

Interview

1. Please provide a brief outline of your training and scientific activity.

Being born in Germany, raised in Iceland and having lived in multiple different places I guess one could say that an interest in cross-cultural engagements came naturally to me. My interest in literature is also a legacy of my childhood. My father (who happens to be an engineer) would recite passages from our medieval literary heritage over dinners, much to everyone's dismay. It did, however, inspire a life-long interest in literature. It seemed therefore reasonable that I would turn to literary studies. I did my degrees in Comparative Literature and English in Iceland, Germany and the United States. Following my doctoral degree, I was a Junior Research Fellow and Visiting Fellow at Clare Hall, University of Cambridge, UK, after which I was hired as Assistant Professor in Comparative Literature at the University of Iceland in 2012. I am now Professor there and Vice-Chair of the Institute for Research in Literature and Visual Arts.

I came late to medieval studies, having intended to do a doctorate in Victorian literature. My formative years in comparative literature, with its focus on modern critical theory and cross-cultural and cross-linguistic approaches to literature have nevertheless served me well as they have allowed me to approach medieval literature from the perspective of comparative studies, something I find to be profoundly beneficial. My work has therefore been focused on cross-cultural reading of literary conventions, tracing patterns of cultural transmissions and seeking to understand literature as a site of cultural fusion, resistance and appropriation. My first book, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (2012) reflects this interest.

My recent work traces its origin back to questions of how culturally contingent behavioural conventions travel across borders and benefits from the recent affective turn in literary studies and history. It seeks to understand where emotion (as an embodied physiological entity) is located in literature and how we (as readers) can engage with it, infusing the textual structures with perceived emotive profundity and value. I find this to be particularly relevant to medieval literature, which draws on very different psychological, medical and philosophical conceptions of emotions than we do today. My latest work, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature: Translations, Voices, Contexts*, which came out with Boydell & Brewer late last year, thus explores emotion as both a literary motif and as a social phenomenon.

2. Please state your reasons for choosing Venice and the Department for your research and teaching stay.

The reason is twofold; firstly, I have had a very successful working relationship with a member of the faculty, Prof. Massimiliano Bampi, and secondly, Ca' Foscari (and the Department) has an established reputation as one of the top universities in the field in Italy and so it is an honour to be associated with both the Department and the University. It is my hope that the stay at Ca' Foscari will provide an opportunity to establish further connections with Italian colleagues and students and that it will additionally allow me to gain a deeper understanding of the literary heritage of the area for research and teaching purposes, as I regularly teach classes on Chaucer and Boccaccio for instance.

3. Have you ever had a research collaboration with the teaching staff of Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies in the past?

Yes, I have collaborated with Prof. Massimiliano Bampi, which has resulted in a book chapter by Prof. Bampi in a volume I am co-editing, a symposium held at Ca' Foscari in the spring of 2018 on 'Genre' and a volume we are co-editing that will form part of a recently established series with Boydell & Brewer, *Studies in Old Norse Literature*, for which I am series editor along with Carolyne Larrington at the University of Oxford.