



Universiteit  
Leiden

## Arthurian Revival across the Ages

### Practices in Comparative Medievalism

#### Applicants

Supervisor Name	Discipline
Dr Daný van Dam	Contemporary literature / cultural studies / adaptation studies
Fernanda Korovsky Moura MA	Theatre studies / nineteenth-century literature and culture / medievalism

#### Project description

Each age has its own concerns and obsessions, and art can offer a creative outlet through which such concerns can be portrayed. While some of these creative texts are set within everyday contexts, others are situated in a remote – often idealised – past. In this way, temporal distance is used to look at contemporary concerns mediated through a fictionally reconstructed history. This research project intends to perform a comparative medievalist investigation, analysing how different periods in history engage with past cultures and make them relevant to their own age. Specifically, we will compare artistic returns to the Arthurian mythical past at two points in time: the (later) nineteenth century and the twenty-first century. The focus will be on performance analysis, using nineteenth-century theatrical productions and present-day TV and film adaptations as primary sources of investigation. For the nineteenth-century material, we expect that the trainees will be using the Leiden University Library's newly acquired *Nineteenth-Century Collections Online* database. A popular example adapting the Arthurian mythical past for the nineteenth-century stage would be J. Comyns Carr's *King Arthur* (1895), performed by Sir Henry Irving; modern examples might include David Lowery's film *The Green Knight* (2021), Frank Miller and Tom Wheeler's Netflix series *Cursed* (2020), and BBC's *Merlin* (2008-2012). By using these historical and contemporary Arthurian adaptations to study the different ways in which the voices of the past are mediated and fictionally reconstructed at different points in time, this project aims to show that history is not a one-way process but that the past moves in multiple directions at once, creating different connections and layers of meaning.

### Research Trainee Profile

We welcome students at all levels of eligibility (3<sup>rd</sup> year Ba, Ma, ResMa). We encourage applications from students with an interest in representations of the past across media. We look for:

- skills in textual and visual analysis, preferably including at least some familiarity with performance studies and/or film studies;
- the ability to work with online databases (such as *NCCO*) and/or a willingness to invest in becoming familiar with these kinds of digital environments;
- independent research skills for studying primary sources, both nineteenth-century material and twenty-first-century adaptations;
- the ability to present the results of the work in spoken and written form, both for supervisory meetings and for more general dissemination to a popular and academic audience.

The trainees will be responsible for surveying primary sources and making a preliminary selection of texts to be used for further research. Together with the supervisors, they will work towards disseminating the results of the research in different formats.

### Collaboration

This project involves both different disciplines and different time periods. The supervisors' starting point is a shared interest in reimagined histories. Fernanda Korovsky Moura's expertise in the Victorian period and the way it reimagines the medieval past connects to Daný van Dam's experience with the way the present reimagines the Victorian era and other time periods. By taking 'performance' to be a concept that is shared by nineteenth-century stage adaptations and twenty-first-century TV and film adaptations of the Arthurian legends, this project creates links between contemporary film/media studies and theatre historiography studies. The use of 'adaptation' as another central term draws together literature, theatre and film/TV. By drawing the comparison up to the present moment, the project can be connected to the ongoing debates about intersectionality and the representation of minorities in media and art, one of Daný van Dam's areas of expertise.

### Deliverables

This project aims to disseminate its results in different formats:

- two blog posts, created by the students (each student to take the lead on one post). For the publication of these blog posts, both local platforms (*Leiden Arts in Society Blog*, *Leiden Medievalists Blog*) and suitable international platforms (e.g. British Association for Victorian Studies blog *The Victorianist*) will be considered;
- two podcast episodes, created by the students (each student to take the lead on one podcast episode), to be uploaded for Fernanda Korovsky Moura's series *An overview of English literature*;
- if a suitable academic event takes place during or shortly after the traineeship, the students will be encouraged to prepare, with the supervisors' support, a conference submission for a local (graduate) conference, for example for an event organised by one of the Dutch research schools or by university-specific research centres for medieval studies;
- a co-authored paper by the supervisors to be published some time after the end of the traineeship, for which the research trainees will offer support in the initial stages (depending on the work they perform, the students may be acknowledged as contributors or, if they remain involved in the writing process, may be listed as co-authors).

## **Planning**

Students should be available for biweekly meetings: once a month between themselves (an update, including questions/concerns, should be sent to the supervisors) and once between students and supervisors. The students will be encouraged to work together more regularly.

### *February-March*

- reading/viewing and primary analysis of relevant sources and making selection/shortlist of most appropriate case studies;
- starting to work with online archives and databases and, if needed, acquire required digital skills.

### *April-May*

- analysis of primary sources;
- prepare for first blog posts and podcast to be published in May-June;
- if available, apply for relevant event (e.g. graduate conference).

### *June-July*

- continue analysis;
- prepare for second blog posts and podcast to be published in July-August;
- if available, present research at relevant event (June-August)
- look for relevant journals or other publication outputs.

### *August*

- finalise blog posts and podcasts, promote work;
- complete brief report about traineeship;
- discuss potential involvement in future academic publication.

## **Student Application**

Interested students should send their applications to both Daný van Dam ([h.d.j.van.dam@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:h.d.j.van.dam@hum.leidenuniv.nl)) and Fernanda Korovsky Moura ([f.k.moura@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:f.k.moura@hum.leidenuniv.nl)). The application should include a 1-2 page CV and a short letter of motivation in which they outline their reasons for applying to the traineeship as well as any prior research experience.