

# Krönika över nyutkomna doktorsavhandlingar

**F**rån och med häfte 74 (2023) vill vi erbjuda nydisputerade forskare inom tidskriftens intresseområden en möjlighet att presentera sina avhandlingar. För denna andra doktorskrönika bjöd vi in några som disputerat mellan 2023 och första halvan av 2024. Förslag till kommande årgångars krönikor lämnas till tidskriftens redaktörer.

## Malo Adeux

**Thesis:** Adeux, Malo. Appropriation et légitimation du discours historique. L'exemple de trois traductions vernaculaires du *De Excidio Troiæ* de Darès le Phrygien: *La Veraie Estorie de Troies*, *l'Ystoria Daret* galloise, la *Trójumanna saga* islandaise (XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle). Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest, 2023. <https://theses.fr/2023BRES0078>

**Keywords:** comparative medieval literature, Trojan War, Dares Phrygius

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## Abstract

Presenting himself as an eye-witness of the Trojan war, Dares Phrygius is the reference historian of the Latin Middle Ages when it comes to the war of Troy. In the 13th century, his work, *De Excidio Troiæ*, was translated in many vernacular languages, amongst them French, Welsh and Norse (i.e.

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Icelandic). But the story of Dares seldom comes alone: it is often associated with the story of Romans or even of Bretons (i.e. Welsh), as they thought themselves then to be of Trojan ascent.

In this study, I analyze the textual strategies at work in the French *La Veraie Estorie de Troies* (The Real Story of Troy) included in the French compilation *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* (also called *Estoires Rogier*), the Welsh *Ystoria Daret* (The History of Dares), and the Norse *Trójumanna saga* (The History of Trojans), in order to legitimize the transfer of Dares's story towards vernacular languages and to appropriate this story into a new, unlatinized, textual community.

This work presents itself as a compared study of these three corpuses. After a presentation of the context in which they were written and their manuscripts comes an analysis of the sources and their uses by the translators. After analyzing the compilations, I turn towards internal textual strategies, that is, the treatment of the story of Dares, the modifications, the explanation of references, the role of the narrator and how history was conceived therefore in these works. In this study, I endeavor to show that appropriating the Trojan matter, even if the process is never made explicit in the texts, came from a specific interest for the story of Dares and more generally for the history of Troy.

## Discussion

The vernacular translations of *De Excidio Troie* have often been described as attempts to promote the political agenda of their patrons, especially in a period of crisis (e.g. the invasion of Wales in 1282 by the English King Edward I, the loss of political autonomy of Iceland to Norway). Such considerations appear to clash with the latest, reassessed dating of the first redaction of these texts, which reveal the texts were often created earlier than the crises. But they also disregard the fact that these texts often remain silent about possible goals or motives. Therefore my work consisted of a compared analysis of the translations in regard to their original Latin source, studying both the modifications of Dares's narrative and the incorporation of interpolations.

The different aspects of the texts I studied, such as the autonomy of the Trojan narrative in the compilations, the formal transformation of the its diegesis (the reorganization of time and the spatial references especially), and the presence of the narrator as the organizer and commentator of Dares's testimony, emerged in my work as the result of a series of comparative close-

readings, trying to make sense of the translators' choices in their works by comparing similar excerpts.

This analysis brought me to the idea that the project of rendering the Trojan narrative into vernacular languages emerged among *literati* communities (i.e. mastering Latin), giving the opportunity to *illiterati* historians, not only to be confronted to radical otherness, but also to access a kind of superior knowledge formerly reserved to a Latinized elite. This is mostly shown by the tendency to copy the Latin source or to try to explain it even when it is the most exotic or with the most obscure references. Ultimately, this work proved to be a study of textual strategies, in which Dares's narrative appeared to be as much a political and ideological tool as a means to the emancipation of vernacular languages and historical writings from the Latin standard.

As the study of the translations of *De Excidio Troiae* is an ongoing project, the annex to my thesis included a normalized edition of the three versions of *Ystoria Daret*, using what B. G. Owens published in his master thesis in 1951; I added to it the variants of MS Philadelphia, Library Company of Philadelphia, 8680.O, discovered later, translated the texts in French, added an index of the names and places, and a series of remarks about problematic passages. I also added a summary of the narrative found in the manuscripts of *Trójumanna saga*, with references to the edition by Jonna Louis-Jensen (1968, 1981).

A review of the thesis appeared in the 2024 issue of *Perspectives médiévales*.

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Sanders, Julie, 2006: *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London / New York: Routledge.  
 Stock, Brian, 1983: *The implications of literacy: Written language and models of interpretation in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

## Bio

After graduating with BAs in French literature, English studies, Breton studies and Philosophy, I joined the Viking and Medieval Norse Studies Program in Reykjavík. I passed the Agrégation (teacher exam in France) in French literature, before receiving a scholarship for a PhD at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale (Brest, France), which I defended in December 2023. I am now an associated researcher within the Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique (CRBC) in Brest, and teach both at middle school and university levels. I am currently looking for post-doctoral projects involving French, Welsh, and Norse translations of Latin works during the medieval period. In my free time, I also teach Breton, my native language, and write and edit for local magazines and publishers.

## Selected publications

- Adeux, Malo (forthcoming): How much French did Icelanders read in the Middle Ages? A case study in *Trójumanna saga*, *Alexanders saga*, *Breta sögur*. To appear in a Festschrift.  
 Adeux, Malo, 2019: La matière de Troie dans les textes gallois. In: *Troianalexandrina* 19. Pp. 435–444.  
 Adeux, Malo and Hélène Tétrel, 2019: La Matière de Troie dans l’Islande médiévale. In: *Troianalexandrina* 19. Pp. 445–455.

