

Institution: University of Oxford		
Unit of Assessment: 26A – Modern Languages		
Title of case study: Mediating Modern German: reaching new and diverse audiences through translation, engagement, and performance		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Jan 2011–July 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Karen Leeder	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Modern German Literature	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Oct 1993–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Aug 2013–Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Leeder's work has developed the profile and reputation of German poets in English by broadening the reach of contemporary German poetry. Leeder has developed collaborations with publishers, arts organisations and broadcasters who draw on her expertise or partner with her to create new work attracting diverse audiences. She has stimulated interest and engagement with modern German poetry through translation workshops, broadcasts, and her project 'Mediating Modern Poetry' (2014–present). Her prize-winning translations have brought German poets' work to new audiences, cementing their reputations in the English-speaking world and in Europe, and inspiring new forms of artistic expression.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Leeder's research pioneers new approaches (e.g. 'lateness', voice, reception, science) to modern German poetry, for canonical authors such as Rilke and Brecht, major contemporary poets (e.g. Durs Grünbein, Evelyn Schlag), and emerging writers (e.g. Ulrike Almut Sandig, Jan Wagner). She has published 14 scholarly books and 45 articles since 2011, alongside 16 books of translation, providing new avenues into poets' work, shaping their reputations, and interacting with the research clusters on lyric, voice and performance in the UoA.</p> <p>Leeder's work on 'lateness' in modern poetry – the notion of work influenced by old age or incapacity, or self-consciously belated or 'after' – has enabled the reinterpretation of texts by 5 classical and lesser-known poets. Leeder is the first to apply this to the poetry of the 'belated' nation Germany, but simultaneously also to challenge the biographically-inflected notions of 'late style' as advanced by Adorno or Said and to place 'lateness' as a broader category within the context of philosophies of time and speed. Her piece on Brecht (2011) read his final lyric work against the grain to reveal late pleasures as well as encroaching incapacity [R1]. Her subsequent interdisciplinary volume for <i>New German Critique</i> which appeared in 2015 [R2], had the unusual distinction of being reviewed (<i>JES</i>, 2016) – and prompted an invitation as keynote speaker at the biennial German Studies Association of Australia conference (2016).</p> <p>Leeder has worked on Durs Grünbein for more than a decade, illuminating new aspects of his work (his interest in English literature, his engagement with science, his reworking of history). Invited papers include Cambridge 2008 and the Goethe Institute (Rome) 2014. A piece on Grünbein and science in <i>Durs Grünbein: A Companion</i> (2015), co-edited by Leeder, the first book in English on the poet, has been widely cited on account of its attention to how the scientific principle is adopted as a deliberate strategy after unification and more than just a trope, but is also rendered aesthetically [R3]. Leeder's translations of Grünbein's poetry won major prizes in 2013 and 2018, and her English version of Grünbein's <i>Porcelain</i>, with an introduction and notes revealing new undocumented aspects of the work, published to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Dresden, was the subject of an invited paper at Harvard University [R4].</p> <p>Among the emerging writers whom Leeder has championed, Ulrike Almut Sandig has a special place. Leeder was among the first to write on Sandig in German or English. Her translation of Sandig's <i>Dickicht</i> (2011) as <i>Thick of it</i> (2018) [R6] including a preface and notes, introduced</p>		

