knighthood because he is not noble;[17] it is invoked again in the episode "Gwaine," when in the court scene Uther declares, "For a commoner to attack a nobleman is in violation of the knight's code" ("Gwaine"). Whether noble status "always has been" a condition for knighthood, as Arthur suggests at the end of "Gwaine," or whether it was invented by Uther, as suggested by Gaius in "Lancelot," Uther invokes this code as a natural law.

By having Uther cling to this code, the series contrasts Arthur with his father, and these contrasts become more marked to show Arthur's growth. Although in the first episode of the series Arthur responds to Merlin's inadvertent transgression of class boundaries with punishment,[18] Arthur soon shows greater willingness to minimize class differences. In "Valiant," Arthur does listen to his servant, but when Uther humiliates him in front of the court for doing so, he dismisses Merlin. The end of the episode juxtaposes father and son. When Merlin is proven right, and thus Arthur is proven right for listening to him, Uther does not apologize, and Arthur does not expect him to do so; as Arthur says to Morgana, "He will never apologize" ("Valiant"). This line is followed shortly after by Arthur saying to Merlin, "I wanted to say, I made a mistake. It was unfair to sack you" ("Valiant"). Uther refuses to admit he is wrong to his son, but Arthur will do so to his servant. Contrasts continue. In another first season episode, Uther refuses to let Lancelot serve as a knight, even when he proves himself, because "The code bends for no man"; Arthur replies to Uther, "Then the code is wrong" ("Lancelot"). In a second season episode, Uther refuses to send a rescue party for Gwen when she is captured by bandits; Arthur tells Morgana that he "couldn't disagree with father in public" but he takes Merlin to attempt the rescue.[19] Arthur is overlooking class here in part because of his feelings for Gwen, and the rescue mission gives him an opportunity to voice these feelings to Merlin and to express frustration that a relationship with Gwen is impossible because of his father's attitude: "My father

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[15] These conflicts also propel the growth of other characters as well, particularly Morgana and Merlin. Morgana's initial disagreements with Uther become bitter hatred as the series progresses, marking her change from a passionate proponent of others' rights to a tyrant in her quest for vengeance. Merlin must learn more magic, in some cases, to work around the constraints imposed by Uther; for example, in "Valiant," he learns a new spell in order to force the disclosure of the Valiant's use of magic to cheat and kill in the tournament.

[16] Kathryn Wymer, "A Quest for the Black Knight: Casting People of Color in Arthurian Film and Television," *Year's Work in Medievalism* 27 (2012): 9, http://ejournals.library.gatech.edu/medievalism/index.php/studies/article/view/13.

[17] Jake Michie, "Lancelot," *Merlin: The Complete First Season*, season 1, episode 5, directed by Ed Fraiman, aired 18 October 2008 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD. Subsequent references will be to title in-text.

[18] Merlin judges Arthur by his actions and treats him as a bully and a "prat"; Arthur has him imprisoned and put in the stocks. See Julian Jones, "The Dragon's Call," *Merlin: The Complete First Season*, season 1, episode 1, directed by James Hawes, aired 20 September 2008 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD.

[19] Howard Overman, "Lancelot and Guinevere," *Merlin: The Complete Second Season*, season 2, episode 4, directed by David Moore, aired 10 October 2009 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2011), DVD. Subsequent references will be to title in-text.

won't let me rescue a servant. Do you honestly believe he'd let me marry one?" ("Lancelot and Guinevere").[20] By the end of the third-season episode "Gwaine," Arthur apologizes to Gwaine for his father's position, calling Uther "a stubborn man" and saying explicitly—and to an outsider for the first time—"My father's wrong" ("Gwaine"). This trend culminates at the end of season three, when Arthur and a small group of followers hide in an ancient castle from the forces that have captured Camelot and Uther. Arthur finds a table, and calling the others to it he says, "This table belonged to the ancient kings of Camelot. A round table afforded no one man more importance than any other. They believed in equality in all things. So it seems fitting that we revive this tradition now."[21] He then does "something [his] father won't approve of" and knights four men who have neither title nor wealth: Lancelot, Gwaine, Percival, and Elyan, who is Gwen's brother and, like her, the child of a blacksmith. Before they leave the castle, he also makes public his feelings for Gwen ("Coming").