## Adèle Kreager

**Thesis:** Kreager, Adèle. *Boundaries of the Human: Identities, Ontologies and Transformations in Old Norse Literature*. Cambridge 2023. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.106845>

**Keywords:** posthumanism, human–nonhuman relations, Old Norse concepts of body and self, shapeshifting, the environment

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## Abstract

My thesis examines the definition of the human in vernacular texts preserved and transmitted in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland. It seeks to understand how the literature of this period grappled with the question of what it means to be ‘human’ – what features humanity inheres in, what processes it emerges through – specifically by examining episodes of transformation as test cases for evolving cultural ideas of embodiment and selfhood. This critical inquiry is guided by four categories of research questions: the first concerns the perdurance and plasticity of human identity; the second, the relationship between the body and identity; the third, concepts of agency and materiality; and the fourth, the impact of a text’s mode, genre and intellectual framework on its treatment of human identity.

My study draws on a variety of sources, from saga literature, mythological narrative and traditional poetics (eddic and skaldic) to legal compilations, religious works and medical texts. Using three theoretical frameworks (critical posthumanism, new materialism and disability studies), I analyse how different literary modes examine concepts of human identity. I find that the material and conceptual boundaries between humans and their non-human environment of plants, landscapes, animals and objects become key sites of negotiation in constructions of the embodied self. I explore how narrators and poets offer audiences diverse visions of the human subject and body as critically embedded in, and co-constituted by, the nonhuman world – an entanglement that some texts embrace, and others reject. My research reveals the relational and contingent nature of Old Norse ontologies as expressed in literary texts, which posit identity as an evolving process rather than a fixed state.

## Discussion

The conceptual premise of this research is that, due to the intimate connection between identity and change, motifs of transformation in literary texts can be analysed to reveal cultural concepts and conversations surrounding human identity in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland. Transformation-episodes prompt close inspection of the parameters of personal identity and the ways humans categorise and perceive the surrounding world. My approach is shaped by three scholarly frameworks (critical posthumanism, new materialism and disability studies), the utility of which is demonstrated by the findings of the study. These frameworks, through their distinct but

complementary reappraisals of bodies, identities and environments as intimately connected, offer valuable lenses for researchers working on Old Norse cultural concepts of the human, departing from Cartesian binaries and challenging Enlightenment-informed approaches to the self-sovereign body.

Chapter 1 investigates the productive dismemberment of male bodies in mythic narrative (*Snorra Edda*, *Poetic Edda*), alongside the fragmentation of bodies in the image-worlds of skaldic kennings and eddic riddles (*Heiðreks gátur*). I then extend this discussion by examining impaired and vulnerable bodies in *fornaldarsögur* that are supplemented by nonhuman matter, focusing on (more-than-)human embodiment in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 addresses human and divine perceptions of matter in mythological narrative and traditional poetics, focusing on the interconnectivity of bodies and environments, the distribution of agency and personhood across actors and objects, and the portrayal of animacy in skaldic verse and eddic riddles. Moving away from object–human relations, in Chapter 4 I examine the ‘intimate caesura’ between animals and humans in the Sigurðr-cycle (*Poetic Edda*, *Snorra Edda*, and *Völsunga saga*), using two case studies: the first explores the relationship between social and ontological alterity, analysing how animals and humans coalesce through the adoption of each other’s traits; the second investigates acts of consumption which blur human and animal identities. Finally, I survey the Old Norse lexicon of shapeshifting, arguing that transformation terminologies are far richer and more heterogeneous than previously acknowledged, with poets and narrators drawing on a wide vocabulary of transformation to shape the audience’s understanding of a given change. This lexical overview is rounded off with a discussion of recurrent characteristics of transformation-episodes, including the rarity of permanent transformations, the significance of volition and the frequency of ‘motifs of recognition’ (Chapter 5).

I contend that these literary works facilitated cultural reflection on the boundaries between humans and their more-than-human environment of plants, landscapes, animals and objects. I find that human identity is frequently presented as contingent and flexible (rather than essential and fixed). However, the *valency* of this concept of the human varies across the literature: some texts embrace human–nonhuman entanglement as an advantageous reality, while others construct rules that militate against the perceived openness of the human. This suggests that audiences had access to (and appetite for) different approaches to human identity, indicating that traditional *and* experimental ways of conceptualising the world in Old Norse

literature were not necessarily suppressed by more ‘orthodox’ medieval intellectual frames of reference.

### Bio

Adèle Kreager (b. 1996, United Kingdom) has recently defended her doctoral thesis at the University of Cambridge. She holds an MPhil degree in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic from the same university, where she has also taught classes and seminars in Old Norse language, poetics and textual criticism, and lectured on eddic verse and saga literature. Her research interests include Old Norse concepts of the body, cognition and selfhood; human-nonhuman relations; the environment; health and medicine; materiality and agency; skaldic kennings.

### Selected publications

- Kreager, Adèle (forthcoming): Metamorphosis, Hybridisation and Illusion in the Language of Old Norse Transformation. In: Nováková, Barbora, Jan Kozák, Jiří Starý, Marie Novotná and Zuzana Stankovitsová (eds), *Hybrids and Metamorphoses in Old Norse Mythology*. (Studia Fennica Folkloristica.) Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.
- Kreager, Adèle, 2022a: Encounters at the Mound in Old Norse Literature: Dialogues between Landscape and Narrative. In: *Scandinavian Studies* 99(4). Pp. 399–430. <<https://doi.org/10.5406/21638195.94.4.01>>
- Kreager, Adèle, 2022b: Lapidaries and *lyfsteinar*: Health, Enhancement and Human-Lithic Relations in Medieval Iceland. In: *Gripla* 33. Pp. 115–155. <<https://doi.org/10.33112/gripla.33>>