Sandig and has been acknowledged in a variety of competitive contexts. Her article 'I am a Double-voiced Bird' (2018) [R5] examines the issue of voice in Sandig's work, in the light of her performance aesthetic, demonstrating that her work involves playful appropriations of voices rather than a single confessional voice, as is often claimed.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.[Chapter, available on request] Leeder, Karen. "Lateness and Late Style in Brecht's last poetry." in *Brecht and the GDR: Politics, Culture, Posterity*. ed. Karen Leeder and Laura Bradley, *Edinburgh German Yearbook*, Vol 5, 2011, pp. 45–64. ISBN: 9781571134929
- R2.[Journal Article] Leeder, Karen. "Figuring Lateness in Modern German Culture" in *Figuring Lateness in Modern German Culture*. ed. Leeder, special edition of *New German Critique* 125, Vol 42, no. 2, Aug 2015, pp. 1–29. DOI: [10.1215/0094033X-2889224](https://doi.org/10.1215/0094033X-2889224)
- R3.[Chapter, available on request] Leeder, Karen. "Durs Grünbein and the Poetry of Science." in *Durs Grünbein: A Companion*. ed. Karen Leeder, Michael Eskin and Christopher Young, Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2013, pp. 67–94. DOI: [10.1515/9783110227956.67](https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110227956.67)
- R4.[Translation, listed in REF2] Grünbein, Durs. *Porcelain: Poem on the Downfall of my City*. trans. Karen Leeder, London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2020. ISBN: 9780857427816
- R5.[Journal Article, listed in REF2] Leeder, Karen. "'I am a Double-voiced [...] Bird': Identity and Voice in Ulrike Almut Sandig's Poetry" *Ulrike Almut Sandig: Prose, Poetry and Performance*. ed. Heike Bartel and Nicola Thomas, special edition of *Oxford German Studies*, Vol 47 Issue 3, Oct 2018, pp. 329–350. DOI: [10.1080/00787191.2018.1503471](https://doi.org/10.1080/00787191.2018.1503471)
- R6.[Translation, available on request] Sandig, Ulrike Almut. *Thick of It*. trans. Karen Leeder, London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2018. ISBN: 9780857425560

Prizes and Awards

- English PEN European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) European Voices Translation Award (2016) for *Thick of it*.
- PEN America PEN/Heim Award (2016) for *Thick of it*.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Heightened public awareness of German poetry, collaborating with publishers, festivals, arts organisations and broadcasters increasing access for new and diverse audiences.

Leeder has received high profile awards [A] and sat on the Board of numerous arts organisations, including the Stephen Spender Trust and Poetry Trust [B], and worked with 11 festivals since 2014 (including Cheltenham, Edinburgh, Reading) to increase coverage of German poetry, and engage new audiences [C]. She has judged 8 poetry / translation competitions (3 for young people) including with high-profile organizations (e.g. British Library; Poetry Society; Society of Authors; PEN) [D]. Leeder hosted Jan Wagner, the first non-English-speaking poet to deliver the prestigious annual Poetry Society Lecture. The Chair of the Poetry Society acknowledged her as 'one of the great translators [...] opening up our wider knowledge of German poetry' (0:40-1:06) [E.2.i].

Leeder has appeared 17 times on BBC TV and radio during the period: e.g. Open Book, Free Thinking, BBC Proms, The Essay. Her research inspired Radio 3's 'The Verb' (average: 53,000 live listeners), on 'lateness' (2017) and 'German poetry since the fall of the Berlin wall' (2019) [F]. The producer noted: 'Her intimate experience of translation issues and her existing relationships with the poets [...] meant the programme was richer for her involvement' [E.1.c]. Leeder's work on 'Brecht and lateness' inspired another producer to record public responses to a Brecht poem ('The Pleasures of Brecht', 2019) [F]. He commented: 'The insights and interpretive ideas and notes on translation she offered [...], as well as the descriptions of the historical and literary context [...], provided the spine around which the radio feature could take shape' [E.1.f].

Leeder's involvement has heightened awareness of German poetry, in accessing new audiences and in the texts selected, performed and printed. The CEO of arts education charity Poet in the City comments: 'Karen is a rare and invaluable asset to the public poetry world [...] working with speakers such as Karen, who deliver inspiring contextual talks is a real opportunity to challenge

barriers to poetry and create new audiences' [E.2.b]. A representative of publisher Seagull Books emphasises 'Leeder is one of the most dynamic of cultural mediators [...] instrumental in bringing key German authors to our publishing house [...] and increasing our coverage of modern German literature' [E.1.b].