In contrast to Uther's strict notions of inherited hierarchies, Arthur bases his kingship on the idea of a meritocracy that allows mobility within the class system and that gives more characters a voice in the ruling of the kingdom. Men and women who prove themselves loyal, caring, and brave are rewarded with higher positions and can advise Arthur. The series presents Arthur's approach as "a more compassionate and tolerant model of rule in comparison to Uther's stark emphasis upon social order" (Tollerton, "Multiculturalism," 121). Nevertheless, hierarchies do not disappear; Arthur and Gwen are still king and queen, and the others are knights, with all attendant privileges. Merlin still needs to clean Arthur's boots, even after the speech at the Round Table ("Coming"). The series rationalizes Merlin's status as servant, however, to suggest that while Uther's privileging of rank is wrong, class hierarchies need not be overturned completely. Viewers have been told repeatedly that it is Merlin's destiny to serve (and save) Arthur; the quotidian chores that Merlin performs disguise, and indeed enable, his true occupation of protecting Arthur and stage-managing the predicted rise to power of Albion's greatest king. Because Merlin chooses to be Arthur's servant for the good of Camelot, the series implies that he, too, could change positions in the class hierarchies if he desired. Merlin's status thus does not diminish the differences between Arthur and Uther.

Those differences validate Arthur's legendary fame. Various characters—such as Queen Annis (Lindsay Duncan) or King Odin (Fintan McKeown)—treat Arthur as if he were his father, only to admit he is not; as a result, peace treaties end long-standing feuds in both "His Father's Son" (from season four) and in "Another's Sorrow" (from season five).[22] Such contrast is crucial in a series whose Arthur dies relatively young. From season one, it was suggested that Arthur would be the greatest king Albion has ever known, but because of the series' premise, only two seasons cover Arthur's time as king. Invoking Arthur's difference from his father is one way of demonstrating his "greatness," because Arthur makes difficult choices that lead to that difference, risking the loss of Uther's respect and approval (which Arthur wants) to make his own decisions. Arthur demonstrates his desire for Uther's approval from early episodes to the fifth season's "The Death Song of Uther Pendragon," where Arthur summons Uther's spirit to seek reassurance.[23] Before the combat with Valiant in episode two, for example, Arthur stares at the empty throne; when he defeats the knight, he looks up at Uther in that throne, in an attitude that the director describes as "Dad, did you see that?" ("Valiant"; "*Merlin*: Behind the Magic"). The series thus suggests that Arthur's disagreements with his

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[20] As Wymer notes, the difference in Arthur's and Gwen's class positions is more significant than racial difference: "Gwen and Arthur's interracial relationship is a central component of the plot. Though their love is framed as taboo, it is because the relationship crosses class lines, not because it crosses racial lines." See Wymer, "Quest," 10.

[21] Julian Jones, "The Coming of Arthur Part 2," *Merlin: The Complete Third Season*, season 3, episode 13, directed by Jeremy Webb, aired 4 December 2010 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2012), DVD. Subsequent references will be to title in-text.

[22] Jake Michie, "His Father's Son," *Merlin: The Complete Fourth Season*, season 4, episode 5, directed by Alex Pillai, aired 29 October 2011 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2013), DVD. Jake Michie, "Another's Sorrow," *Merlin: The Complete Fifth Season*, season 5, episode 4, directed by Ashley Way, aired 27 October 2012 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2013), DVD.

[23] Howard Overman, "The Death Song of Uther Pendragon," *Merlin: The Complete Fifth Season*, season 5, episode 3, directed by Justin Molotnikov, aired 20 October 2012 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2013), DVD.

father's principles stem from Arthur's strength of character and integrity. Morgana expresses Arthur's dilemma in the fourth episode of season one, after Uther has forbidden his son to go on a dangerous quest for the antidote that will save Merlin's life: Morgana–who at this point in the series is Arthur's friend–says, "what kind of king would Camelot want: one that would risk his life to save that of a lowly servant, or one who does what his father tells him to?" ("Poisoned Chalice"). That this question is framed so early in the series is significant, for the choice that Arthur makes at that moment—to disobey his father and do what he thinks is right—is a choice he must continue to make, even after Uther's death. "Greatness" is thus defined by the show as requiring separation from the previous generation and a judicious rewriting of its codes and traditions.

Arthur's struggle with his father and with the legacy of his father's rule means that the series dramatizes what I referred to earlier as anxieties of inheritance: that is, the series normalizes a parent-child relationship where the child is at risk because of the decisions of the previous generation and must not only live up to the standards of that generation but redefine and move beyond them. The series addresses these anxieties through an "epic family fantasy drama," to quote a BBC media release for the series.[24] By virtue of using that genre, *Merlin* assumes a viewership of multiple ages and thus represents these dynamics of parent-child relationships to an audience of (potentially) parents and children.