Stimulated public interest in and engagement with modern German poetry

Through 8 translation and writing workshops (UK, Austria, Italy), Leeder has engaged with diverse audiences, from professional literary translators (chairing 'German British Encounters' for the Akademie der Künste and the Royal Literary Society in 2015) to school children and a non-German-speaking public (Free Verse Fair London, 2015) [C.5]. At a 2016 workshop led by Leeder and poet Ulrike Almut Sandig, a pupil commented: 'The poems blew me away; it's impossible to express the very profound effect the words, and the recitations themselves, had – and still have – on my consciousness' [E.2.h]. A film of the event received 1016 views on YouTube and a participant commented: 'You have this wonderful human presence there and you see her perform and you see her bring it all to life...amazing.' (1:40-1:49) [C.5.a]. Leeder received unsolicited feedback from a listener on 'The Pleasures of Brecht': 'Your voice and your tenderness when speaking, touched me deeply. [...] I have never written to anyone as a result of listening to them on the radio which gives you some indication of what impact, your voice, in particular, had on me. I shall look at life differently from now on.' [E.2.a]

Since 2013, Leeder has given 31 public readings (Italy, Ireland, USA, Austria, Australia and Germany, including to 700 at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin; 1,200 in Hay), and prestigious venues in the UK (e.g. Richmix, Keats House, King's Place); performed 2 live poetry duels (Cheltenham and Winchester festivals), participated in 5 poetry podcasts and appeared in 12 public roundtables [C.1-3]. A live-streamed event with Sandig for Oxford 'Big Tent! Live Events! Online (2020), included performance, discussion and films: generating 656 views, and public comments: 'fascinating discussion', and 'inspiring!' [C.1.b]. Leeder's session on 'Poetry in Hidden Places' with Sandig for Jaipur Literature Festival (October 2020) has already attracted 13,000 views [C.1.a].

Leeder's expertise in engaging broad audiences has seen her invited to contribute to trade magazines, give public lectures (e.g. Aldeburgh Festival 2014), and introduce German poetry collections to Anglophone readers. Martyn Crucefix, translator of Peter Huchel's *Numbered Days* (2020) commented: '[Your Introduction] is just what I might have hoped for [...] I love your choosing the Dipper poem to draw out some more positives in his work and what you say about it makes me see the poem again in a new light – the point of lit crit.' [E.2.c].

Influenced creative practice and generated new forms of creative expression

Leeder's translations have inspired artists to create work which would have been impossible without access to English-language versions. Beth Sparks produced drawings based on Leeder's translations of Sandig's 'Grimm' cycle published in a special art edition [G]; Sascha Conrad's film using Leeder's translation of Sandig's 'Shining Sheep' [H] was shortlisted for the EMPRES Award 2020 [A]; animators Beate Kunath and Eléonore Roedel created three short films containing the English text of Sandig's poems [I]. These have been viewed 1,623 times online, integrated into concerts by hip-hop band Landschaft (Kiev, Rotterdam) and presented at readings, festivals, concerts and interventions across India in 2019, crucially increasing the poet's reach through the medium of English [E.1.d].

Developed the profile and reputation of German poets in English

Sandig was unknown in English when Leeder translated her poetry for the premier New Zealand literary journal *SPORT* (2012). Sandig states: 'Leeder's adaptations of my poems contribute significantly to [...] my international reception. Thanks to her collaboration, I am not only developing an English-speaking readership, but also [...] an audience that, though not part of the conventional book scene, is by no means less poetry-loving' [E.1.d]. Her invitations are 'the result of Leeder's work as a literary mediator' [E.1.d]. These include major UK festivals (Edinburgh, StAnza, Hay) [C.1.f-h], as well as festivals in Jaipur and Rotterdam [C.1.a and 1.d]. She was commissioned to produce new work, (e.g. on the First World War for Hay, and for the 50th anniversary of 'Sgt. Pepper' for the city of Liverpool and the Beatles' estate) and published in prestigious journals in the UK, Australia, USA and India in Leeder's translation. Editors of

Centres of Cataclysm, a volume celebrating the 'best of fifty years of European poetry' included a poem from *Thick of It* and invited Leeder and Sandig to lead a public workshop [C.5.a]. The former editor of *Modern Poetry in Translation (MPT)* states: 'It is not by chance that Sandig has been "accepted" by the UK poetry scene [...]. Karen's inspired advocacy has allowed her to bridge the languages and cultures in a way that few contemporary poets can do.' [E.2.e]

Leeder's collaboration has also enhanced Grünbein's reputation. After curating major events with him at Poetry International (Southbank Centre – sell-out audience: 600) [C.4.k], one of his poems commissioned and translated by Leeder was chosen to represent Germany in *MPT*'s 'EU Stronger in Europe' campaign 2018–2019 [J]. Further translations appeared in international journals including *New England Review* (nominated for a Pushcart prize) and *Poetry* (Chicago) where 'The Doctrine of Photography' won the John Frederick Nims Memorial Prize 2018 [A]. The editor of *Poetry* commented: '[Grünbein's] work, and your translations, are a marvel' [E.2.j]. A 2019 'in conversation' event with Leeder and Grünbein as part of 'Riveting Germans' at the British Library spoke to a sold-out audience of 400 [C.4.a]. Leeder's English version of Grünbein's *Porcelain* has twice featured on BBC radio [F (2019; 2020)]. Grünbein comments: 'I value my work with Karen Leeder enormously. Through her translations and her engagement, she has been instrumental in increasing my reputation in the English-speaking world.' [E.1.a]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. Selected Award Announcements and Prizes; webpages, URLs provided.
 - Conrad, Sascha, 'Shining Sheep', shortlisted for the EMPRES Award, Oxford (2020)
 - Grünbein, Durs, 'The Doctrine of Photography', trans. Leeder, *Poetry* (December 2017), winner of John Frederick Nims Memorial Prize (2018)
 - Sandig, Ulrike A., *Thick of It*, trans. Leeder (Seagull Books, 2018), winner of English PEN EUNIC Award and PEN America PEN/Heim Award (2016).
- B. Selected Webpage Evidence - Membership of arts organisations [URLs provided], including:
 - Executive Committee Member of the Board of the Stephen Spender Trust (2015-present)
 - Board Member of the Poetry Trust (2015-2017)
- C. List with Webpages of Participation in Festivals [URLs provided], including:
 1. Public Events
 - a) 'Poetry in Hidden Places', Jaipur Literature Festival (29 Oct 2020), 13,000 views.
 - b) 'Voices from the Wings', Oxford 'Big Tent! Live Events!' Online (11 June 2020), 656 views
 - d) Translated Sandig poems for Poetry International Festival Rotterdam (14 June 2019)
 - f) Performance with Sandig for Edinburgh Book Festival (19 Aug 2018).
 - g) Performance with Annie Rutherford, Nora Gomringer and Sandig, Lighthouse Bookshop, Edinburgh (20 Aug 2018).
 - h) 'The Armistice Gala', performance with Sandig and Evelyn Schlag, Hay Festival in association with the Imperial War Museum (29 May 2018), live audience 1700; 882 views.
 - r) Reading with Michael Krüger and panel discussion, Reading Literature Festival, (26 Oct 2015).
 2. Live Poetry Duels
 - a) Winchester Poetry Festival (8 Oct 2016)
 - b) Cheltenham Literary Festival (4 Oct 2014)
 Other festivals include: Rotterdam, Hay, Newcastle, Aldeburgh, Luton, and Cork (2014-2019).
 3. Poetry Podcasts – Poet in the City, multiple appearances (2015)
 4. Poetry Roundtables involving Durs Grünbein:
 - a) 'Riveting Germans – Thirty Years after the Wall', British Library, (26 Nov 2019), 39 hits.
 - k) 'What if not Transformation...: Poetry After Rilke', series of special events curated for Poetry International, Southbank Centre (20 July 2014).
 5. Translation and Writing Workshops:
 - a) Leeder & Ulrike Almut Sandig, Poetry Translation Workshop, Oxford (14 May 2016)
 - b) University of Innsbruck (19 April 2016)