Anxieties of inheritance are not only experienced on the personal level by individuals, however, at least not according to social and political commentators who describe contemporary Western countries as in the midst of profound generational shifts from the baby-boomer generation to its successors. An article entitled "Bridging the Generation Gap," points to one difference between these generations: "Older employees . . . tend to be steeped in hierarchical mindsets, . . . By contrast, younger workers prefer level management structures that . . . give them a voice."[25] Such different mindsets have implications beyond the workplace to attitudes towards authority, generally, or the importance placed on inclusivity, whether racial, multicultural, or religious; inclusivity is particularly significant given the racial and ethnic diversity of the millennials compared to the baby boomers,[26] and it is a context made visible in the television series given "that several key characters are played by mixed-ethnicity and (in the context of British demographics) ethnic-minority actors" (Tollerton, "Multiculturalism," 114). Commentators on the coexistence of differing generational attitudes highlight resulting tensions; describing the differences between generations is often framed using the language of conflict. One commentator on the 2012 American election referred to the "sustained competition and conflict between" what he calls "two giant generations reshaping American life";[27] the tag-line for another article reads, "The economic legacy left by the baby-boomers is leading to a battle between the generations."[28] Whether viewers of *Merlin* are aware of or agree with these descriptions, they live in a world that is being characterized as in a metaphorical war with the policies of the previous generation (whether on the environment, the economy, or education) that are increasingly seen as leaving an inheritance of debt and decline for future generations.

Generational battles are not just social or economic, however. The process of adaptation itself is a struggle with previous generations of texts. Adaptation can be homage and critique; the tradition is admired, yet must be changed. As Linda Hutcheon observes, "there are manifestly many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute by copying."[29] The adaptation thus exists in tension with its forebears: to

[24] "*Merlin* to cast final spell as creators reveal that current series will be the last." *BBC Media Centre*, accessed 26 November 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2012/merlin-final.html.

[25] Jeremy Quittner, "Bridging the Generation Gap: Building a Culture that Embraces Employees of All Ages–From Boomers to Millennials," *Inc.*, November, 2012, 96+.

[26] Ronald Brownstein, "Election Reinforces Divide Between Millennials, Baby Boomers," *National Journal*, 8 November, 2012, np.

[27] Brownstein, "Election."

[28] "Sponging Boomers; The Next Crisis," *The Economist*, 29 September 2012.

[29] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2013), 7. Subsequent references will be in-text.

be received as an adaptation, it must invoke its pre-texts at the same time that it overwrites them with a new narrative, leading Hutcheon to refer to the adaptation as "its own palimpsestic thing" (9). Hutcheon, among other theorists of adaptation, has explored the cultural "denigration of adaptors and adaptations" (4); because of "the (post-)Romantic valuing of the original creation and of the originating creative genius," Hutcheon suggests, adaptations have been seen as "inferior and secondary creations" (3-4). Adaptations are shaped by their own generation's values—a different "code" than their predecessors—yet those pretexts can haunt them; John Stephens and Robyn McCallum, examining stories adapted for children, comment on the subversive and critical potential of retold stories, yet caution "that replication of old content . . . may result in the further replication of, for example, old masculinist and antifeminist metanarratives."[30] An adaptation always runs the risk of being overshadowed by the parent text(s)'s reputation and ideology; despite the many explicit ways in which BBC's *Merlin* signals that its premise "emancipates itself from the need to adhere to the medieval canon of Arthurian literature,"[31] the very repetition of such signals and the promotional materials clarifying the series' approach suggest the impossibility of escaping the parent tradition.

Merlin never explicitly talks about twenty-first-century social or economic issues; nor does it speak openly of the anxiety of influence of adaptations. Nevertheless, the presence of Uther as king/father allows the series to show the son moving out of his father's shadow to make a new, racially diverse, and inclusive Camelot, in the process making something in his own, not his father's, image. Despite Arthur's early death, images in the final episode of Gwen as queen and Merlin as long-lived wanderer suggest the idea of Arthur's Camelot survives.[32] *Merlin* is a fantasy, and not just because of the dragon: it is a fantasy of generational conflict where the younger generation's vision triumphs, and the son, not the father, becomes a legend.

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[30] John Stephens and Robyn McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Stories and Metanarratives in Children's Literature*, Children's Literature and Culture Series (New York: Garland, 1998), 22.

[31] Sherman, "Source," 83.

[32] Julian Jones, "Diamond of the Day - Part 2," *Merlin: The Complete Fifth Season*, season 5, episode 13, directed by Justin Molotnikov, aired 24 December 2012 (London: BBC Home Entertainment, 2013), DVD.