- c) Free Verse Fair, London (26 Sept 2015)
- g) Goethe Institute, Rome (9 May 2014).
- Other workshops: Oxford, Leeds, Lancaster, Sheffield, Nottingham (2014-2020).
- D. Invitations to judge poetry competitions include
 - Translation Challenge, Wales PEN Cymru and Wales Literature Exchange, 2020.
 - Timothy Corsellis Translation Prize for Poetry Society, 2018-2020.
 - Goethe Institute Society of Authors German Translation Prize, 2020.
 - Consultant for DfE 'By Heart' competition for Poetry Society, 2019.
 - Michael Murphy Memorial Poetry Prize awarded by the English Association, 2017.
 - Institute of Modern Languages Research / German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) competitions, 2014 and 2017.
- E. Selected Correspondence with Karen Leeder
 1. Selected Statements from individuals
 - a) Statements by poet Durs Grünbein (9 Aug 2020)
 - b) representative of Seagull Books (17 Mar 2020)
 - c) BBC producer of 'The Verb' (15 May 2020)
 - d) poet Ulrike Almut Sandig (14 Mar 2020)
 - f) BBC producer for 'The Pleasures of Brecht' (4 Aug 2020)
 2. Selected Emails and Feedback
 - a) Listener communication to Karen Leeder (8 Jul 2019)
 - b) Feedback from CEO, Poet in the City, 'Mediating Modern Poetry: Project Partners Feedback', URLs provided.
 - c) Translator communication to Karen Leeder (20 Sep 2019)
 - e) Feedback from CEO, Poet in the City, and from editor of *Modern Poetry in Translation*: 'Mediating Modern Poetry: Project Partners Feedback', URLs provided.
 - h) Feedback form from school student participant in 'Modern Poetry Translation Study Day', Queen's College, Oxford (14 May 2016)
 - i) Introductory remarks by Chair of the Poetry Society, 'The Poetry Society Annual Lecture', New College, Oxford (20 Feb 2017), 0:40-1:06, URL provided.
 - j) Editor of *Poetry* (Chicago) communication to Karen Leeder (18 Mar 2020)
- F. Selected Media appearances (URLs provided)
 - 'The Pleasures of Brecht', BBC Radio 4, with Joanna Macy, Christopher Hamilton, Adrienne Maree Brown, prod. Phil Smith, 8 July 2019.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0006lmk>
 - 'Mocking Power Past and Present', BBC Radio 3 *Free Thinking*, with Anne McElvoy, Daniel Kehlmann, Dina Resk, Tom Smith, incl. reading of Durs Grünbein translation *Porcelain* (2020), 4 Feb 2020. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p082bh2l>
 - 'German Poetry since the Fall of the Berlin Wall', BBC Radio 3 *The Verb*, with Durs Grünbein, Ira Lightman, Nora Gomringer, 15 Nov 2019.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000b7x0>
 - 'On Lateness', BBC Radio 3 *The Verb*, with Phil Jupitus, Ida Lightman, Andy Miller, Holly Pester, 20 Jan 2017. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b088jl69>
- G. Sandig, Ulrike A., *Grimm*, trans. Leeder (Oxford: Hurst Street Press, 2018).
- H. Conrad, Sascha, 'Shining Sheep', 20 March 2020, featured in <https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/event/voices-from-the-wings> (50:40-53:24).
- I. *Landschaft* Selections
Kunath, Beate, and Roedel, Eléonore,
Landschaft – Wolf (9 May 2019);
Landschaft – Flieger (4 June 2019);
Landschaft – Test Test (20 October 2019),
Lyrics by Ulrike Almut Sandig, trans. Leeder, <https://www.b-k-productions.de/en/project/landschaft/>
- J. Grünbein, Durs, 'Torso of Polyphemos', trans. Karen Leeder, *MPT*, <https://modernpoetryintranslation.com/poem/torso-of-polyphemos/>